
Diversity & Inclusion in Schools Report

Parent Survey Results

July 2022



Key Headlines

91%

feel they have a **good understanding** of what diversity and inclusion means in relation to education.

71%

of parents agree that their child's school **celebrates diverse cultures**, people and experiences in its teaching.

70%

of parents say their child's school has an inclusive environment that **enables all children to thrive**.

41%

agree that the education provided in schools today **reflects the diversity of pupils in the UK** and the world around them.

40%

of parents feel gender stereotypes influence the subjects their child is interested in learning, and **37% of parents** say their child's career aspirations are influenced by gender stereotypes.

25%

of parents are confident that the **current education system** provides the best outcomes for all pupils.

20%

of parents are **not confident** talking to their child about LGBT+ and non-binary definitions.

6 in 10

parents and teachers feel **their personal background is reflected** in what is taught in schools today.

66%

of teachers agree that the education provided in schools today is **inclusive of all pupils** in the UK, **36% of parents say the same**.

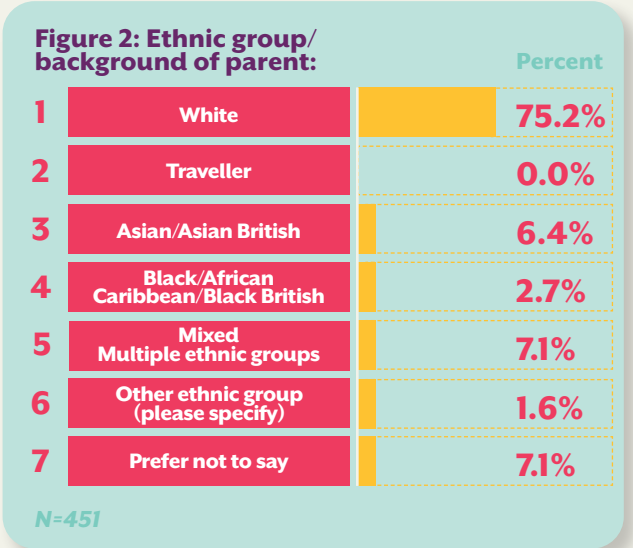
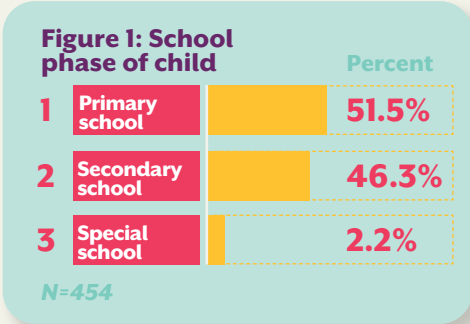


Methodology and Demographics

A short online survey, promoted to parents via social media, was active between 14th October 2021 and 5th January 2022. 454 parents completed the survey (412 in England, 18 in Northern Ireland and 24 in Wales).

Parents were asked to answer the questions based on their eldest child's experiences. 52% of parents' attended a primary school, 46% a secondary school and 2% a special school (Figure 1). 75% of parents classify their ethnic group/background as white, 7% mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 6% Asian/Asian British, and 3% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (Figure 2).

Respondents cover all regions of England, including 27% from the South East, 15% the South West, 13% London, 8% the East Midlands and 7% Yorkshire and Humberside. 7% of parents said their child attends an independent (fee paying) school.



Where the same questions were asked, these parent results are also compared with the results of Pearson's Teacher survey¹ towards the end of the report.

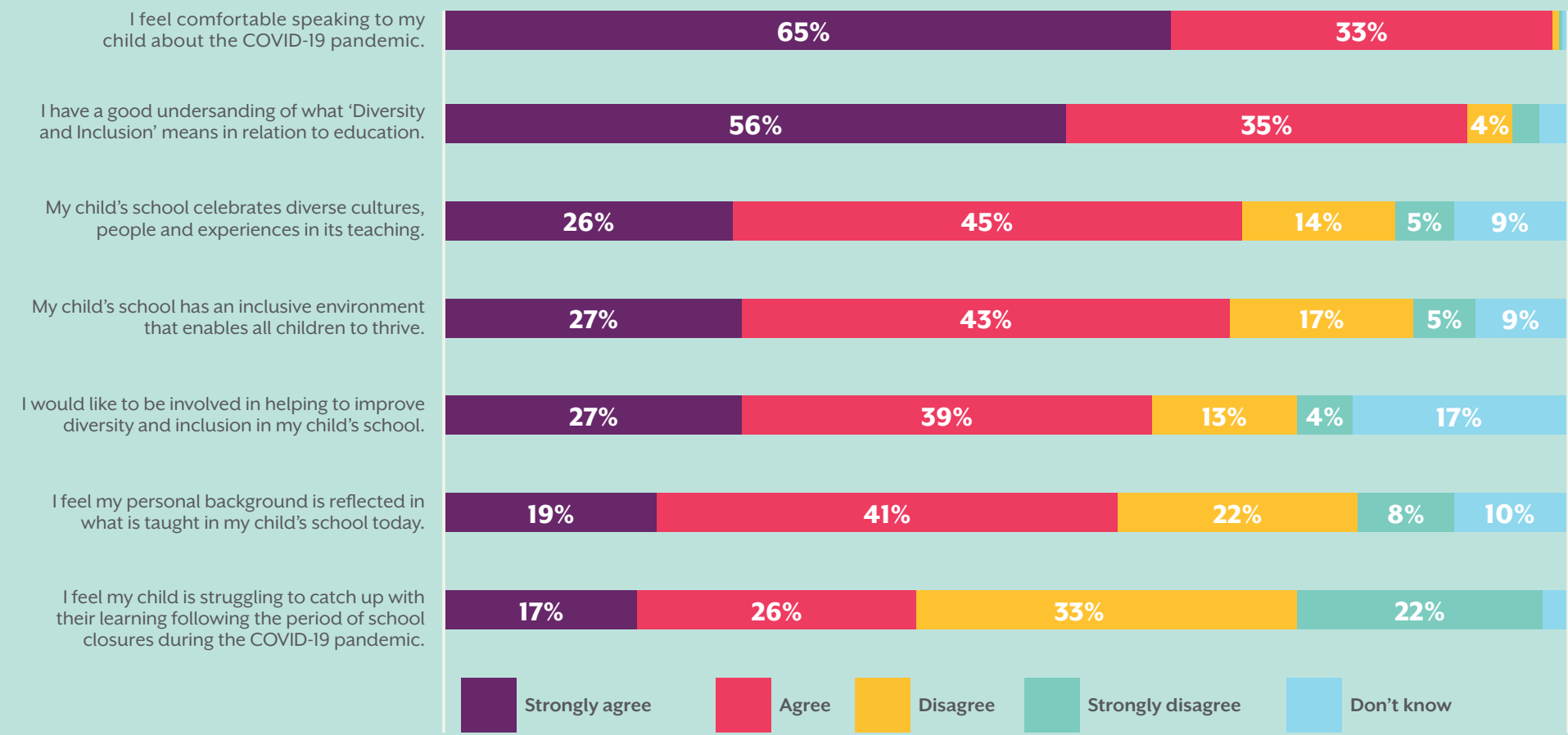
The results of one question from Parentkind's Parent Voice Report which was asked in the Teacher survey is also included in the Appendix.

Please note percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding, don't knows and/or prefer not to says.

Full results

Diversity and inclusion in schools today

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:



N=454

91%

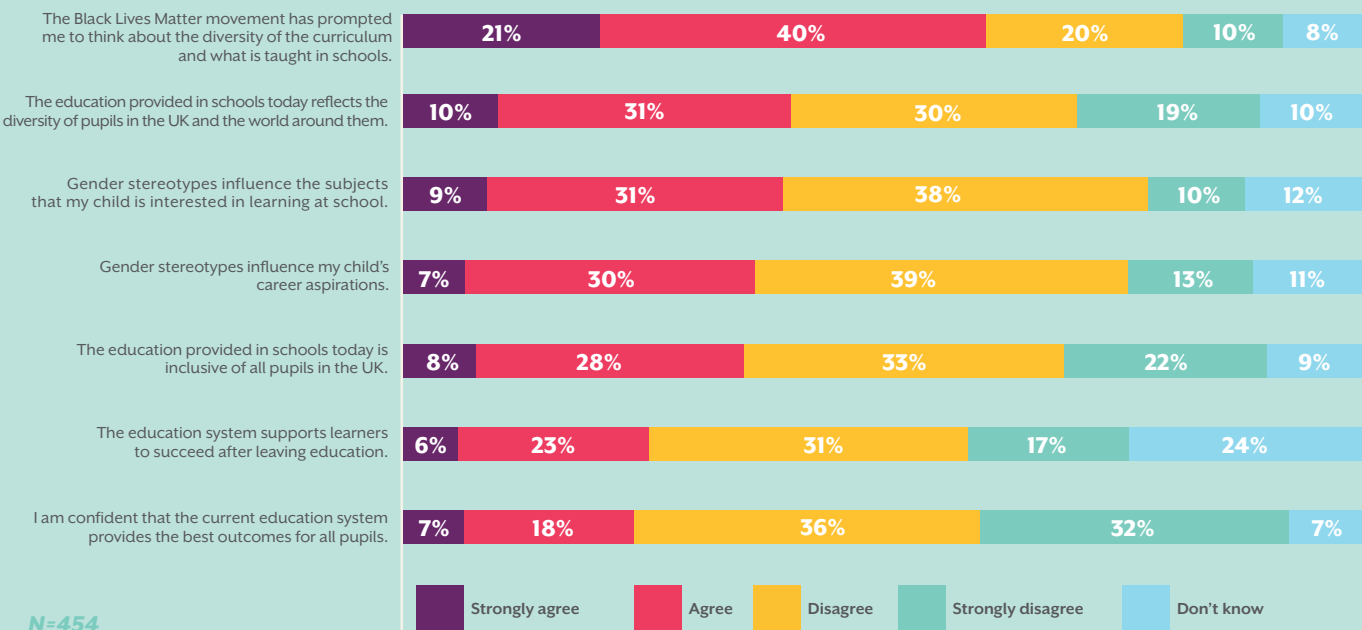
The vast majority of parents feel they have a good understanding of what diversity and inclusion means in relation to education.

The vast majority of parents (91%) feel they have a good understanding of what diversity and inclusion means in relation to education (Figure 3). Furthermore, most parents agree that their child's school celebrates diverse cultures, people and experiences in its teaching (71% of parents compared with 19% disagreeing) and 70% of parents say their child's school has an inclusive environment that enables all children to thrive – although 26% of parents disagree. 60% of parents feel their own personal background is reflected in what is taught in their child's school today whilst 30% don't feel it is. Two thirds of parents said they would like to be involved in helping to improve diversity and inclusion in their child's school.

Feedback was also sought regarding the ongoing pandemic. Almost all parents (98%) feel comfortable speaking to their child about the Covid-19 pandemic. However, 40% of parents say their child is struggling to catch up with their learning following the school closures over the last couple of years.

¹Pearson surveyed 1,003 teaching staff between 10-17th December 2019 and 1,000 teaching staff between 31st July - 17th August 2020 to capture their views on education. Responses were collected via online surveys, with the fieldwork completed by research agency Opinium. Teaching staff include school leaders, middle leaders, classroom teachers and teaching assistants working in UK primary and secondary schools. The full report is available here <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/educator/schools/issues/inclusion/diversity-and-inclusion-in-schools-report.pdf>

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

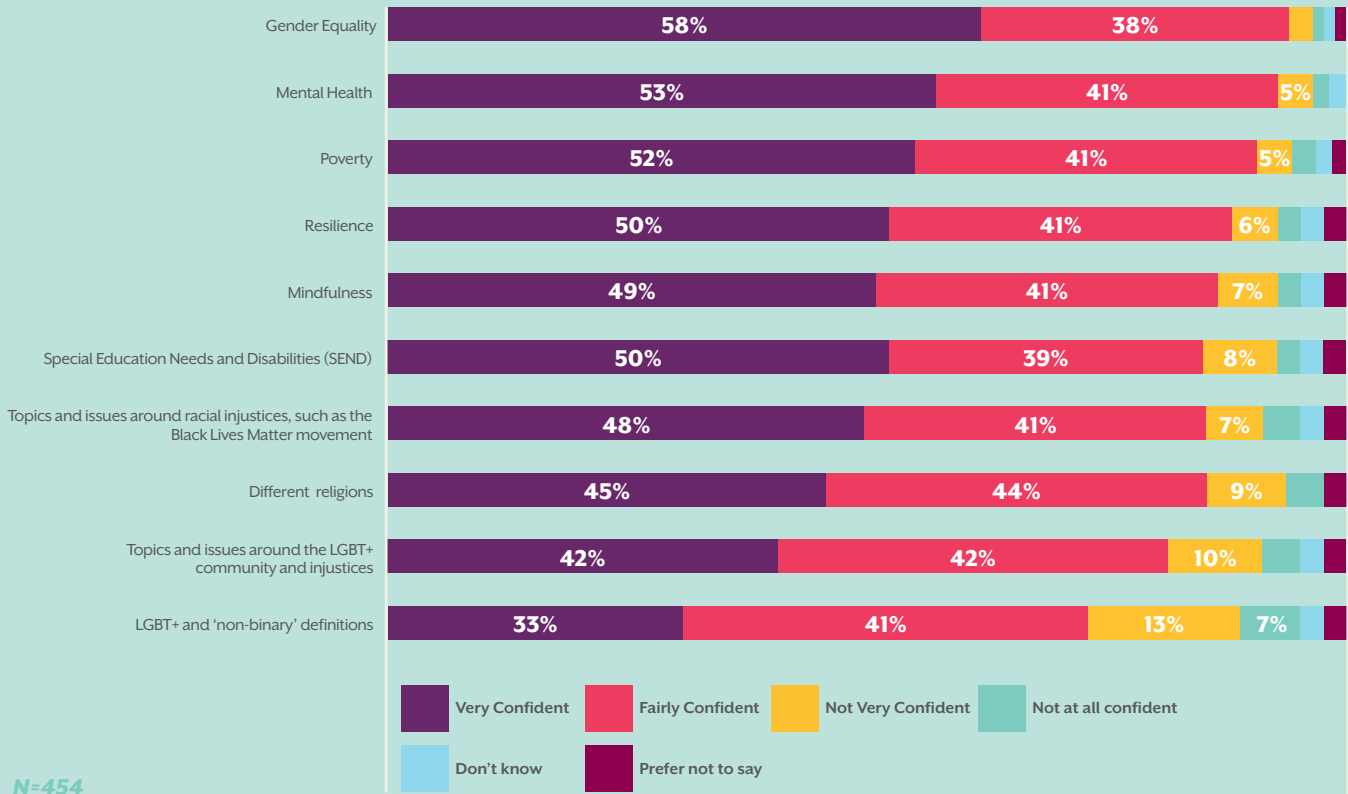


61% of parents say the Black Lives Matter movement has prompted them to think about the diversity of the curriculum and what is taught in schools (Figure 4). However, parent opinion is split on whether the education provided in schools today actually reflects the diversity of pupils in the UK and the world around them with 41% of parents agreeing with the statement and 49% disagreeing. On a similar note, 36% of parents agree that the education provided in schools today is inclusive of all pupils in the UK whilst more than half (55%) disagree. 40% of parents feel gender stereotypes influence the subjects their child is interested in learning at school and 37% of parents say their child's career aspirations are influenced by gender stereotypes.

More than two thirds (68%) of parents are not confident that the current education system provides the best outcomes for all pupils – 25% of parents are confident. Furthermore, 29% of parents agree that the education system supports learners to succeed after leaving education with almost half (48%) disagreeing and a quarter (24%) unsure.

Discussions with children

Figure 5: How confident do you feel speaking to your child about the following?



As Figure 5 shows, the vast majority of parents have some degree of confidence to talk to their child about a range of topics including gender equality (96% very or fairly confident), mental health (94% very or fairly confident), poverty (93% very or fairly confident) and

resilience (91% very or fairly confident). Although still high, levels of confidence are lower when talking about LGBT+ and non-binary definitions and topics and issues around the LGBT+ community and injustices.

“The vast majority of parents have some degree of confidence to talk to their child about a range of topics”

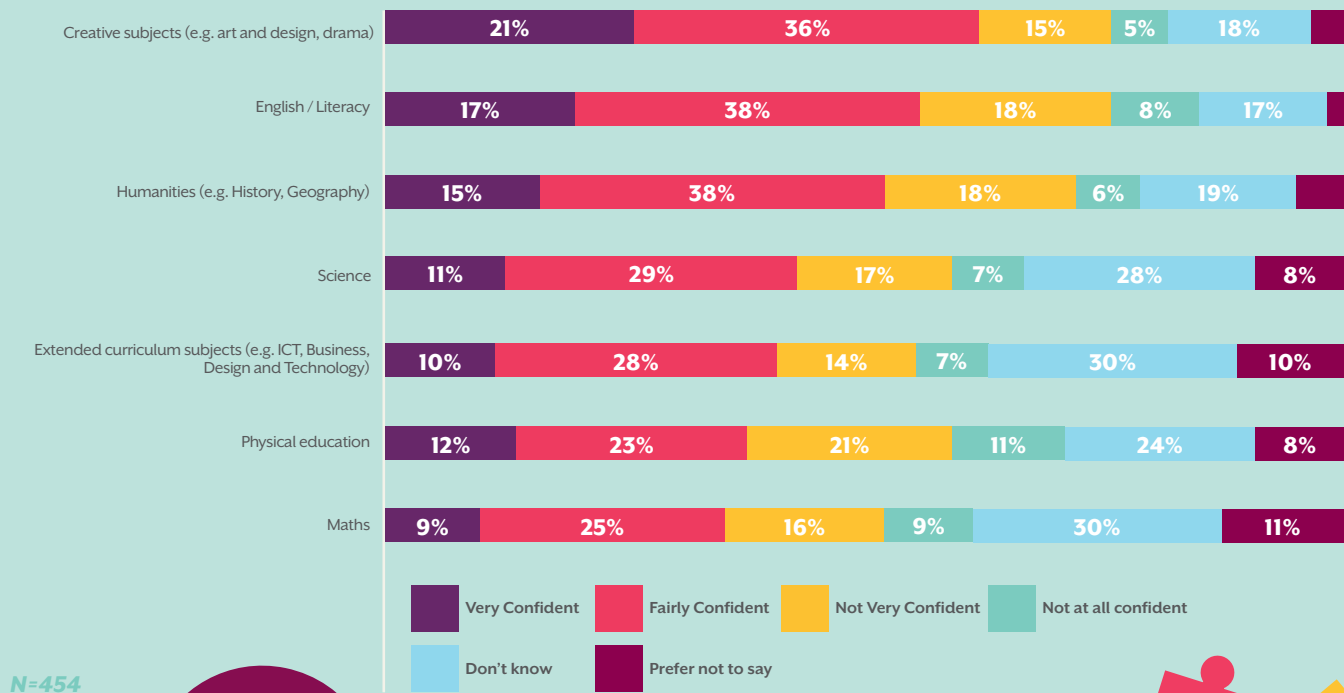


Diversity of the school curriculum

Parents were asked how diverse they feel their child's school curriculum is (Figure 6). Creative subjects such as art, design and drama come out top with 57% of parents saying this content is diverse, followed by 55% of parents saying their child's English or literacy lessons are diverse, and 53% of parents saying the same for humanities lessons. Other subjects such as science, ICT, PE and maths have fewer parents saying they are diverse. However, a significant minority of parents said they did not know how diverse

the content of each of these subjects were – this was especially the case with maths and extended curriculum subjects such as ICT and Business (30% of parents saying they didn't know) and science (28% don't know). As well as the curriculum content becoming more diverse in general, there is also an opportunity for schools to share what their child learns in lessons so that more parents are up to speed with curriculum content.

Figure 6: In your opinion, how diverse is the content that your child is taught in the following subjects?

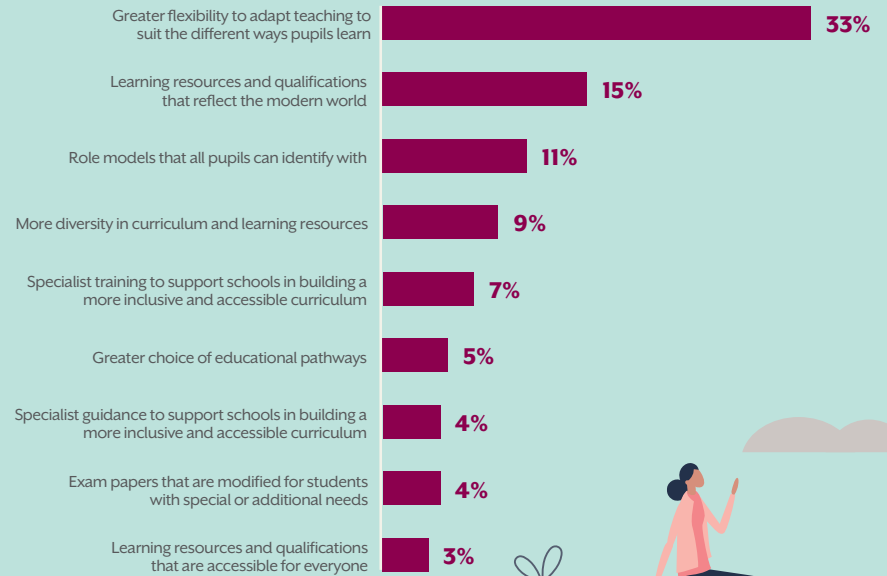


Raising aspirations and outcomes

When asked which one thing, from a list of suggestions, would most help to raise aspirations and outcomes for their child the most popular response by far was greater flexibility to adapt teaching to suit the different ways pupils learn (33% of parents selected this option). The next most popular response was learning resources and qualifications that reflect the modern world (15%) followed by role models that pupils can identify with (11%). More diversity in curriculum and

learning resources was selected by 9% of parents and specialist training to support schools in building a more inclusive and accessible curriculum by 7%. The full list of suggestions is in Figure 7. In addition, a few unprompted suggestions raised the need for more tailoring of learning specifically for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Figure 7: Which one, if any, of the following things in school would help the most to raise aspirations and outcomes for your child? (Select one)



Free text responses from parents

Parents were asked an open question about their thoughts on how inclusive and diverse education is today.



Almost half of all respondents shared their feedback. In summary, there was a mix of praise, often for specific schools, and criticism, often of the curriculum in general (sometimes with specific examples).

"This has improved significantly in recent years. Teachers are working very hard to respond to the need to update the curriculum."

"I think that individual schools - like the ones both of my children attend - can be excellent at being inclusive and celebrating diversity, but that more is needed from government to ensure that all schools provide high quality provision that reflects modern society."

"Wales has recently launched a new curriculum and my 11 year old has a specific session on equality and diversity every other week. This is a welcome addition to help support the next generation to be more inclusive. It is also worth noting that in the primary school my eldest has learnt about Mary Seacole and other minority ethnic roles models during Black History week. Have loved learning alongside her and welcome the shift in Wales to making this a focus throughout the school year."

"I think it varies from school to school but, in the main, the schools I've dealt with (as a parent and teacher) promote conformity not diversity and discourage freedom of expression. They do not provide appropriate education for those who struggle, often finding excuses to exclude those who negatively impact on their league tables. I have been disgusted by the lack of diversity in the curriculum of my own child's school particularly with regards to other religions and ethnic backgrounds."

"It's still quite stereotypical of specific subjects being for specific gender."

"Many schools try but few offer truly consistent levels of inclusion and diversity."

"The 'outstanding' schools are never re-inspected so can get away with setting policies and 'educational directives' that are not inclusive and this actively discourages students from attending their schools and as a result they create pockets of privilege where they don't need to be inclusive."

“

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“

Many schools try but few offer truly consistent levels of inclusion and diversity. ”



A number of parents raised a connection between schools with a greater diversity amongst teachers and students generally being better at including diversity in the curriculum as a whole.

"Our secondary school is amazing. It's all girls and very much respects those who are LGBT etc. The children come from a very diverse range geographically as well as culturally which actually means everyone is a lot more accepting of differences whether disability, culture, religion, sexuality etc."

"I think it is inconsistent between schools and different areas of the country. I'm happy with the inclusion and diversity taught in my son's school in Greater London. However there are a lot of different nationalities and cultures attending the schools whereas this could be different in a countryside school for example."

"Schools where most the teachers are from a white, middle class, C of E background in primary schools are going to find it much harder to include diversity in their teaching. The biggest issue with this is that so many village primary schools are Church of England schools so diversity is going to be lacking as that's what they focus on."

A notable minority of parents specifically raised challenges with SEND, and a number within this specifically mention neurodiversity.

"There are far too many schools that aren't inclusive towards children and young people with SEND. They are seen as a burden, deemed behavioural with lack of support in education but also little to no focused training to support these children in mainstream. There's is very little accountability in education to

support SEND due to the creation of academies, progress 8 scores and the need to protect the brand so it is too easy to move children to alternative provision or exclude them."

A minority of parents raised concerns about the content of diversity and inclusion teaching.

"Education should be focused on equal standards, the teaching of fact free from political or ideological bias, and developing pupils' ability to learn and express themselves."

"It seems that schools are happy to be inclusive and diverse when it comes to colour and sexual preferences but not when it comes to diversity of opinion."

"The UK emphasis on diversity is in danger of increasing separation in schools between pupils and teachers of all colours and creeds. There needs to be more focus on people as one group with all the ties that bind us together."

Finally, parents were asked if there was any support they might find useful to help their child understand and appreciate diversity across people, cultures and their experiences. Almost half the parents made suggestions which included a wider variety of role models, more inclusivity in books/teaching materials and inviting external speakers from different backgrounds (particularly where the teacher and student population is not especially diverse).

“A more diverse curriculum, increasing emphasis on current affairs and debates in the classroom and outside of it; opportunities for voluntary work in the UK and outside which is understandably restricted in pandemic times.”

“More diversity in the curriculum but also lessons specifically focused on serious issues like racism. This would give our children the tools to actively fight against it. Also I believe more should be done to teach about the root causes of racism.”

“To see people from different cultures and backgrounds in all spaces and roles in the world, not just seeing someone from a different religion through the lens of the religion for instance. For a true appreciation and celebration of people from diverse backgrounds to be embedded as part of the very fabric of school life, not just looked at for one day a term or as a special event.”

“Fun web based programme/platform with info/games/quizzes/video clips etc. My children used to love some of the CBeebies tv shows that were brilliant at inclusion and diversity. But there’s nothing for older children (even those as young as 5-8 when they grow out of CBeebies).”

“Something needs to be put into place so that children with diverse needs have their perspectives of themselves and their families all year round. This way the children and the society in which they live, and are educated will see that diversity and different cultures are all around them, not just something they learn about during theme days that happen once a year.”

“Open days at school to allow inclusion of parents in some lessons. I found this helpful in relation to phonics recently so could be done for other subjects.”

“The school are quite good at letting us know curriculum changes in PSHE and RE, a parents evening on how we can support and talk to our children about these ideas linked to what they are taught in school across all of the curriculum would be helpful.”

“More visible role models.”

“Increased access to discussion with people from diverse backgrounds, books about different experiences and including diverse characters.”

“Being taught the history that surrounds all these issues and helping the new generation learn from history.”

“Maybe collate a range of questions our children ask us and possible ways to respond.”

“I would like the school to interact with me on what topics they are doing, so I can also educate myself of the changing world and I can make my child understand better.”

“
Being taught the history that surrounds all these issues and helping the new generation learn from history.”

“
The school are quite good at letting us know curriculum changes in PSHE and RE...”

“
My children used to love some of the CBeebies tv shows that were brilliant at inclusion and diversity.”



Comparisons with teachers' views

Many of the questions asked in Parentkind's parent survey mirrored those asked to teachers in Pearson's Diversity and Inclusion in Schools report². Here, we summarise the similarities and differences in responses³.

Where parents and teachers are in agreement:

- Six in 10 parents and teachers feel their personal background is reflected in what is taught in schools today
- More than six in 10 parents and teachers agree that the Black Lives Matter movement has prompted them to think about the diversity of the curriculum and what is taught in schools
- Very high proportions of parents and teachers feel comfortable talking to children about the Covid-19 pandemic
- 49% of teachers and 40% of parents agree that gender stereotypes influence the subjects that children are interested in learning at school
- Only a third of both parents and teachers believe that non-binary identities are represented in resources, topics and materials taught in their child's school today, rising to 39% of parents and 40% of teachers in the case of LGBT+ identities

54% of teachers believe that gender stereotypes influence children's career aspirations

Whilst two thirds (66%) of teachers agree that the education provided in schools today is inclusive of all pupils in the UK, only 36% of parents say the same

Parents and teachers feel comfortable talking to children about the Covid-19 pandemic

Six in 10 parents and teachers feel their personal background is reflected in what is taught in schools today

Where there are differences in opinion between parents and teachers:

- Whilst two thirds (66%) of teachers agree that the education provided in schools today is inclusive of all pupils in the UK, only 36% of parents say the same
- Similarly, whilst 61% of teachers agree that the education system supports learners to succeed after leaving education only 29% of parents share this view
- A much higher percentage of teachers (57%) than parents (25%) are confident that the current education system provides the best outcomes for all pupils
- Far more teachers (70%) than parents (40%) feel that children will struggle to catch up with their learning following the period of school closures
- More teachers (61%) than parents (41%) agree that the education provided in schools today reflects the diversity of pupils in the UK and the world around them
- 54% of teachers believe that gender stereotypes influence children's career aspirations compared with 37% of parents
- Teachers are more likely to say that the subject content taught in schools is more diverse than parents are – although a greater proportion of parents than teachers indicated they were not sure
- A greater percentage of parents than teachers are confident talking to their children about topics and issues around the LGBT+ community and injustices (18% difference), racial injustices (14% difference), poverty (12% difference), gender equality (11% difference), mental health (11% difference) and LGBT+ and non-binary definitions (10% difference)
- A greater percentage of teachers believe that different groups such as Black and Minority Ethnicities, girls/women, boys/men, White ethnicities, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), advantaged pupils and disadvantaged pupils are represented in resources, topics and materials taught in school today than parents do
- Whilst the most popular response amongst both groups, a higher proportion of parents (33%) than teachers (18%) believe that having greater flexibility to adapt teaching to suit the different ways pupils learn would most help to raise aspirations and outcomes for children



Diversity and inclusion in schools

Pearson



² Pearson surveyed 1,003 teaching staff between 10-17th December 2019 and 1,000 teaching staff between 31st July - 17th August 2020 to capture their views on education. Responses were collected via online surveys, with the fieldwork completed by research agency Opinium. Teaching staff include school leaders, middle leaders, classroom teachers and teaching assistants working in UK primary and secondary schools. The full report is available here: <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/uk/documents/educator/schools/issues/inclusion/diversity-and-inclusion-in-schools-report.pdf>.

³ Four questions 'I have a good understanding of what 'diversity and inclusion' means in relation to education', 'My child's school has an inclusive environment that enables all children to thrive', 'My child's school celebrates diverse cultures, people and experiences in its teaching' and 'I would like to be involved in helping to improve diversity and inclusion in my child's school' were not asked in the teacher surveys so there is no comparable data.

Conclusions

The findings above report a mixed picture when it comes to parents' views on diversity and inclusion in education today. Whilst high numbers of parents say their child's school takes steps to celebrate diverse cultures, people and experiences in its teaching, fewer than half of parents agree that the education provided in schools today truly reflects the diversity of pupils in the UK and the world around them and only a quarter are confident that the current education system provides the best outcomes for all pupils.

There are also some significant areas of difference between views of parents and those of teachers regarding diversity in the curriculum. Around two thirds of teachers believe that the curriculum is inclusive of all pupils and reflects the diversity of pupils in the UK. However, less than half of parents share these views.

A significant part of this difference is down to parents admitting they don't know to what extent this is true in today's curriculum, but we also heard from parents highlighting areas where diversity was lacking, as well as those who felt the curriculum was focusing too much on minority groups.

These cases illustrate how important it is that schools communicate and engage with parents around how diversity and inclusion is handled in the curriculum, both in terms of securing parents' support for what the school is doing and supporting their children to engage with the content, plus as a means of receiving feedback, suggestions and potentially help on what more could be done.

Two thirds of parents indicated that they would like to be involved in helping their child's school with diversity and inclusion; currently an untapped resource of support for many schools.

When it comes to ways to improve, a third of parents support the idea of introducing greater flexibility in approaches to teaching to reflect individual pupils' ways of learning. The next most common ideas were increasing the variety of different role models in the curriculum and having learning resources and qualifications that reflect the diversity of modern schools.

The research also identifies areas for policymakers to reflect on. As we begin to move past the disruption caused to education by the COVID-19 pandemic, resolving parents' concerns that the

current education system does not deliver the best outcomes across all pupils, or provide sufficient support for pupils to succeed after education, is likely to be a critical factor in maintaining parents' confidence in schools and education.

While there are positive signs in recent UK government policy in these areas, once again, ensuring that parents' voice is heard during the development and implementation of these ideas will be a crucial step in ensuring that they lead to positive outcomes for children's education.



Appendix - Excerpt from Parentkind’s Parent Voice Report 2021⁴

Representation within school resources and topics

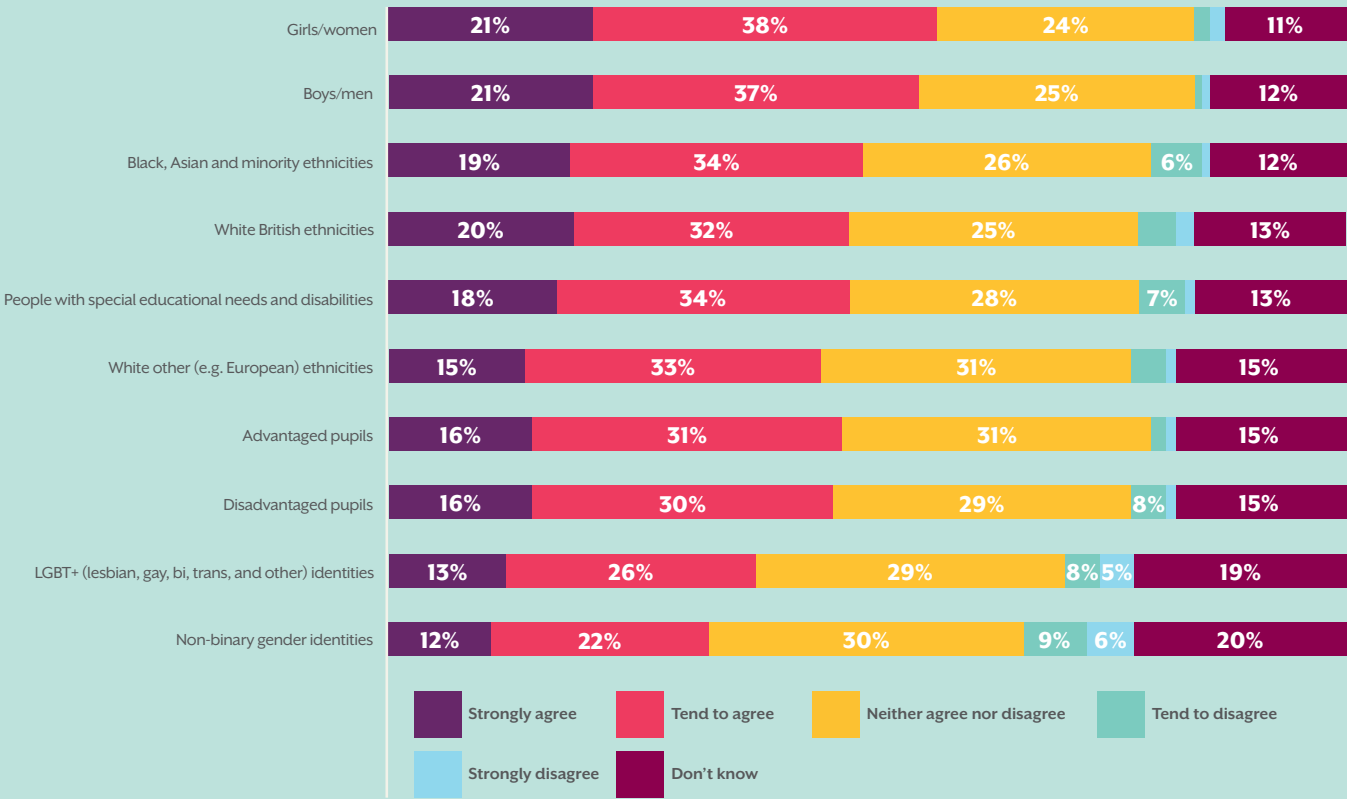
To better understand parent awareness and perceptions of how different groups – across sex, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation and gender identities – are represented today in schools, we drew inspiration from the 2020 Pearson report Diversity and inclusion in schools⁵, which posed similar questions

to teachers. We refined a list of ten categories, acknowledging these to be broad brushstroke, and asked how far parents agreed each was represented in resources, topics and materials taught in their child’s school today.

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

Overall, we see that the most recognised groups were girls/women (59% overall agreement) and boys/men (57% overall agreement), while over half of parents also agree that Black and Minority ethnicities (53%) and White British ethnicities (52%) are represented, alongside people with SEND (52%). Scores drop below half thereafter, with White other ethnicities at 48%, advantaged pupils at 47% and disadvantaged pupils at 46%. Less recognised for representation within educational resources and topics were LGBT+ and non-binary identities, with higher uncertainty expressed (around half of all respondents) and more than one in ten disagreeing that they are represented.

Figure 7: Representation in school resources and topics
Widest agreement that resources represent different sexes, ethnicities and SEND - most uncertainty around representation of LGBT+ and non-binary identities



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school.
Base: All respondents.



⁴ Sample was 3751 parents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who have a child aged 4-18 in state school. The full report is available here: <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/uploads/files/1/Parent%20Voice%20Report%202021%20-%20In%20Full.pdf>

⁵ See: <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/educator/schools/issues/inclusion/diversity-and-inclusion-in-schools-report.pdf>

About Pearson

At Pearson, we believe everyone should have the same opportunity to achieve their full potential and to be successful in education, and in later life - whatever their background, ability or identity. Which is why we're working hard to ensure that education is inclusive.

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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.

