Department for Education

Investigating the school improvement needs and practices of London primary and secondary schools

Final report

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1   Executive Summary

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1.1   Context

This report summarises the results of a research study commissioned by the Greater London Authority, working with the Department for Education, as part of the Mayor's Education Inquiry.

The Mayor's Education Inquiry has explored the critical challenges facing London's primary and secondary schools, with the aim of making recommendations for practical action with key partners including the boroughs, schools and policy-makers. One of the key themes of the Inquiry is educational standards and the quality of learning provision.

National policy on school improvement has changed significantly since the change of government in 2010. The Schools White Paper (The Importance of Teaching, p.73) stated that schools have responsibility for improvement and announced the end of an approach of trying to control improvement from the centre. This has marked the end of programmes such as City Challenge and School Improvement Partners.

There are many ways now for schools to improve, including making use of school-to-school networks such as the National College for School Leadership's National Leaders of Education (NLEs), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and Teaching Schools or Teaching School Alliances (TSAs)[1]. These initiatives are one part of the range of options that schools may be using or considering. This research investigates the full range of school improvement practices and the gaps or challenges in accessing these specific to London schools.

1.2   Where challenge lies in school improvement

London primary and secondary schools are highly engaged in their school improvement and confident in their identification of school improvement priorities.

However, resourcing improvement is a particular challenge, and schools are not widely confident about evaluating value for money in school improvement measures taken. Schools are also hungry for more information on effective school improvement strategies, and to find out what has worked for other schools, reflecting a wider trend of increasing emphasis on peer-to-peer support in general.

The opportunity to spread knowledge and confidence via system leadership and Teaching School Alliances is reflected in higher proportions of NLEs and outstanding schools finding aspects of school improvement easy or very easy.

1.3   Challenge and support used by schools

When seeking to *identify* school improvement priorities, other schools are the first port of call for schools (76%), after internal processes (99%) and governors (92%). The

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[1] See glossary of terms

local authority is less-used at this initial stage of the school improvement process (68%), but still more used than commercial services (42%).

At the stage of *implementing* school improvement, the local authority is currently the most important provider of support (used by 86%), followed by commercial services (72%) and other schools (70%).

Where external challenge to improve has been received, schools are generally positive about the impact this has had, even more so where this challenge has come from peers (95% positive) compared to the local authority (84% positive).

While 17% expect to use the local authority less in future (to implement school improvement support), 12% expect to use them more, and so the school improvement market is likely to evolve fairly gradually. Over time it is set to expand quite significantly, with schools widely expecting to use a range of providers 'more' in future, and already 98% of schools use at least one external party (aside from governors) to help set their school improvement priorities.

At various stages in the survey, phase, school status and Ofsted grades reflect differences in practices and needs. But where schools work with other schools on delivering school improvement, they are more interested in specific areas of expertise and experience, rather than exclusively seeking to work with schools that have a higher Ofsted grading. Some primaries in particular prefer to work exclusively within their phase, but generally there is an open approach to working with schools irrespective of phase and status, and across boroughs.

It is a common thread throughout the findings of this survey, that schools in a position to deliver school improvement support to others (via system leadership roles or teaching school alliances), also consider their own school improvement opportunities to be greater, perhaps as a result of the networks it gives them access to. For example, among respondents who were NLEs or LLEs, 67% stated that they used (other) NLEs/LLEs to identify school improvement priorities, compared to 21% of non NLEs/LLEs. While mutual benefits are clearly a positive, a worst-case scenario is that improvement is therefore focused on the best and the worst schools, leaving those in the middle (e.g. grade 2 Ofsted schools not using NLEs) less engaged in school improvement channels.

1.4 Current school improvement priorities and areas of focus

The top 3 school improvement priorities stated by London primary and secondary schools are as follows:

- Raising standards and participation in core subjects (85%)
- Raising teaching performance (84%)
- The underperformance of specific pupil groups or underperformance generally (80%).

Figures in brackets above denote percentages agreeing that this area was highly relevant to their current school improvement priorities.

Among schools focusing on core subjects, there is a higher focus on subjects where key stage performance is lower. However, on the whole, more schools focus on literacy/English (including basic reading and writing) than on numeracy.

Among schools who are focused on pupil underperformance in their school improvement, most look at general underperformance, followed by targeting pupils with SEN, and children judged to be vulnerable (with smaller percentages focusing on specific ethnic groups).

In curriculum design, a key focus is on developing a creative curriculum and cross-curricular links. For the primary sector in particular, curriculum enrichment/learning outside the classroom is a key priority.

One in five secondary schools mention issues relating to school buildings when asked to state any another school improvement priorities (not listed by questions in the survey), suggesting that the physical environment is a particular priority within school improvement planning this year.

1.5 Future needs, governor challenge, and pan-London support

Just under half of schools report having unmet needs or further information requirements in at least one of their school improvement priority areas. The most common requests related to curriculum design (e.g. more information on the new National Curriculum) and pupil underperformance (e.g. more information on requirements relating to Special Educational Needs). Both the National Curriculum and SEN are areas which are subject to current reviews of national policy, and so responses reflect schools' keenness to remain up-to-date with national policy.[2]

Demand for peer-to-peer collaboration for school improvement (both formal and informal) is likely to grow substantially. Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) in particular are expected to be a more significant provider of school improvement support going forwards: Approximately half of schools already using TSAs anticipate wanting to use them more in future. Furthermore, half of non-users anticipate wanting to start using these in future. Projecting these figures onto the London school population[3] as a whole, the survey indicates that 395 London schools are already using TSAs at least to some extent and of these 192 seek to use them more. Among the 1,806 schools not currently using TSAs as many as 834 anticipate wanting to use TSAs for school improvement in future.

Support to increase skills-levels in governing bodies is considered likely to boost to school improvement. More than nine in ten schools use their governors to help set priorities (92%) but only 52% rate 'input from the governing body or chair' as important when deciding on school improvement options i.e. how to implement improvements in the areas prioritised. On average, governors are rated 7.4 out of 10 by schools in terms of providing challenge and expertise to support school improvement.

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[2] For more information on these national policy reviews, see:
http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum/

http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/sen/b0075291/green-paper

[3] The total sample frame comprises 2,201 schools in the target London school population of primary and secondary schools of maintained or academy status.

After 'support to increase skills levels', next most valued would be an increase in the time that governors have available for school business. This aspect is particularly valued by school leaders in the primary sector.

Analysis by sub-groups here suggests that academies rate governor challenge and expertise more highly than other schools (8.1 out of 10) as do schools with lower levels of free school meal eligibility (7.8 out of 10), noting a correlation between these two subgroups.

Pan-London support as a whole appears to be largely sought-after and welcomed. There are small suggestions that Inner-London schools may be slightly more engaged in a potential London curriculum enrichment offer and that secondaries might be more likely to use online sign-posting and case study provision, but generally there is little variation across school types compared to other measures in the survey.

Among secondaries, assistance engaging with universities and employers would be particularly valued (92%), and to a greater extent than London-focused teaching materials, although a large majority would also value these (83%).

All schools were asked to rate the usefulness of having a shared vision and ambition for schools in London, using a response scale from not at all to very useful. A large majority were positive about this vision, with 8 in 10 (79%) stating very useful or fairly useful, and only 5% stating 'not at all useful'.

2 Aims; Methodology and Sample; Notes on using the Report

2.1 Aims

The overarching aim of the study was to assess the need for pan-London facilitation of school improvement services; and how and where value could be added through the sharing of ideas, the building of networks, or other non-prescriptive approaches.

Within this, the study aimed to

- Identify the key sources of school improvement support and motivation for London schools, quantifying the importance of the main sourced identified.

- Reveal any variations in school improvement needs or practices between different groups of schools in London.

- Assess the extent to which the pattern of school improvement needs and practices varies between local authorities or clusters of local authorities in London, and to uncover any distinctive patterns of local provision that it is possible to identify using a sample survey methodology.

- Probe the priority, importance, or level of engagement with a range of school improvement practiced, and to reach a deeper understanding of how London schools are responding to increased autonomy

2.2 Methodology and sample

BMG Research worked closely with the client Steering Group on questionnaire design.

Fieldwork began following the London Mayoral Election and ran from 10th May to 22nd June 2012.

The school population interviewed included primary and secondary schools of maintained and academy status but excluded special schools, sixth-form only colleges and pupil referral units.

Structured telephone interviews were undertaken by CATI[4], averaging 32 minutes in duration, undertaken by BMG's in-house team of education-specialist interviewers. Refusals were low (approximately 10% on average) but availability during the survey period was limited by events including National Curriculum Tests; Diamond Jubilee celebrations; school visits/headship days; and general workload during a busy term.

A letter was emailed to schools before fieldwork began, informing them of the survey and its significance, which was re-sent as required during the fieldwork period. A reminder was administered to non-respondents following the spring half-term. Respondents were interviewed out of school hours and during half term where this was more convenient to them.

From a total of 2,201 eligible schools a final sample of 530 was achieved over the five weeks of fieldwork (24%). This is profiled as follows:

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[4] Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing.

- **Phase**: 469 primaries and 61 secondaries.
- **Status**: 492 maintained schools and 38 academies.
- **Location**: 344 in Outer London and 186 in Inner London.
- **Role**: 366 heads and 164 deputies.

The sample achieved was monitored by a range of variables throughout fieldwork and was found to be highly representative against school population figures in terms of Ofsted grades, eligibility for free school meals (FSM), location (Inner/Outer London), number of pupils on roll, and faith character.

Weights were applied to the data by phase and status to correct for lower response rates in the secondary maintained and secondary academy sectors (15% and 13% respectively) relative to the primary maintained and primary academy sectors (26% and 25%).

Unweighted and weighted sample profiles compare as follows:

- **Unweighted sample**: 86% primary maintained; 2% primary academy; 7% secondary maintained; 5% secondary academy.
- **Weighted sample**: 78% primary maintained; 2% primary academy; 11% secondary maintained; 9% secondary academy (as shown in Figure 1 below).

The impact of weights applied was assessed and found not to reduce the wider representativeness of the sample by other variables, including FSM, location, and school size and faith character.

Figure 1: School type (overview)
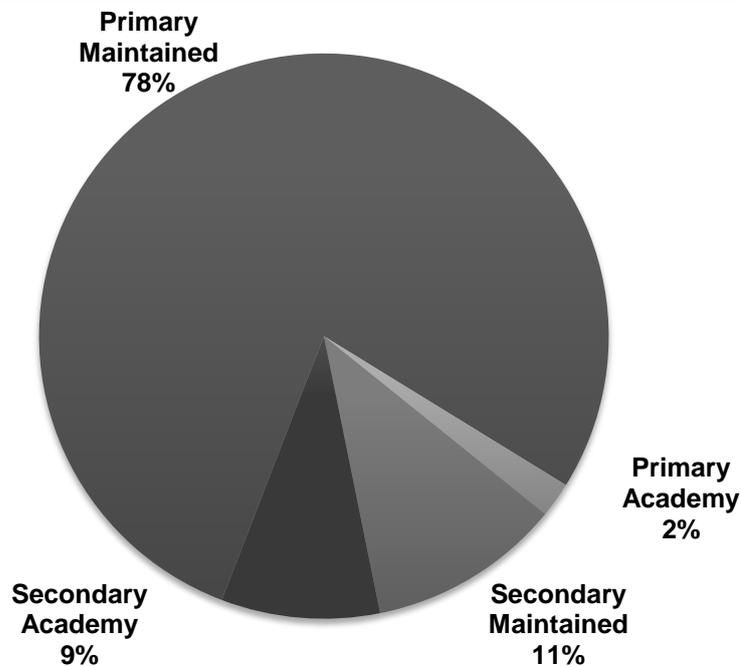
Base: All respondents (530)

2.3 Notes on using this report

Throughout this report, charts and tables reflect the findings from the weighted data.

Where sub-sample base sizes are quoted these are unweighted figures to provide the actual number of schools interviewed.

This report focuses on differences between groups of schools that are significant at the 95% level of confidence. Sub-sample differences identified in this report can therefore be assumed to be significant at this level, unless stated otherwise. The minimum unweighted sub-sample size analysed is 30 schools and any sub-samples under this level may not be identified as significant on this basis.

Please note that where differences between subgroups are described, the aim is to identify associations, or correlations, between subsets of data. The analysis does not establish causality or directionality i.e. the impact of one sub-group on another.

For those seeking further information, a set of data tables accompanying this report provides cross-tabulation by the following variables:

- Respondent role
- School status
- School academy type (NB low bases)
- School phase
- School type
- School size
- School religious character
- School location
- School Ofsted rating
- School % FSM
- Teaching School Alliance involvement
- Respondent NLE/LLE status
- Respondent age
- Respondent's time in role
- Respondent gender
- Respondent's view on difficulty of finding out about school improvement options.

Separate data tables are also available which include Key Stage 2 and GCSE outcome data, and further disaggregation (including school size within phase for example).

Please note that table bases (i.e. the base for all statistics in the table) are labelled at the top left. This may be all respondents, or a sub-set of relevant respondents who were asked this question.

Data tables are annotated to assist interpretation. An asterisk next to the letter above a column of data indicates that the base for that sub-group is too small for statistical analysis. Where a statistic in the body of a data table is annotated with a letter of the alphabet, this identifies a significant difference between sub-groups: The letter corresponds to the label at the top of the column of data (i.e. the other subgroup within

that tabulation) which is significantly different from that subgroup, at the 95% confidence level.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require assistance interpreting the tabulations or require additional cuts of the data.

Where differences between quoted figures of less than or equal to +-1% arise in this report, this is due to rounding. For example, if the percentage who agree slightly is 60.4% and those who agree strongly is 20.3%; these would be quoted individually as 60% and 20%, but the aggregated figure of all those who agree would be quoted as 81%.

A glossary of terms is provided at the end of this report.

2.3.1 A note on academies in the sample

Given the very different routes by which schools become academies and free schools it may be useful to consider the various types of academies included in our sample. A DfE report on attainment at Key Stage 4[5] in academies states that '*Sponsored academies generally replace under-performing schools with a history of low attainment, often in more socially-deprived localities and with generally lower than average prior attainment on entry (p2)'.* Converter academies consulted in the same study had generally converted from predecessor schools that were '*already high-performing'* at Key Stage 4 (p6). Free schools are described as new provisions set-up in response to local demand[6]. This group therefore includes schools that may be operating in different circumstances, with different challenges and potentially in need of different types of support.

Ideally, analysis of such schools would make this distinction but the small numbers in our sample (6 sponsored academies, 29 converter academies and 3 free schools) mean that such a split is not generally possible. Given the importance of autonomy in school improvement policy at national level we have decided to include analysis for academies at aggregate level but the relative numbers involved mean that this will generally reflect the position for converter academies.

2.4 Sample profile

The final sample of respondents has been profiled below (firstly by school types and secondly by respondent types) to provide context to the findings and to confirm the representativeness of the data.

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[5] *Attainment at Key Stage 4 by pupils in Academies 2011.* Reference: DFE-RR223. Author: Infrastructure Funding and Longitudinal Analysis Division & Data and Statistics Division, DfE.

[6] http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools

Figure 2: School type (detail) confirmed by respondent using Edubase categories
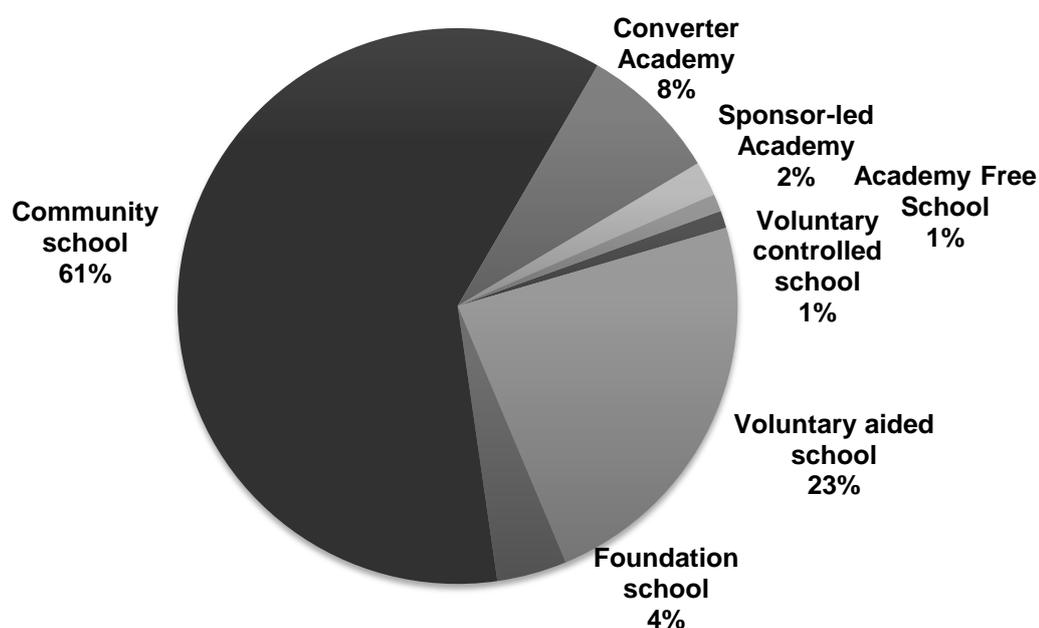
Base: All respondents (530)

Across the total sample of respondents, this aggregates to 11% academies (2% primary; 9% secondary); and 89% maintained schools (78% primary; 11% secondary).

Among primary phase respondents, 3% were academies (97% maintained), compared to 45% of secondaries (55% maintained).

Among academy status respondents, 75% were converters, 19% were sponsored and 6% free schools.

2.4.1 School size

The mean (average) school size in the sample of respondents was 519 pupils, varying between 370 in the primary sector and 1,142 in the secondary sector. A more detailed breakdown is provided as Figures 3 and 4 below.

Among primary respondents, maintained schools tended to be smaller on average than academies (with means of 366 and 525 pupils respectively).

Among secondary respondents, the opposite trend is seen, with maintained schools averaging 1.152 pupils on roll compared to a slightly lower 1,129 among secondary academy respondents.

Converters were slightly smaller than sponsored academies (994 and 1084), although please note very small bases here, of 29 and 6 respondents respectively.

Figure 3: Pupils on roll

Up to 250	25%
251-500	46%
501-1000	17%
1001 - 1500	8%
1501 - 2000	3%
2001 +	<0.5%
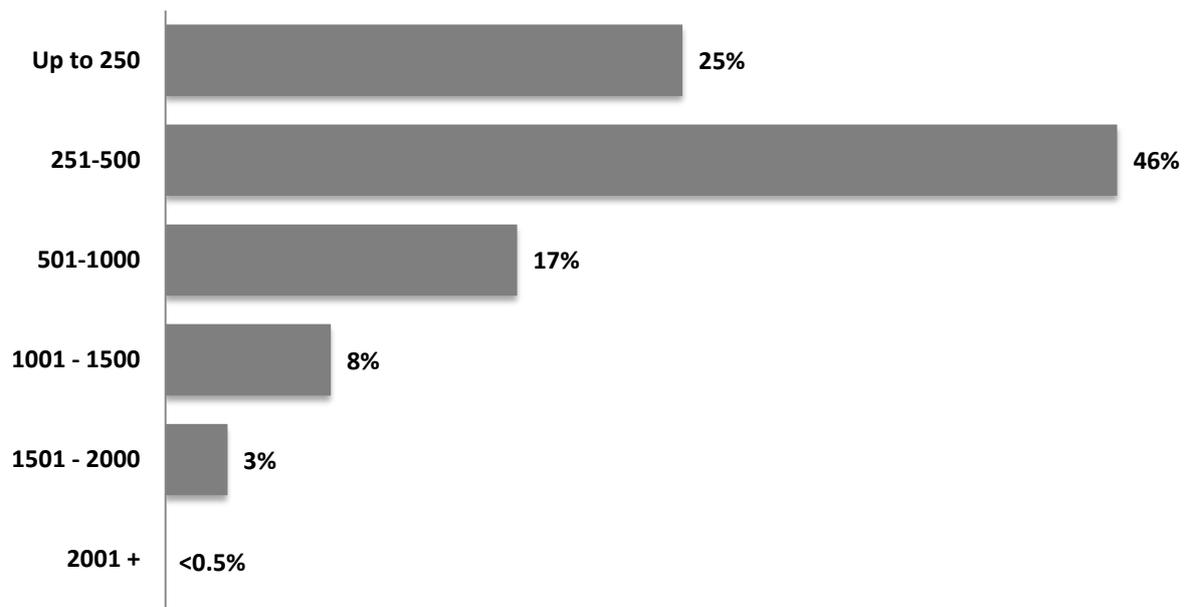
Base: All respondents (530). <0.5% denotes less than half a percent

Figure 4: Pupils on roll: Phase comparison

	Primary	Secondary
Up to 250	30%	4%
251-500	57%	3%
501-1000	12%	34%
1001 - 1500	<0.5%	42%
1501 - 2000		13%
2001 +		2%
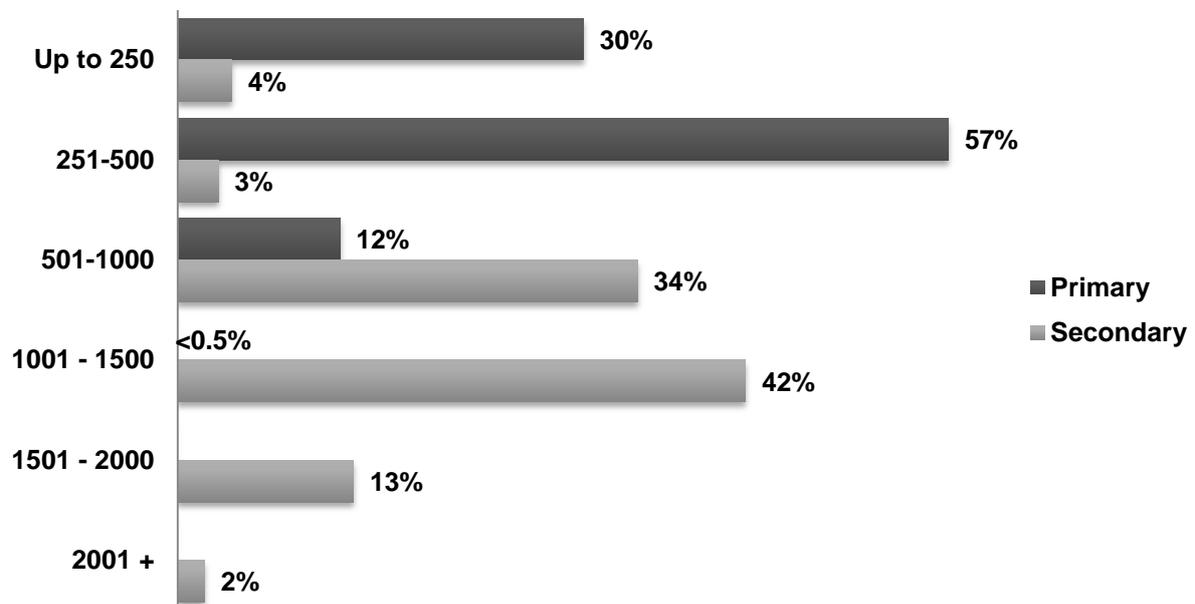
Base: Primaries (469); Secondaries (61)

Faith school respondents were smaller than non-faith schools (potentially reflecting the greater predominance of non-faith schools in the secondary sector). Similarly, Inner London schools in our sample of respondents were slightly smaller than those in Outer London.

2.4.2   Ofsted grade

A quarter of the sample of respondents were outstanding schools, just under half of schools were grade 2/good (47%), and a quarter grade 3/satisfactory (25%).[7] A small proportion of just 1% of schools were grade 4/inadequate.

Please note that, due to their low number, grade 4 schools in the sample have been combined with grade 3 schools for the purposes of tabular analysis.

Figure 5: Ofsted grade

Grade	Percentage
Grade 1 (Outstanding)	25%
Grade 2 (Good)	47%
Grade 3 (Satisfactory)	25%
Grade 4 (Inadequate)	1%
Unknown	2%
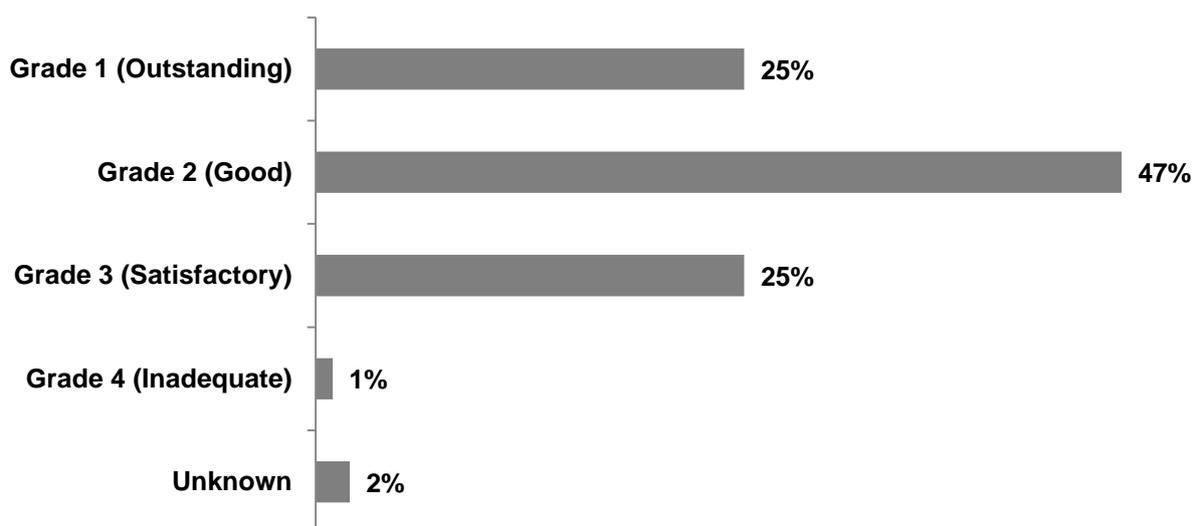
Base: All respondents (530)

Grade 1 schools were more prevalent in the secondary sample of respondents than the primary sample of respondents (accounting for 35% and 23% respectively). This is a true reflection of the London school population (sample frame) from which our sample was achieved: In the London school population, 36% of secondaries and 23% of primaries are grade 1 schools.

2.4.3   Faith character

Three-quarters of the sample of respondents were non-faith schools, while similar proportions were Roman Catholic (12%) or Church of England (11%), and 2% reflected a range of other faith characters.

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[7] For further information on the Ofsted framework see http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection-january-2012

Figure 6: Faith character
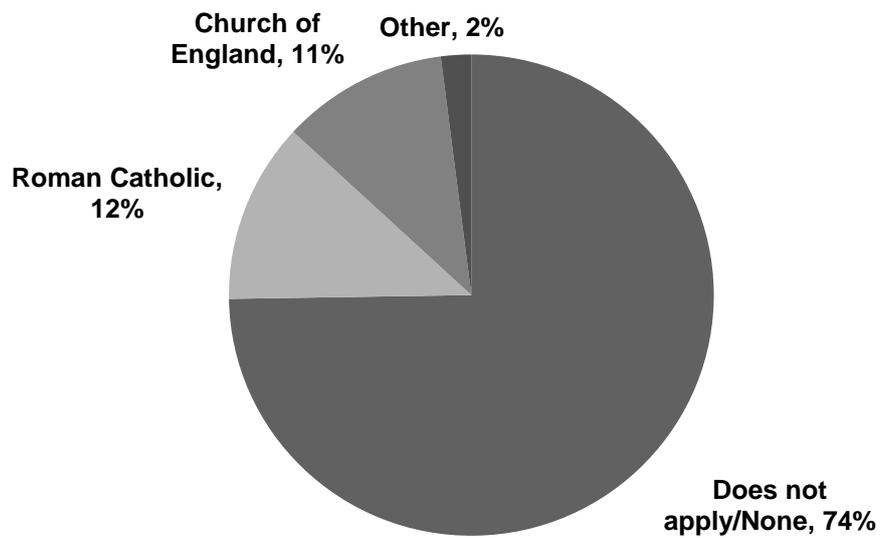
Base: All respondents (530).

2.4.4   Location

Just over a third of the sample of respondents were Inner London schools (35%), and 65% were Outer London schools.

Figure 7: Location
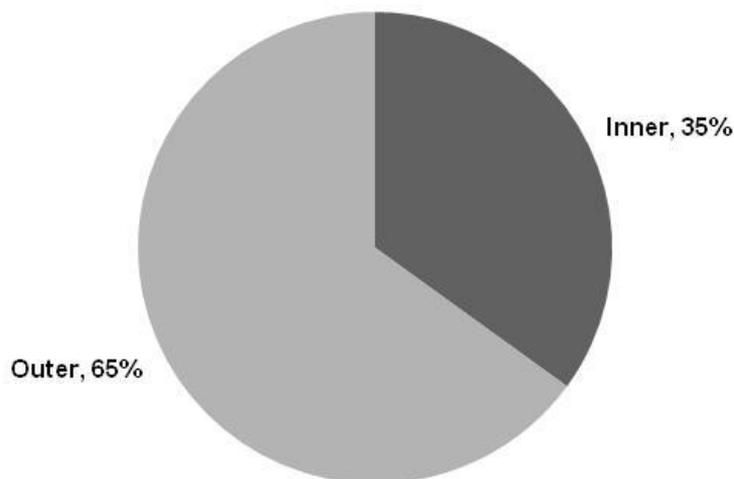
Base: All respondents (530).

All boroughs are represented in the sample of respondents, most accounting for 2%, 3% or 4% of the total. No more than 5% of the sample is represented by any one borough (e.g. 5% of schools are found in each of Barnet, Bromley and Hillingdon).

Academies in the sample of respondents were more likely than average to be located in Outer London: 82% being located here, compared with 63% of maintained school respondents being located there. Faith school respondents showed a greater than average tendency to be in Inner London (42% compared to 32% of non-faith schools).

Higher FSM levels are associated with Inner London schools in our sample of respondents: 60% of respondents with 35% or more pupils eligible for free school meals were in Inner London, while only 12% of respondents with fewer than 20% of pupils eligible for FSM were in Inner London.

2.4.5   Free school meal eligibility (FSM)

Overall, 41% of schools in our sample of respondents contained 20% or fewer pupils eligible for free school meals, while the remainder were divided equally between those with between 20%-35% FSM pupils (30%) and those with even higher levels of FSM (29%). Again, this is a very close reflection of the London school population from which our respondents were drawn. An analysis of this shows FSM to be distributed across these three brackets as 38%, 31%, and 31% respectively.

Figure 8: FSM eligibility (% of pupils with Free School Meal Eligibility)

Base: All respondents (530)

Academies in the sample tended to have fewer pupils eligible for FSM: As many as 60% of respondents were in the lowest FSM bracket (up to 20% eligible), compared to 38% of maintained schools. This is shown in Figure 9 below.

This pattern reflects the same pattern found within the London school population (sample frame) from which these schools were drawn, although the pattern was less marked in the London school population. Schools with up to 20% of pupils eligible for FSM accounted for 50% of academies and 37% of maintained schools in the London school population. Schools with 20.1% to 35% of pupils eligible for FSM accounted for 26% of academies and 32% of maintained schools in the London school population. Schools with more than 35% of pupils eligible for FSM accounted for 24% of academies and 31% of maintained schools in the London school population.

In both cases (the achieved sample and the London school population) the pattern towards higher FSM levels reflects the predominance of converter academies. The London school population at the time of interviewing comprised 244 academies of

which 170 were converters (70%), 65 were sponsor-led (27%) and 9 were free schools (4%). The achieved survey sample of 38 academies comprised a slightly higher proportion of converters (29, or 76%), compared to sponsor-led schools (16%), while 3 (8%) were free schools.

Figure 9: FSM eligibility by school status (academy/ maintained)
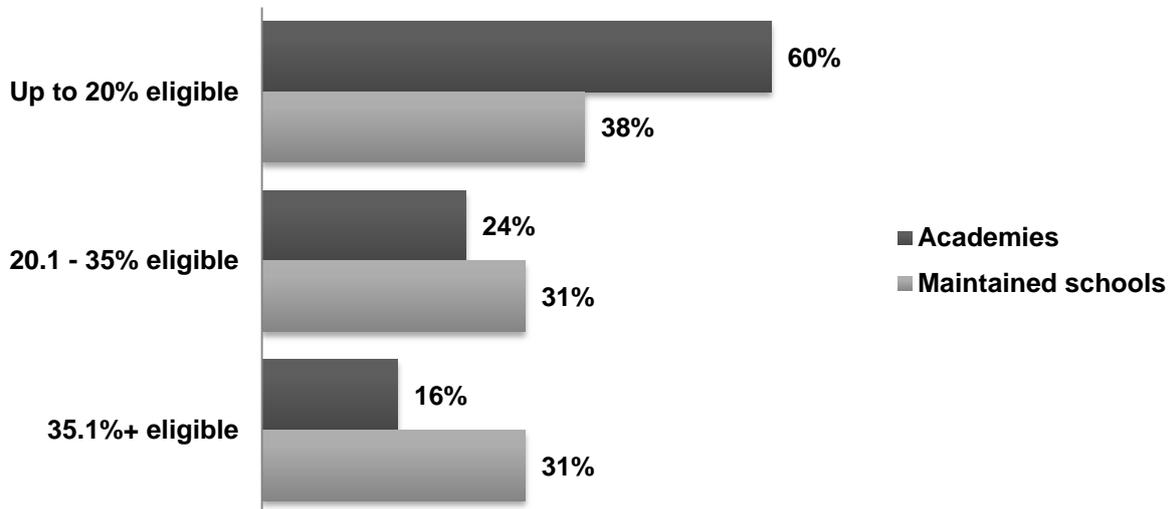
Base: Academies (38); Maintained (492)

2.4.6   Respondent role

Schools were represented only once each in our sample of respondents. Eligible respondents were head teachers and senior leaders with responsibility for school improvement planning. Two in three respondents were heads, and one in three were senior leaders, as profiled in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Respondent role
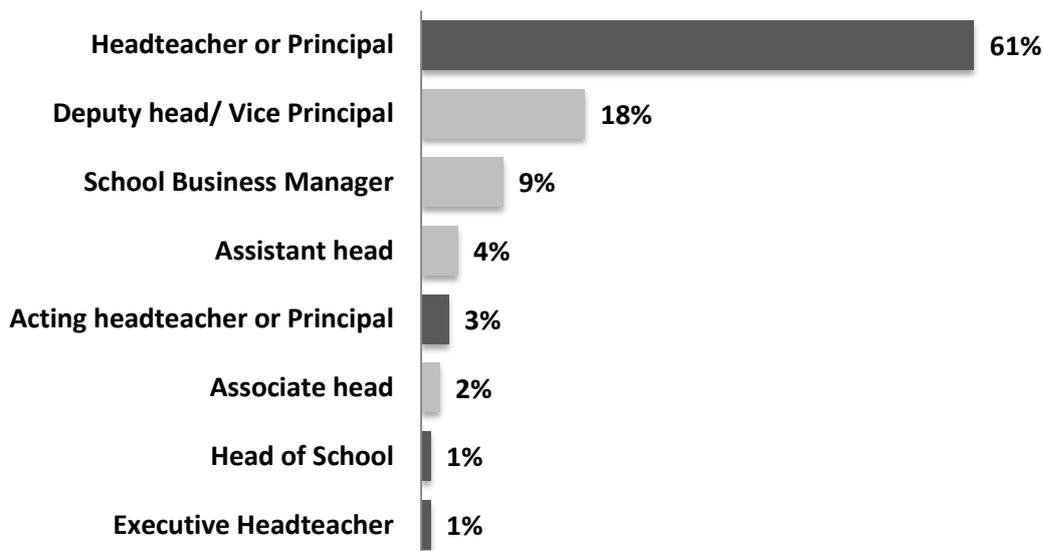
Base: All respondents (530). Darker grey bars denote roles categorised as head equivalents in cross-tabulations; lighter grey as deputy/senior leaders.

Academy and secondary schools in our sample of respondents contain higher proportions of senior leaders, and consequently fewer heads/principals, as demonstrated in Figure 11. This is likely to be a combination of more widespread delegation in terms of participating in the survey, and more widespread delegation of school improvement responsibilities: Similar responses and levels of knowledge were shown (as heads) through the survey.

Given the academy/secondary bias towards senior leaders, there are also higher proportions of senior leaders in larger schools in our sample of respondents: The average school had 672 pupils where we interviewed a deputy and 444 where we interviewed a head.

Figure 11: Respondent role by school status

■ Head or equivalent   ■ Deputy or equivalent
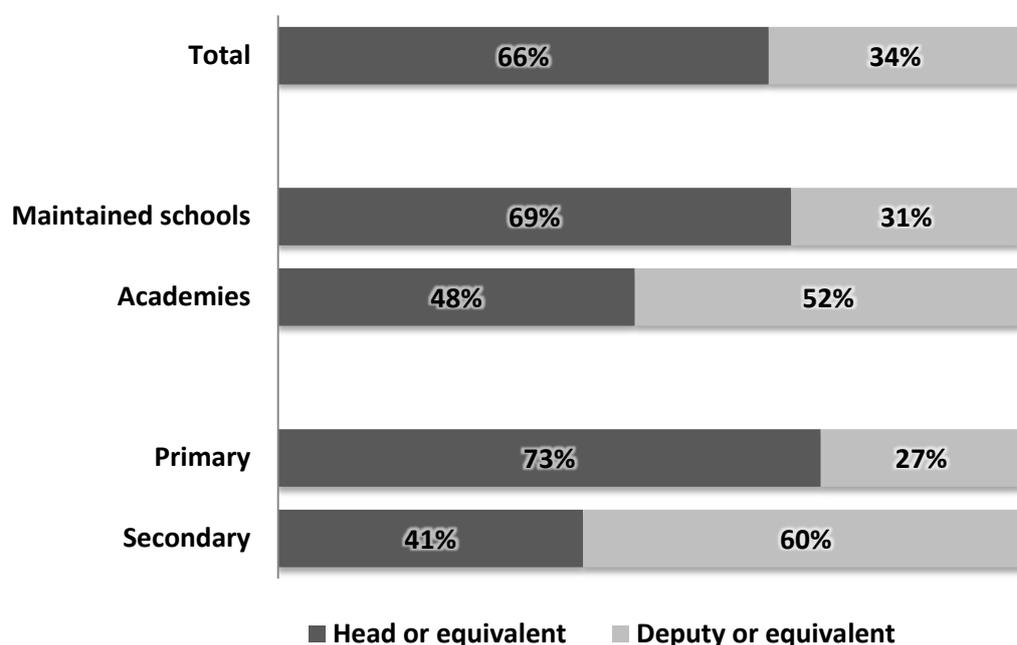
Base: Academies (38); Maintained (492) unweighted. Primaries (469); Secondaries (61)

Around half of the sample of respondents had been in post for up to 5 years, and half for more than five years.

Approximately seven in ten respondents were under 55 years of age and three in ten were 55 years or older.

The same 70:30 split is seen in terms of gender, 70% of respondents being female overall. However, this reduces significantly among secondary respondents (to 37%) and yet further among secondary academy respondents (to 24%, noting an unweighted sample base of only 26).

Data tables can be consulted for more information on respondent profiling if required.

2.5 System Leadership and Teaching School Alliance involvement

6% of the sample was designated by the National College as National Leaders of Education (NLEs[8]) and 13% as Local Leaders of Education (LLEs). The remaining 82% were neither.

Looking at the proportion designated with one or other of these system leadership roles, this increased from a total average of 18% of all heads to 30% of heads over 55 years of age, compared to 12% of younger heads.

A third of respondent schools (33%) had some involvement with a Teaching School Alliance (TSA) as shown below.

Figure 12: Involvement in Teaching School Alliances currently
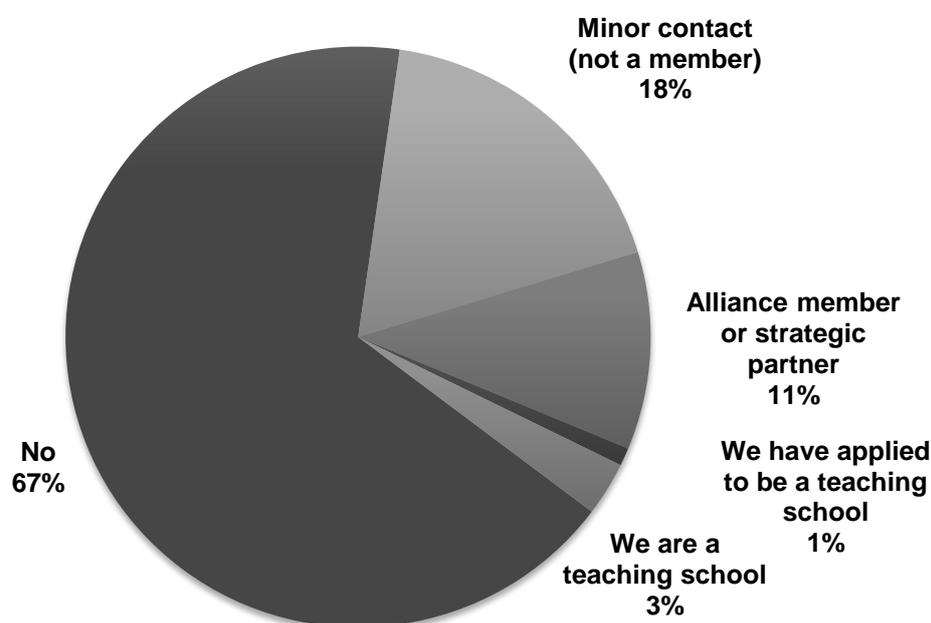
Base: All respondents (530)

Overall involvement in Teaching School Alliances (33% across the sample of respondents) varied between:

- 52% of academies and 31% of maintained schools.
- 46% of secondaries and 30% of primaries.
- 42% of Ofsted grade 1 schools compared with 31% of lower graded schools.

Minor contact or being an alliance member/strategic partner were similarly likely irrespective of Ofsted rating or academy/maintained status. However, being a Teaching School or applying to be one were grade 1 school activities (stated by 10% and 3% respectively), reflecting the requirement for a Grade 1 in teaching and learning as part of the designation criteria.

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[8] See glossary of terms

Having Teaching School status (3% overall) was more likely among academy respondents than maintained schools (16% compared with 2%) but the same pattern was not seen for applying to be a Teaching School: The 1% of schools applying for Teaching School status were all maintained schools in our sample.

Teaching School status was also more prevalent in the secondary sector in our sample: 7% of secondary respondents and 2% of primary respondents described their schools as teaching schools. This was most likely among largest schools: 9% where pupils numbered 1,000 or more.

3 Areas of Challenge in the School Improvement Process

3.1 Perceived ease and difficulty in the school improvement process

At the start of the interview, a set of questions was asked to gather front-of-mind perceptions of the ease or difficulty of different stages in school improvement, based on provision currently available.

Presented in order from most easy to most difficult below, we see high levels of confidence among schools when identifying priorities (99%), and only slightly lower levels when investigating options, and implementing, monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvements made (each 89%).

The most challenging aspect of school improvement is finding ways to resource it: This is the only aspect which more schools considered difficult (60%) than easy (40%). Evaluating value for money is also a very challenging area, 38% finding this difficult.

Figure 13: Thinking about school improvement as a whole and given the guidance and support currently available, how easy or difficult are the following?

	Easy (very/fairly)	Difficult (very/fairly)	Not sure
Identifying your school improvement priorities	99%		1%
Finding out about school improvement options. By options we mean ways of actioning school improvement.	89%	10%	2%
Monitoring progress against priorities	89%	11%	
Implementing and accessing the school improvement identified as needed for your school	85%	13%	2%
Evaluating the impact of school improvement measures taken	84%	16%	1%
Getting impartial information on the effectiveness of school improvement strategies for example case studies of what has worked in other schools	71%	26%	3%
Getting information on the availability and cost of school improvement providers	70%	27%	3%
Evaluating value for money in school improvement support	61%	38%	2%
Resourcing or funding improvement including staff time	39%	60%	1%

■ Easy (very/fairly)　■ Difficult (very/fairly)　■ Not sure

Base: All respondents (530) B1 to B9

Translating the same results into mean averages on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is very difficult and 4 is very easy, the majority of aspects fall around point three on the scale, or 'fairly easy'.

'Identifying your school improvement priorities' averages as high as 3.6 (rounding up to 4, or 'very easy') whilst the most difficult-rated aspect (resourcing school improvement) has a mean rating of 2.3 on this scale, which rounds down to 2, or 'fairly difficult'.

3.1.1 Perceived ease/difficulty of school improvement: Variations by Ofsted and system leader status

Confidence levels relating to aspects of the school improvement planning process are variable.

For example, while Ofsted-graded outstanding schools find some aspects of school improvement no easier than other schools, (e.g. identifying priorities and evaluating value for money) they do consider finding out about improvement options easier: A response of <u>very</u> easy was given by 40% of grade 1 schools, compared to 28% of grade 2 schools, and 22% of grades 3/4 schools.

Outstanding schools were also more confident about implementing and accessing the school improvement identified as needed for their school: <u>Very</u> easy was stated by 31% of grade 1, 22% of grade 2, and 18% of grades 3/4 schools.

National and Local Leaders of Education[9] (NLE/LLEs) find certain aspects of school improvement easier than other heads interviewed: These include:

- Identifying school improvement priorities: Three-quarters of NLE/LLEs described this as very easy (76%), compared to 62% of non-NLEs.
- Getting information on the cost and availability of school improvement providers: This was described as very or fairly easy by 80% of NLE/LLEs compared to 66% of other leaders.
- Implementing and accessing the school improvement identified as needed for your school: This was described as very or fairly easy by 94% of NLE/LLEs compared to 82% of other leaders).

System leaders also showed higher confidence levels around evaluating value for money in school improvement: 24% of NLE/LLEs considered this very easy compared to half as many non-NLE/LLEs (12%). This underlines the role that NLEs can play in disseminating confidence in some of the most challenging aspects of the school improvement process.

Resourcing school improvement is considered difficult to similar degrees across the spectrum of school types, and there is no evidence of failing schools feeling better resourced to fund their improvement: Indeed, resourcing is more likely to be considered easy by grade 2s (41% stating very or fairly easy), compared to grade 3/4s (34%).

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[9] See glossary of terms

Academies are a little less likely than maintained schools to consider it easy to get information on the availability and cost of school improvement providers: <u>Very</u> easy was stated by only 7% of academies compared to 17% of maintained schools.

While no consistent pattern is evident in terms of school phase, primaries may consider the aspect of implementing and accessing school improvement a little easier than secondaries (again potentially reflecting a greater reliance on local authority resources): 87% stated very or fairly easy compared with 77% of secondaries. The same pattern is seen in relation to monitoring progress against priorities: 90% of primaries stated very or fairly easy, compared to 82% of secondaries.

In spite of this, small schools in our sample were particularly likely to find resourcing school improvement difficult: Only 57% of primaries with up to 250 pupils considered resourcing very or fairly easy, increasing slightly to 64% where there were 250 to 500 pupils, and to 67% where there were more than 500 pupils.

Later in this report we look at similar areas of challenge when exploring the types of unmet need or further information that schools require to support their current school improvement priorities (section 6.2).

4 Sources of Challenge and Support used by Schools

4.1 Support used to identify school improvement priorities

Responses suggest that when schools are identifying school improvement priorities, other schools are currently the first port of call (76%), after internal processes (99%) and governors (92%).

The vast majority (98% of schools interviewed) use at least one source of external support to identify their priorities: Responding to a prompted list of sources of support (see Figure 14 below) only 2 respondents (less than 0.5%) said 'None of these' and only 8 respondents (1.5%) stated that they used only internal processes or governors.

Figure 14: Thinking about the current academic year, which of the following, if any, have you used to help identify your school improvement priorities?

Internal self-evaluation processes — 99%
Governing body — 92%
We liaise with other schools or use recommendations from other heads to help set priorities — 76%
Use/ commission LA school improvement services (aside from SIP) — 68%
Ex-SIP — 66%
Other commercial services/consultancy (aside from SIP) — 42%
A NLE or LLE — 32%
In a formal collaboration/federation and set priorities across the group — 30%
Work with a TS or TSA — 20%
Use the priorities prev recommended by SIP/London Challenge — 14%
Academy sponsor or chain — 2%

Base: All respondents (530) B10

Results above are shown on a base of all schools: When we consider responses relating 'my academy sponsor or chain'; as a percentage of academies only, this equates to 22% of all academies. Usage varying from a very small percentage of

converters (2%) and one in four free schools (26%), compared to all sponsor-led academies in the sample (100%), noting the very small base sizes here[10].

4.1.1 Wider sources of support: Faith Schools and the Diocese

Respondents were asked if they use any other external help to identify priorities, aside from the channels prompted. The most common unprompted mentions were Ofsted inspections (3%) and the Diocese (1%), with one or more mentions also of Prince's Trust, Higher Education Institutions and parents (less than 0.5%).

A quarter of all faith schools mentioned the Diocese, unprompted, reflecting its importance for these schools in identifying priorities.

Ofsted inspections were significantly more likely to be mentioned by those rated satisfactory or inadequate by Ofsted (5% mentioning this).

4.1.2 Peer-to-peer support

Looking specifically at responses regarding support from peers on identifying priorities, we see that the most common mention is general liaison with other schools: 76% 'liaise with schools or use recommendations from other heads'. As shown further down the chart (Figure 14), 30% are in a formal collaboration with schools and 20% work with a teaching school or alliance.

These groups are not mutually exclusive, suggesting that schools are often involved in a range of peer-to-peer support channels, with varying degrees of formality.

The Venn diagram below illustrates this by showing the degree of crossover between three different types of peer-to-peer working to identify school improvement priorities: Liaising with other schools; working in a formal collaboration with other schools; and working with a teaching school or teaching school alliance.

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[10] Among converters, 1 of 44 (weighted, from 29 unweighted), say that they use their sponsor or chain (2%). This compares to 1 in 4 free schools (4 weighted, from 3 unweighted) and 6 of 6 sponsored academies (weighted, or 11 when weighted) i.e. 100%.

Figure 15: Thinking about the current academic year, which of the following have you used to help identify your school improvement priorities? A focus on peer-to-peer support used (Estimated number of schools in London)
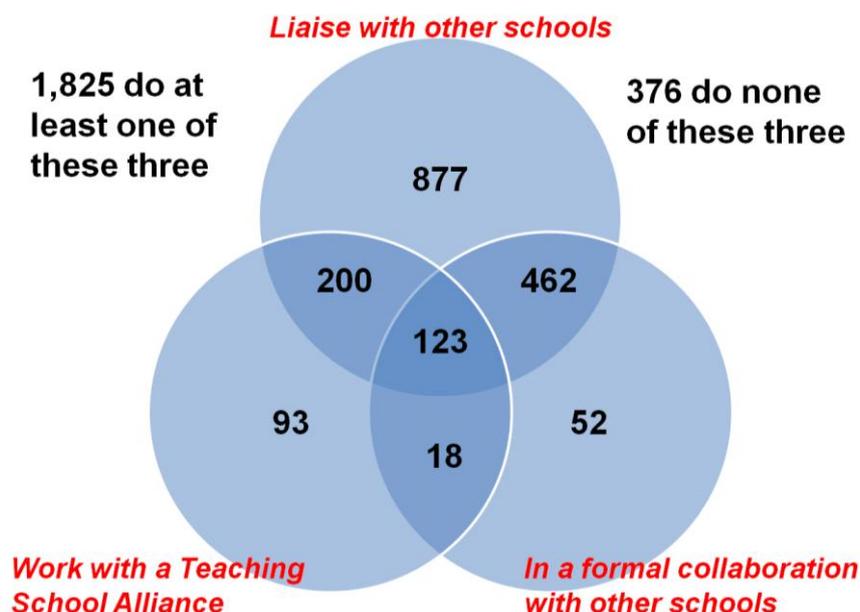
Survey data were grossed up to the London school population of 2,201 schools, based on responses to question B10

4.1.3   External support used to identify priorities: Variation by phase and status

Significant differences between phase are circled in Figure 16 in relation to types of support used by schools to identify their improvement priorities.

As shown, primaries are more likely than secondaries to rely on support from the local authority and from ex-School Improvement Partners. While sample sizes are too small to identify significant differences when looking at academy status within phase[11], analysis suggests that these overall differences are not the result of differences in the (larger) maintained sector. Indeed, in respect of using or commissioning local authority school improvement services, usage varies between 62% of primaries and 32% of secondaries in the academy sector, while in the maintained sector secondaries were a little more likely to use local authority services than primaries (75% and 71% respectively). In respect of using an ex-SIP, the difference between primary and secondary phases is similar according to school status (differing between 52% and 62% in the academy sector and between 56% and 69% in the maintained sector).

Secondaries are more likely than primaries to rely on academy sponsors/chains, which reflects the greater predominance of academies within the secondary phase.

Secondaries are also more likely than primaries to use commercial services/consultancy, and Teaching School Alliances (TSAs). Again, the findings were analysed by academy status within each phase. This showed that in both cases, the difference in usage was greater between phases in the maintained sector than the

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[11] 13 primary academies and 25 secondary academies.

academy sector: In the case of commercial services/consultancy 61% of maintained secondaries used these to identify priorities, which is significantly higher than the 37% of maintained primaries who stated the same. Academies were similar in their usage of commercial services irrespective of phase (62% and 60% of primary and secondary respectively). In terms of TSAs the more notable difference was again within the maintained sector: Usage varying from 28% of maintained secondaries compared to 16% of maintained primaries, while relatively stable among academies (46% of primaries and 40% of secondaries).

Figure 16: External support used to identify priorities, by school phase
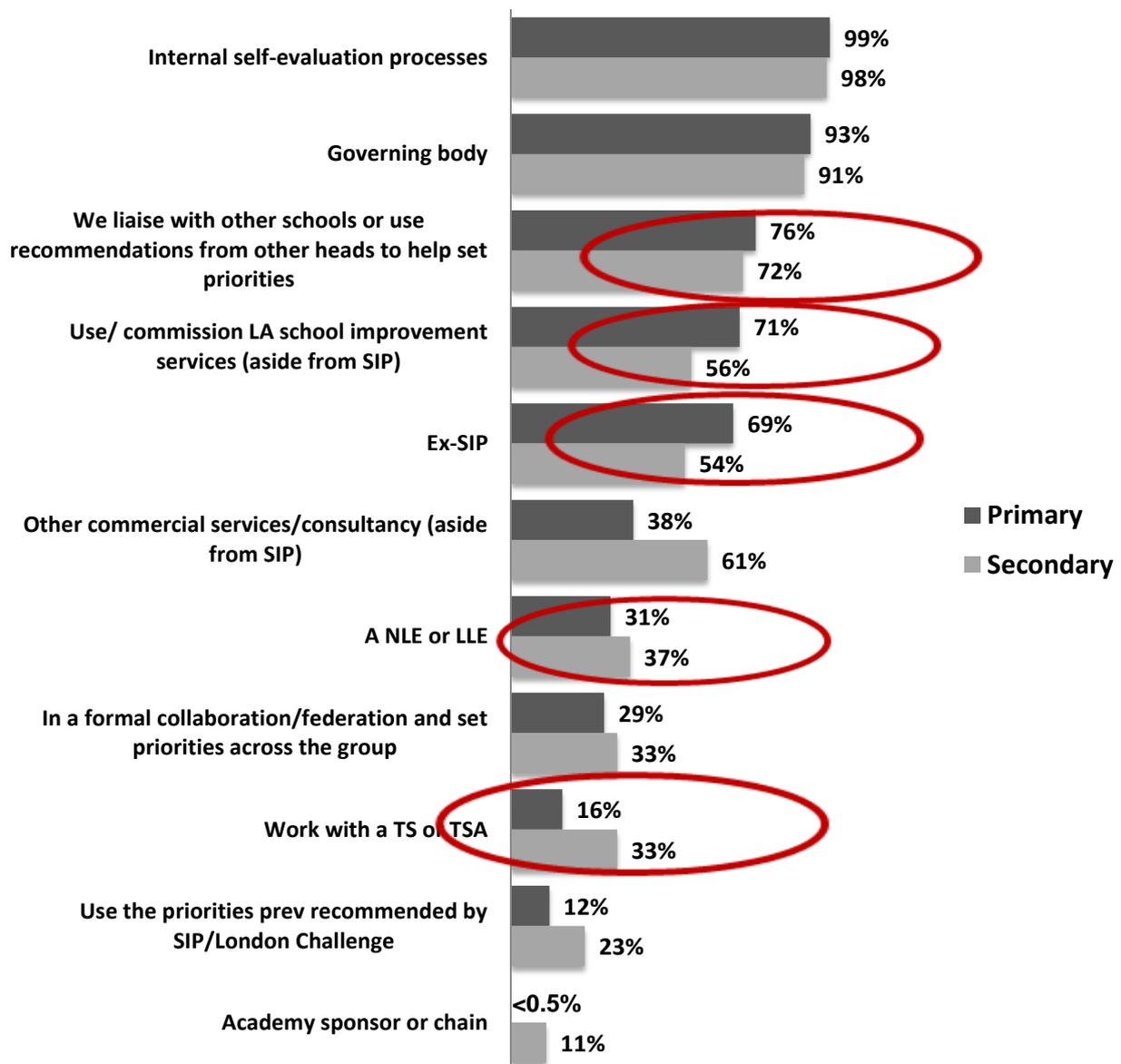
Base: Primaries (469); Secondaries (61) B10.

Academies were more likely than maintained schools to use commercial services (60% and 40% respectively); and TSA support (41% and 17% respectively).

Academies were less likely to use local authorities, although 38% did use the local authority for support identifying priorities (compared to 72% of maintained schools).

4.1.4 External support used to identify priorities: Variation by Ofsted grade and system leader status

It is a common thread through the findings of this survey that schools in a position to deliver school improvement support to others (including via system leadership roles or teaching school alliances), also consider their own school improvement opportunities to be greater as a result: National Leaders of Education[12] (NLEs) feel that they use other NLEs for school improvement, and so on.

In Figure 17 it is shown that outstanding schools (themselves more likely to be delivering peer-to-peer support) are more likely than others to consider that they use a NLE/LLE or a TSA for help in identifying priorities. Likewise, among respondents who were NLEs or LLEs, 67% stated that they used NLEs/LLEs to identify school improvement priorities, compared to 21% of non NLEs/LLEs.

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[12] See glossary of terms

Figure 17: External support used to identify priorities, by Ofsted grade
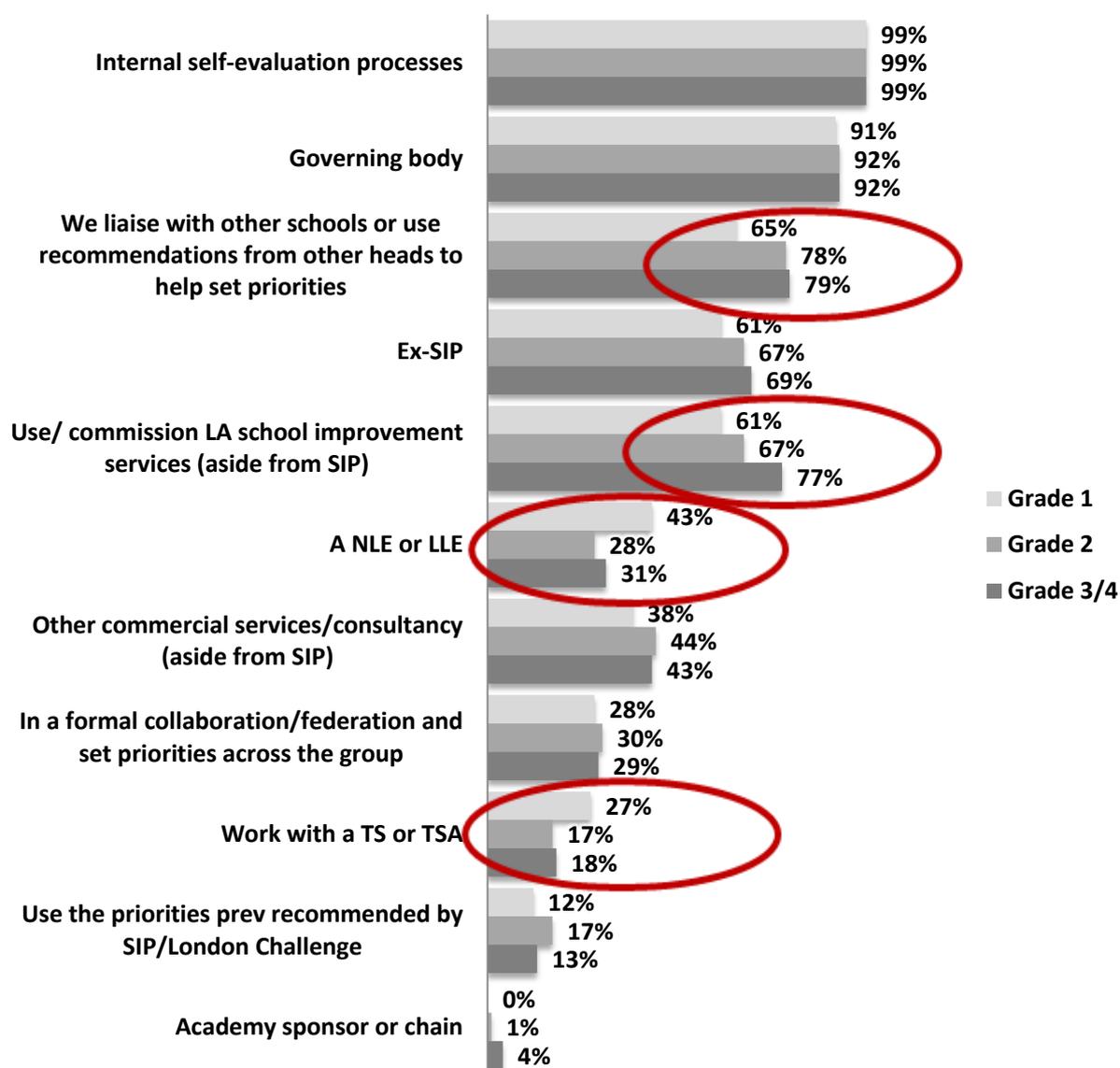
Base: All grade 1 (128), grade 2 (250), grade 3/4 (146) B10

4.1.5 External support used to identify priorities: Variation by location and leader experience

Schools in Inner London were more likely to use TSAs than in Outer London by (25% and 17% respectively). The same trend is seen for commercial services (used by 51% in Inner London compared to 38% in Outer London).

Younger heads and those newer to the role were more likely to mention liaising with other schools (78% of under 55s and 79% of those in the role for less than two years, compared to 68% of over 55s and 68% in the role for more than 10 years). This may reflect other characteristics of their schools, but it may also suggest that newer heads are in-touch with the current drive towards a self-improving system, and have access to informal networks e.g. their NPQH cohort, while older heads in their second or third headship may be more likely to be working with peers who are NLEs or with TSAs:

Indeed, 26% of heads in the role for more than 10 years worked with TSAs to identify priorities, compared to 20% of heads newer to their role.

4.2 Deciding on school improvement options: Considerations in the mix

While 'resourcing school improvement' was identified by schools as the most challenging aspect of the school improvement process (see section 3.1 above), it does not appear to be the case that the cost and availability of school improvement providers dictate which improvement measures are taken.

When making decisions on this, the professional judgement of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was described as by far the most important factor (rated by 93% of schools as 8, 9 or 10 on a 1-to-10 scale of importance).

Feedback from parents and research and evidence were also widely seen as important, and slightly more so than input from the governing body/chair, or previous experience/contact with providers.

The least important consideration in the mix is the cost/availability of providers: More than a fifth of schools rated this unimportant (1-4 on a 1-to-10 scale of importance).

A summary of responses and mean values are shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18: When deciding on school improvement options for your school, how much importance is placed on each of the following? (1-10 scale)
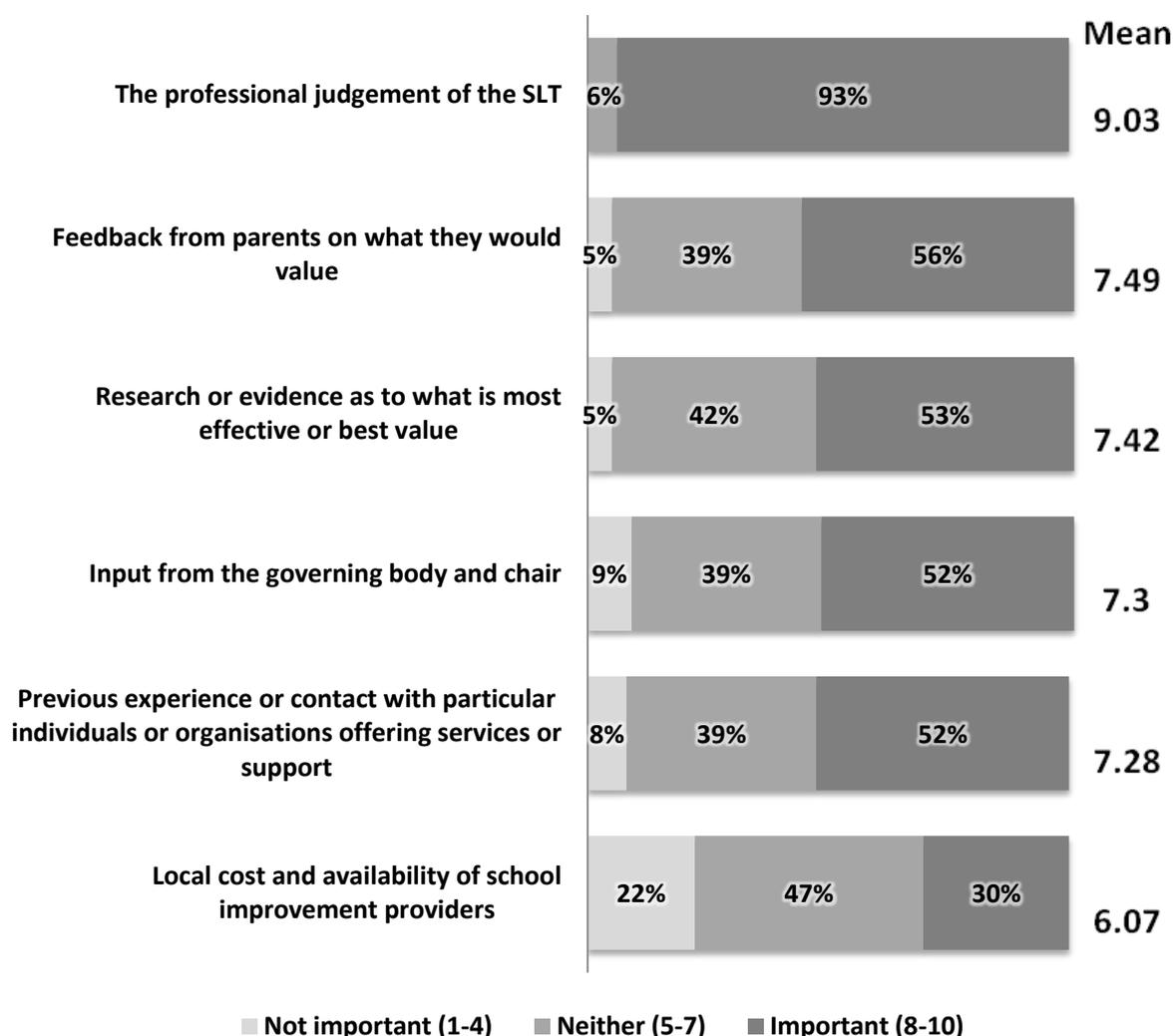
4.2.1 Reliance on school governors and chair

As shown above, just under a tenth of schools (9%) consider input from the governing body/chair to be unimportant (or 1 to 4 on a scale of 1 to 10) when deciding on school improvement options. The mean importance rating for the governing body is calculated as 7.3 out of 10 where 1 is least important and 10 is most important.

Schools with less deprivation (based on lower free school meal eligibility levels) appear to place more importance on input from the governing body and chair: The importance rating is 7.56 out of 10 where FSM eligibility is up to 20%, which is significantly higher than the ratings where FSM eligibility is more than 20% (7.14 out of 10 where FSM eligibility is 20.1% to 35% of pupils and 7.11 out of 10 where FSM eligibility is more than 35% of pupils).

This pattern is repeated at a later question in the survey (see section 7.1.1) where schools with lower levels of free school meal eligibility rate the effectiveness of their chair and governors more highly than other schools.

Academy status and FSM levels tend to show similar trends in several of the survey findings (as a result of academy schools tending towards lower FSM levels, detailed at section 2.4.5 above). Reflecting this, we see a suggestion that academies rate the importance of governors more highly than others when deciding on school improvement options (7.59 compared to 7.27 of maintained schools[13]). This suggestion is confirmed later in the survey when we see that academies rate their governors as more effective than maintained schools in providing challenge and expertise to support school improvement (rating this as 8.10 on average, compared to 7.34 among maintained schools[14]).

Schools with higher FSM levels conversely may place more importance on previous experience/contacts: The mean importance rating was 7.51 out of 10 where FSM is 35% or higher, decreasing to 7.29 in the middle FSM banding and 7.10 in the lowest FSM banding.

Smaller schools in particular may place more importance on local cost and availability of school improvement providers: Average importance ratings were more than 6 out of 10 where a school has 500 or fewer pupils, decreasing to less than 5 out of 10 among schools with 1000 or more pupils.

4.3 External challenge to improve

Respondents were asked whether they had received external challenge to improve resulting from an Ofsted Inspection; from the Local Authority; or from peer-to-peer challenge, with the option to answer yes to any number of these.

Most likely was challenge from the local authority: Nearly a quarter of schools (23%) consider that they have received challenge to improve from the local authority in the current academic year.

16% consider that they have received challenge to improve via an Ofsted inspection, which could include any areas to improve or 'notice to improve'

15% consider that they have received peer-to-peer challenge to improve.

Maintained schools (i.e. those not of Academy status) were also asked whether they had received challenge from a sponsored academy conversion brokerage: Only 2% of these schools confirmed that this was the case (equivalent to 1% of the total sample of respondents).

While some schools mention challenge from more than one of the above sources, more than 3 in 5 schools (62%) consider that they have NOT been challenged by any of these means.

Figure 19 shows variations in the percentage of schools who consider that they have not received challenge to improve.

It can be noted that 41% of schools in Ofsted grades 3 or 4 consider that they have not received challenge. This may reflect the fact that the question concerns the current academic year and some schools may consider their Ofsted challenge to have been

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[13] This variation is not significant at the 95% level of confidence.

[14] This variation is significant at the 95% level of confidence.

received prior to this. Responses are also likely to be affected by sensitivities around this question, and variations in how 'external challenge' could be interpreted by respondents: Some leaders may interpret 'challenge' in positive terms, as an essential part of on-going improvement, while others may associate it more specifically with school failure.

Figure 19: Percentages of schools who consider that they have NOT received a challenge to improve in the current academic year
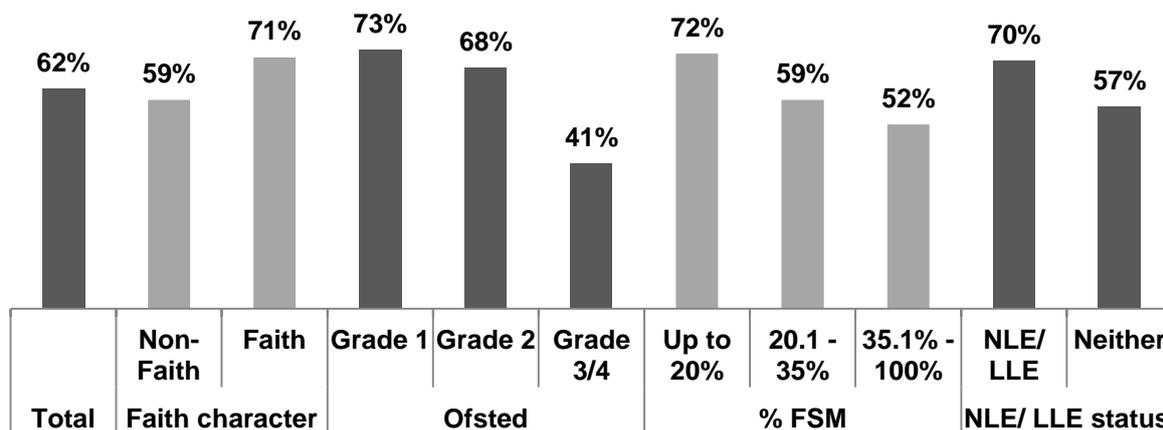
Base: All respondents (530) B17

Challenge from the local authority was particularly mentioned by maintained schools (25%) rather than academies (5%).

Challenge from the local authority was also more mentioned by primaries (26%) than secondaries, 13% of secondaries mentioning this.

4.3.1 Results of challenge received

Where schools had received external challenge from the local authority or peers in the current academic year, they were asked what types of support this had brought, using a prompted list.

As shown in Figure 20, local authority challenge was seen most commonly to bring improvement solutions/suggestions for strategies (76%) as well as regular monitoring/feedback (76%). Two thirds considered that the authority's support had increased their understanding of the school's priorities (67%).

Improvement solutions/suggestions for strategies were also the most often mentioned impact of peer-to-peer challenge, and by a higher proportion than mentioned this in respect of local authority support (92%, compared to 76%). The second most mentioned result of peer-to-peer challenge was increasing the school's understanding of its priorities, which 79% said they had received as part of this peer-to-peer challenge.

It can be noted that similar proportions of schools felt that they were provided with access to extra resources from peer-to-peer support (57%) as from local authority support (53%).

Schools were invited to state any further results of the challenge they had received. The most common mentions were a change in school leadership, tweaks to the curriculum, or wider changes in personnel, new staffing structures, and new policies and practices.

Figure 20: Has the external challenge from ... resulted in any of the following changes?
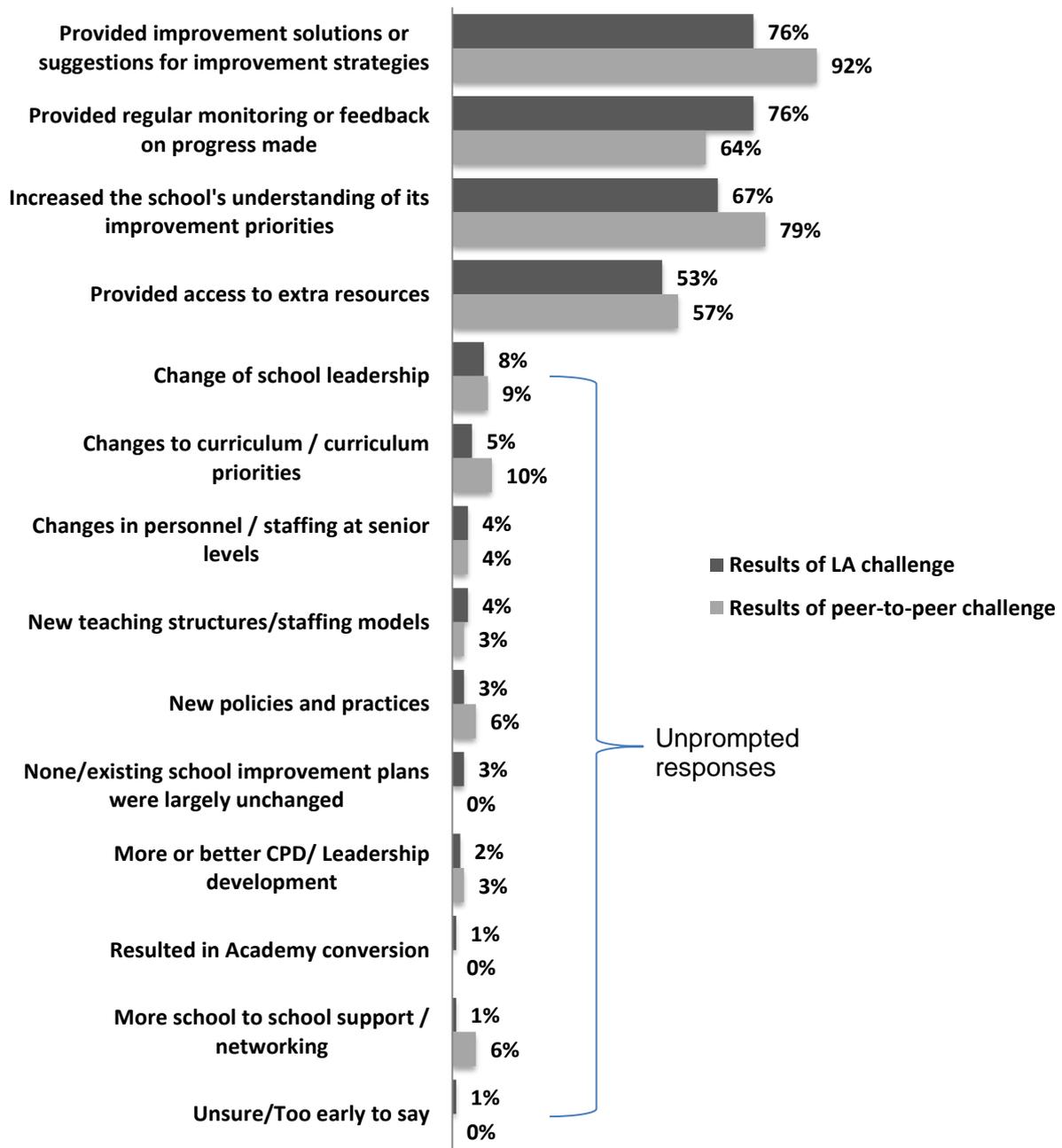
Base: Challenged by LA (129), Challenged by peers (77) B18/1 and B18/2

For grade 3/4 schools local authority challenge was said to provide access to resource in 75% of cases, compared to 40% of grade 1 and 33% of grade 2 schools.

While a similar trend is seen in relation to peer-to-peer challenge, the increase among lower-graded schools is not statistically significant (62% among School grades 3 or 4, compared to 54% and 56% were the school has a higher Ofsted grade)

4.3.2 Perceived impact of challenge on school performance

In general, schools are positive about the impact of challenge received on their school's performance.

Of those challenged by their local authority, 84% found the impact positive and 4% negative. On a scale where 1 is entirely negative and 5 is entirely positive the mean rating was 3.99 (or 'mainly positive').

Of those challenged by peers, 95% found the impact positive and none negative. On a scale where 1 is entirely negative and 5 is entirely positive, the mean rating was 4.26 (also 'mainly positive').

This measure is to some extent subjective and responses may reflect sensitivities around hard-edged versus soft-edged approaches but the findings nevertheless suggest that schools themselves would welcome the ongoing development of peer-to-peer challenge.

Figure 21: Do you consider the impact of the external challenge from ... on your school's performance to have been...?

■ Entirely positive   ■ Mainly positive   ■ Neutral   ■ Mainly negative   ■ Entirely negative   ■ Unsure/too early to say
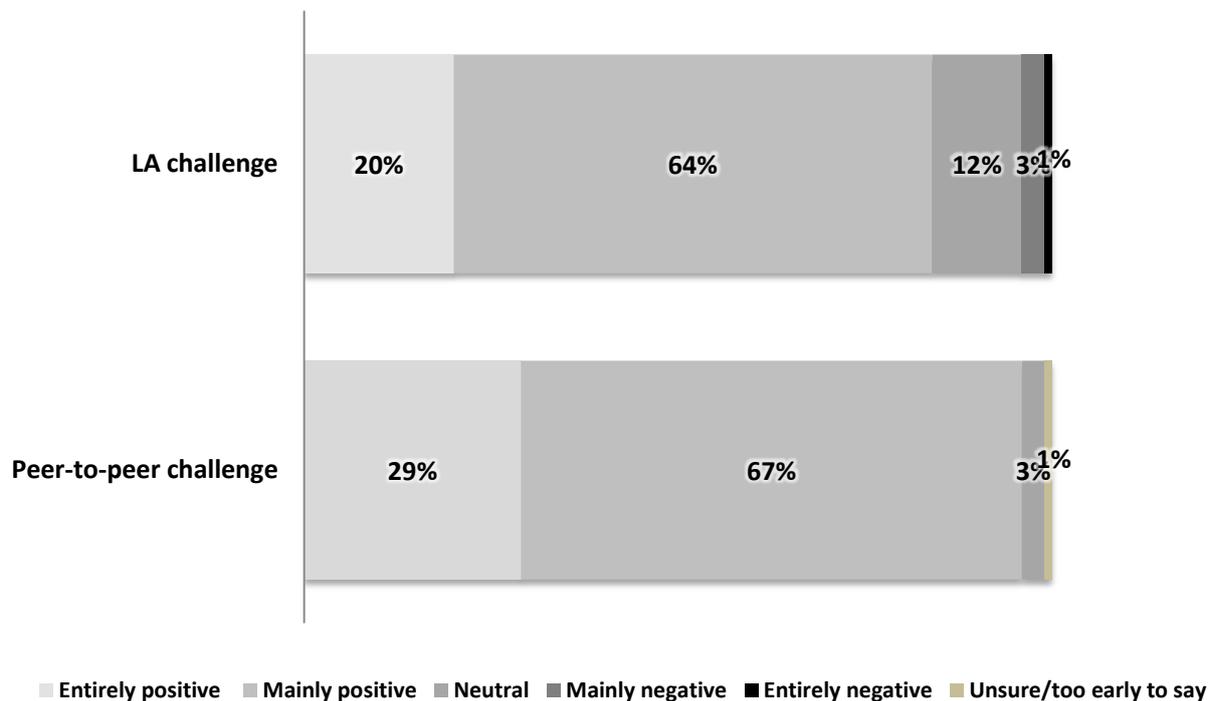
Base: Challenged by LA (129), Challenged by peers (77) B19/1 and B19/2

4.4 Organisations used to implement school improvement

When asked to consider the support types used this year to *implement* the school improvements identified as needed for their school, the local authority was shown to be the most-used organisation or type support, and by a significant degree: 86% of

London schools overall had used it this year, including 15% who had used it 'a great deal', as shown in Figures 22 and 23 below.

Figure 22: This academic year, have you used this to implement school improvement...? Used at all this year

■ **Used at all this year**
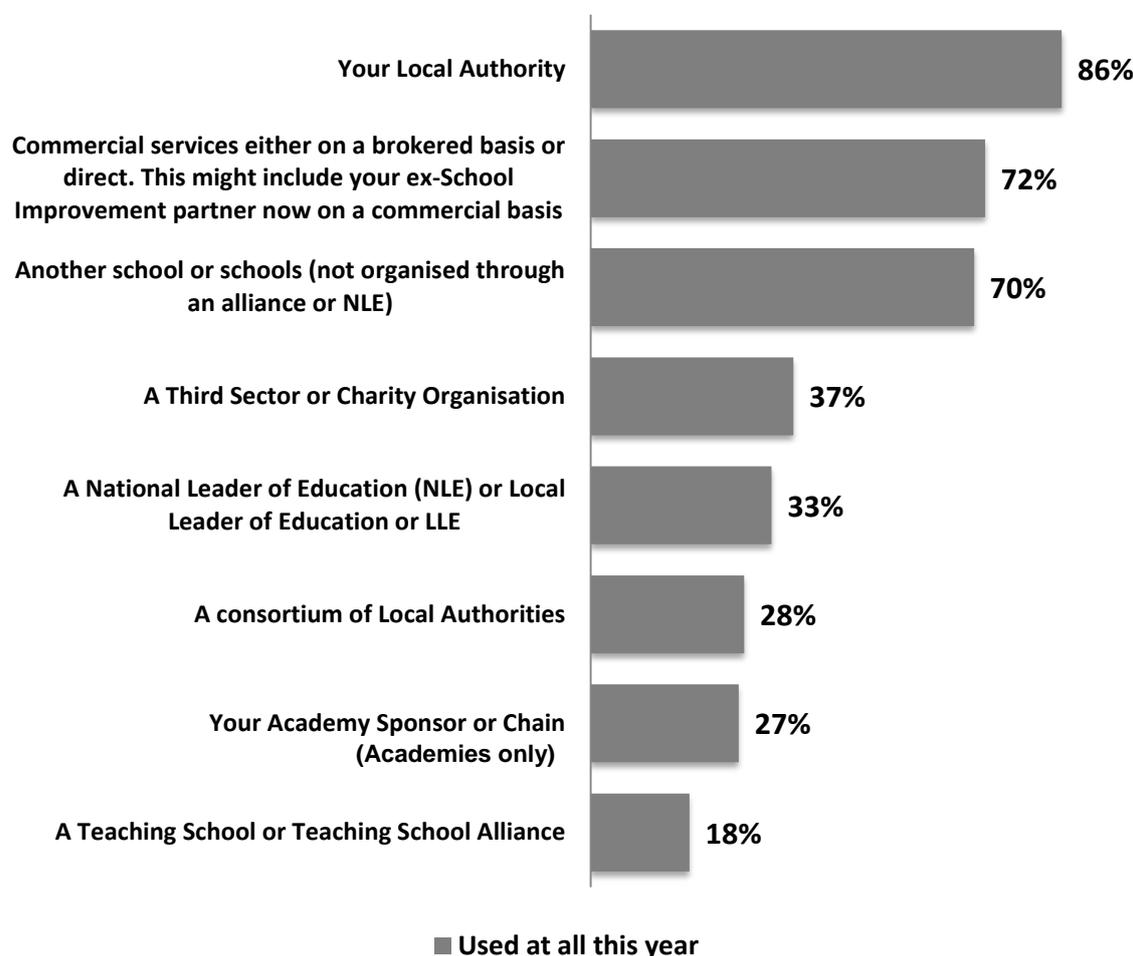
Base: All respondents (530), with the exception of 'Your academy sponsor or chain': All academies (59) D1

In Figure 22, usage of academy sponsors/chains (27%) is shown as a proportion of the sample of academies[15], which equates to 3% of the London school sample as a whole. Therefore, in the current academic year, this is the least-used type of support used for school improvement out of those listed.

Where academies have used their sponsor or chain to implement improvement, they are quite likely to have used this 'a great deal', as shown in Figure 23 (16% of academies stating this). Relative to this, other channels tend to be used on more of an ad hoc basis, for example local authority consortia: Only 3% of schools had used local authority consortia 'a great deal' although 28% overall had used this channel for school improvement.

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[15] Only 7% of converters reported any usage, compared to half of free schools and 100% of sponsored academies, noting extremely small base sizes here.

Figure 23: This academic year, have you used this to implement school improvement...? By level of usage

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much
Your Local Authority	15%	42%	30%
Commercial services either on a brokered basis or direct. This might include your ex-School Improvement partner now on a commercial basis	9%	36%	26%
Another school or schools (not organised through an alliance or NLE)	9%	37%	24%
A Third Sector or Charity Organisation	5%	12%	20%
A National Leader of Education (NLE) OR Local Leader of Education or LLE	8%	12%	13%
A consortium of Local Authorities	3%	7%	19%
Your Academy Sponsor or Chain	16%	10%	2%
A Teaching School or Teaching School Alliance	3%	7%	9%

■ A great deal   ■ A fair amount   ■ Not very much

Base: All respondents (530), with the exception of 'Your academy sponsor or chain': All academies (59) D1

Later in the survey, schools were asked which of these organisations/channels of support they anticipate wanting to use more/less for school improvement support in the future. As detailed in section 6.3, responses suggest that there are likely to be changes to the order of importance of these channels in the medium to long term.

4.4.1   Usage of organisations for school improvement: Variation by phase

Important differences are seen in the use of different external sources of support by phase.

As shown in Figure 24, use of the local authority peaks among primaries, while use of the third sector, other schools and Teaching School Alliances are all more typical among secondary schools.

Figure 24: This academic year, have you used this to implement school improvement...? Used at all this year
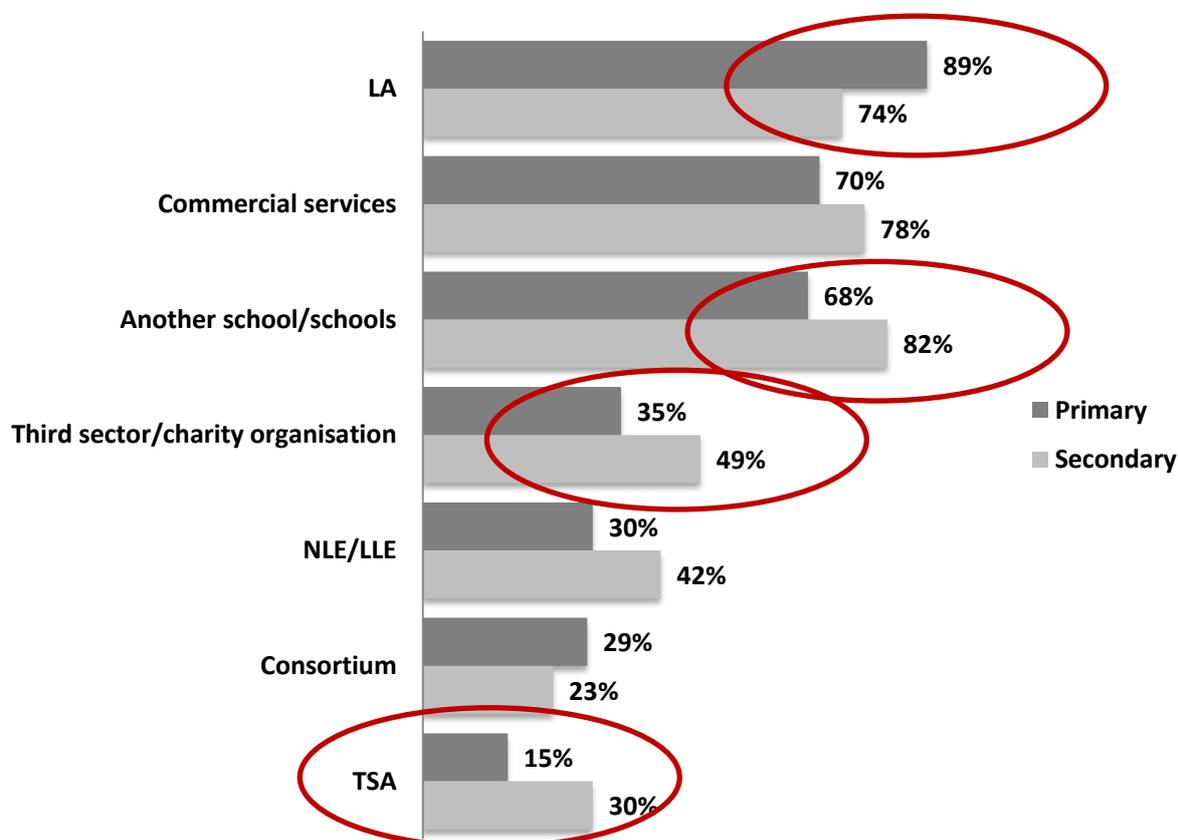
Base: Primaries (469); Secondaries (61) 'Your academy Sponsor or chain' is not shown due to low bases. D1

Usage of NLE/LLEs to implement school improvement is highest in particular among secondary schools of maintained status (47% of this group using NLE/LLEs to implement school improvement in the current academic year).

4.4.2   Usage of organisations for school improvement: Variation by status

Usage of **the local authority to implement school improvement** is higher among maintained schools (90%) than academies (54%).

Usage of **Teaching School Alliances** is higher among academies (30%) than maintained schools (16%). This varies between 23% of primary academies (albeit still higher than the 15% of primary maintained schools) and 32% of secondary academies

Usage of **commercial services** is significantly higher among academies (85%) than among maintained schools (70%).

Reflecting these patterns, use of the local authority is also higher among smaller schools while TSA usage is higher among larger schools.

4.4.3 Usage of organisations for school improvement: Variation by Ofsted grade

Usage of **the local authority to implement school improvement** rises among Ofsted grade 3/4 schools (94% compared to 87% of grade 2 and 78% of grade 1 schools).

Usage of **other schools** (not brokered through a NLE or TSA) is also highest among Ofsted grade 3/4 schools (79% compared to 70% of grade 2 and 62% of grade 1 schools).

NLE/LLEs are used most by Ofsted grade 1s (40%) and grade 3/4s (39%) compared to only 26% of grade 2s. This is likely to reflect the practice, highlighted earlier in this report, of NLEs networking with each other while delivering school improvement, with as many as 46% of NLE/LLE respondents saying that they use other NLE/LLEs.

(There is no significant variation by Ofsted grade in terms of usage of the Third Sector; Teaching School Alliances; and commercial services.)

4.5 Nature of support received from the local authority

Where maintained schools used support from the local authority this year, this support was most likely to be described as advice and information (whether requested by the school or offered by the authority), 93% stating this to be the case. However, nearly half considered that the authority had encouraged a particular option (46%) and a quarter that the authority had provided and insisted on a particular option (25%).

Key differences are seen by phase and Ofsted grade.

As shown in Figure 25, primaries are significantly more likely than secondaries to report being encouraged to take a particular school improvement option (48% compared to 27%).

While differences between Ofsted graded schools do reflect that a more hard-edged approach is taken to school improvement support where schools are deemed failing, more than two thirds of schools with a current status of satisfactory or poor nevertheless consider that the local authority support used for school improvement this academic year was not imposed on them: Only 31% stated that the authority 'provided and insisted on a particular school improvement option'.

Figure 25: In the current academic year has your local authority...?
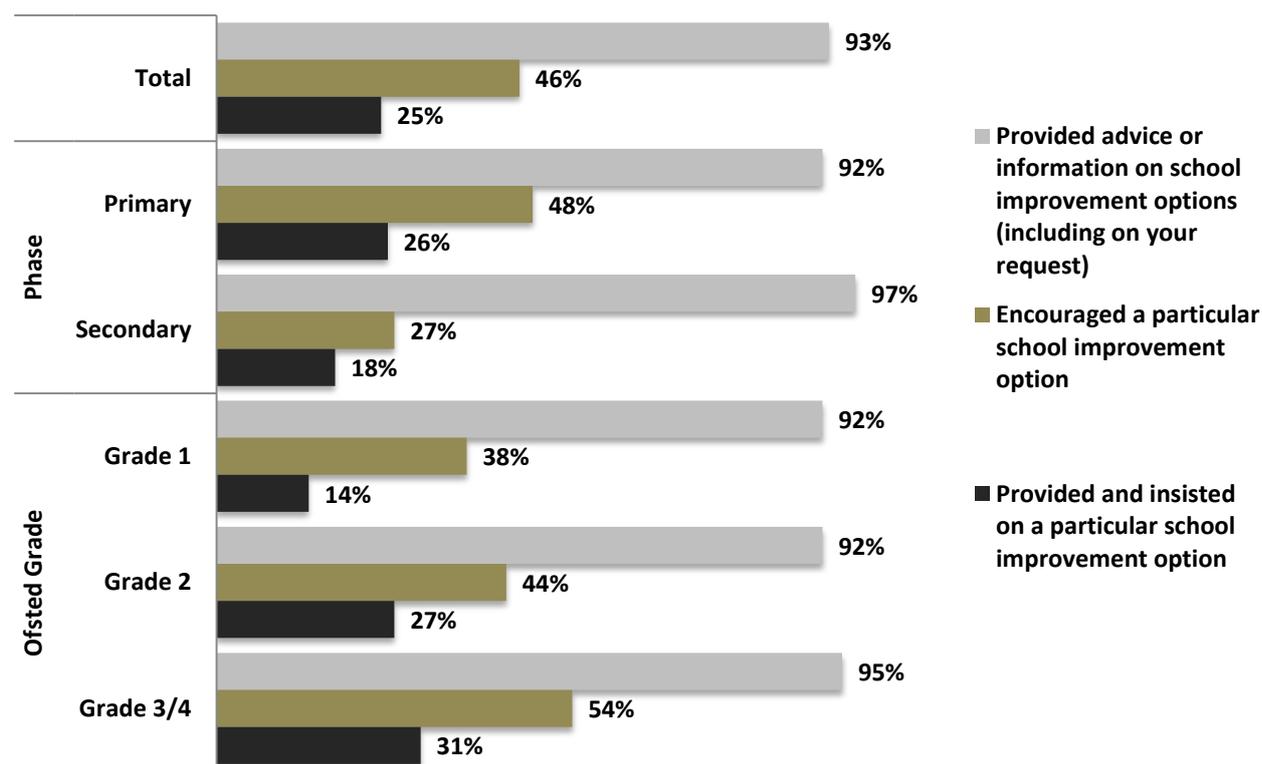
Base: Maintained schools that have received school improvement support from the LA: Primaries (411); Secondaries (33) D3

4.5.1   Nature of support received from academy chains/sponsors

As mentioned in section 4.4, looking at the small sub-groups of academy types we see that 7% of converters and half of free schools mentioned that they use their sponsor or chain to implement school improvement. All of the sponsored academies questioned said that they use their sponsor to implement school improvement.

A question on the nature of support received was asked of academies using their sponsor/chain for school improvement support. However, the base for this question was so small (11 unweighted, or 16 weighted) that comparisons cannot be considered statistically robust. Using the weighted numbers for indicative purposes we see that 12 (77%) felt their sponsor/chain provided advice or information; 6 (41%) said that they encouraged a particular option and 7 (46%) said that they insisted on a particular option. Again, the highest level of support is reported among the sponsored academy subgroup, of which 67% reported that their sponsor provided and insisted on a particular school improvement option.

4.6   Commercial services used

Where schools had made use of commercial services this year (potentially including the ex-school improvement partner, now on a commercial basis), they were asked how these had been sourced. The vast majority (84%) considered that the school had sourced these independently, while 30% stated that they had been brokered by the

authority, and 23% that they had been brokered by a formal or informal group of schools.

Figure 26: How commercial services used for school improvement have been sourced
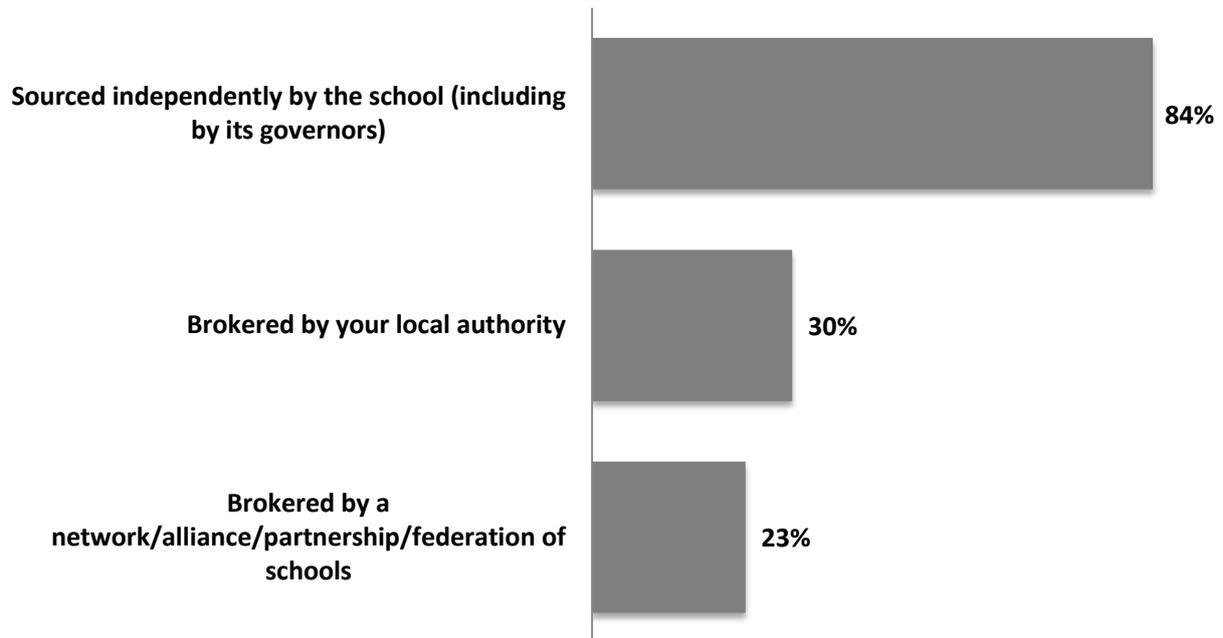
Base: Where used commercial services for school improvement this year (376) D5

Brokerage by the local authority was more likely in the case of maintained schools: 33% of maintained schools describing this approach compared with 11% of academies. A similar degree of variation is seen by phase: 35% of primaries and 12% of secondaries receiving commercial support brokered by the authority.

In reflection of these variations, schools with higher FSM eligibility were also more likely to use consultants brokered by the local authority than others: As many as 38% of schools where the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM is 35% or higher.

There were no significant differences in the use of commercial services according to Ofsted grade.

5 Current School Improvement Priorities and Areas of Focus

5.1 Priority themes in school improvement: Summer-term 2012

All respondents were asked to think about the school improvement priorities that were identified as needing attention in their school at the time of the interview.

A scale of 1 to 10 of relevance was used, where 1 denotes that this school improvement area is not at all relevant to the school, and 10 denotes extremely relevant. Results are summarised in Figure 27, using bandings of 1—4 (not relevant priorities), 5-7 (semi-relevant priorities) and 8-10 (relevant priorities).

As shown, the top two school improvement priorities among London schools interviewed were raising standards or participation in core subjects, and raising teaching performance, followed by raising pupil performance, in general, or for groups of pupils with specific characteristics.

Figure 27: School improvement priorities identified as needing attention in the school at the moment
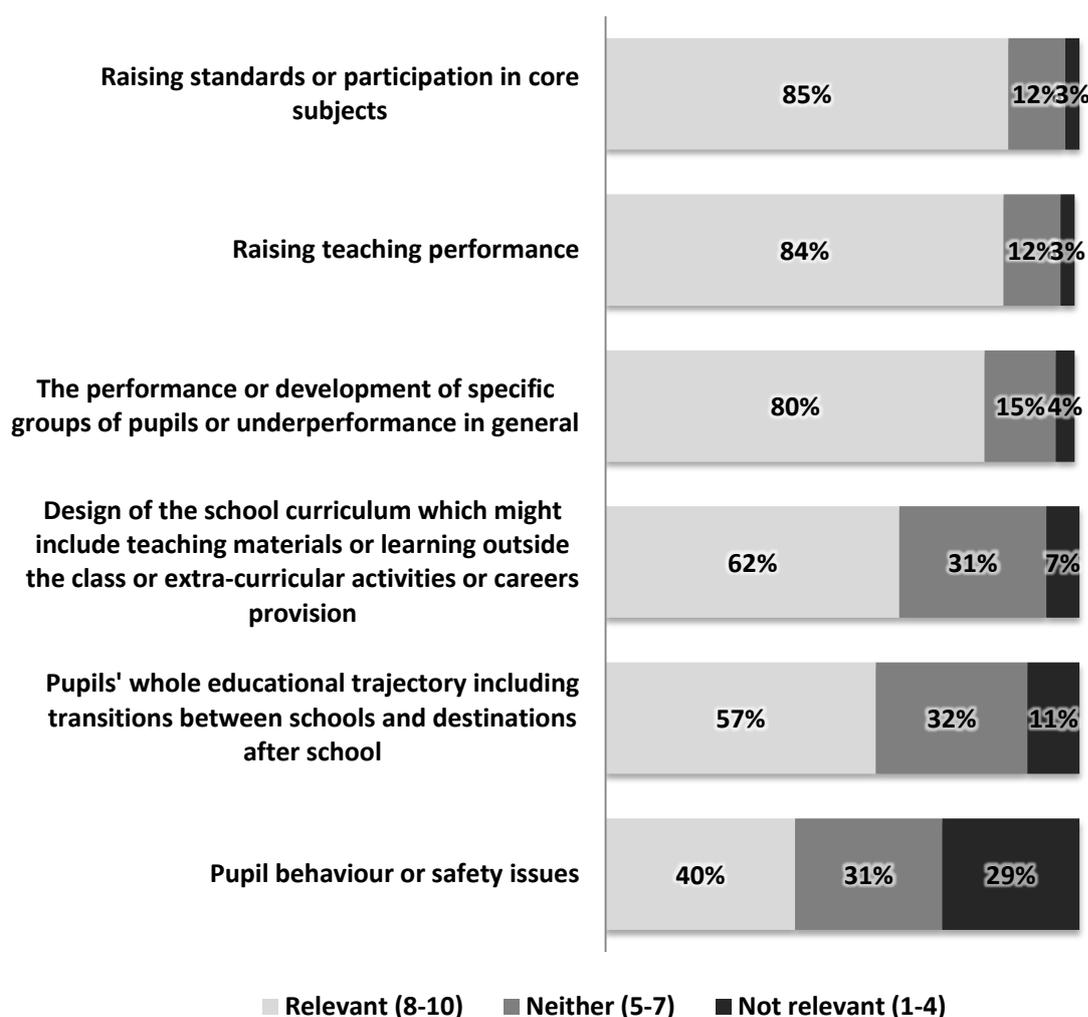
Base: All respondents (530) C1 **NB 'performance or development' refers to educational underperformance.**

As shown later in this report, the order of priorities is different to that shown in Figure 27 when we look at where schools state that they have an unmet need, or a particular information requirement: The school improvement areas where most unmet needs are reported are design of the school curriculum and educational underperformance, where unmet needs are said to exist for 17% and 15% of schools respectively (see section 6.1).

5.1.1 Further school improvement priorities

Asked whether the school had any further school improvement priorities or priority areas of significance that had not been covered in the prompted list[16], just over half (52%) gave some response. These open-ended responses were coded into school improvement areas by BMG's coding team.

Most frequently mentioned were priorities relating to the school building or physical school environment, stated unprompted by more than 1 in 10 of all schools (11%). A similar percentage stressed the importance of issues pertaining to reading, writing or literacy (9%) or leadership development as a school improvement priority (8%).

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[16] The list of prompted school improvement areas is provided in Figure 27.

Figure 28: Do you have any other school improvement priorities or priority areas of significance? (Unprompted mentions)

Category	Percentage
Buildings and the physical school environment	11%
Reading / writing/ literacy	9%
Leadership development	8%
Parental engagement	5%
ICT/ Information Technology	4%
Attendance	4%
Raising academic standards	3%
Developing a collaboration/partnership or joint-working with schools on specifics	2%
Deployment of learning assistants	2%
Outdoor Learning	2%
Middle leadership development	2%
Early years development	2%
Method of assessing pupils	2%
Managing changes within the school (incl. staff restructuring)	2%
Capacity of SLT	1%
Health issues	1%
Language and communication	1%
Financial management	1%
Inclusion	1%
Other	8%

Base: All respondents (530) C1

School building issues were particularly prioritised in the secondary sector: 18% of all secondaries compared with 9% of primaries raised this as an improvement priority. This increased further in the secondary maintained sector (22%) and within large schools: 22% of schools with more than 1000 pupils mentioned school building issues (noting a low base of 36 schools in this size banding).

Parental engagement was more likely to be mentioned by inner-London schools (8%) and also by schools with over 35% of pupils eligible for FSM (10% of these schools raising parental engagement as a priority).

Academies were more than twice as likely as maintained schools to mention reading/writing/literacy (18% compared with 8%).

Ofsted grade 1–rated schools were more likely than other schools to state that staff re-structuring or wider changes within the school were a current school improvement priority (14% compared to 7% and 6% of grade 2 and grades 3/4 respectively).

5.1.2 Priority themes in school improvement: Variation by phase

Phase-analysis suggests a greater focus on raising standards or participation in core subjects (as self-defined by schools) in the primary sector.

Other school improvement areas are similarly prioritised in both phases, albeit with a suggestion of greater focus on pupil behaviour/safety in the secondary sector.

Figure 29 shows the percentage of schools who consider this priority relevant to their school improvement priorities (rating this as 8, 9, or 10 on a 1-to-10 relevance scale).

Figure 29: Percentage of schools rating this school improvement area as a priority, by phase
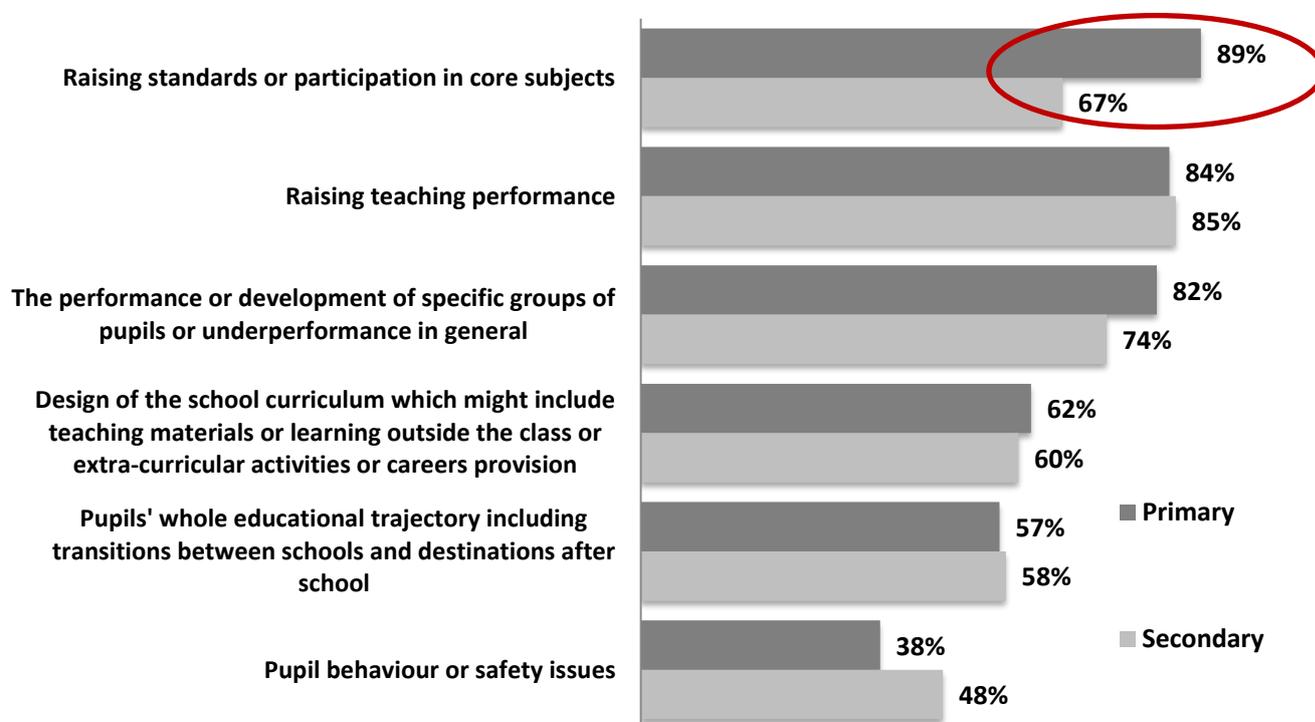
Base: Primaries (469); Secondaries (61) C1. **NB 'performance or development' refers to educational underperformance.**

5.2 Areas of focus within identified priority areas

Follow-up questions were asked to gather more detail on a number of school improvement priorities, where these were confirmed as having relevance to the school's improvement planning at the time of interviewing (rated 8-10 out of 10 on a scale of relevance).

5.2.1 Raising standards or participation in core subjects

Among schools that currently prioritise the raising of standards or participation in core subjects[17], feedback suggests a more universal focus on literacy/English (93%) than on mathematics/numeracy (77%).

Just under two-fifths of schools in this group mentioned raising standards or participation in science (37%) and 17% in languages.

Among additional unprompted responses provided, ICT was most likely to be mentioned as a core subject given focus in school improvement (6%).

Figure 30: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of raising standards or participation in core subjects
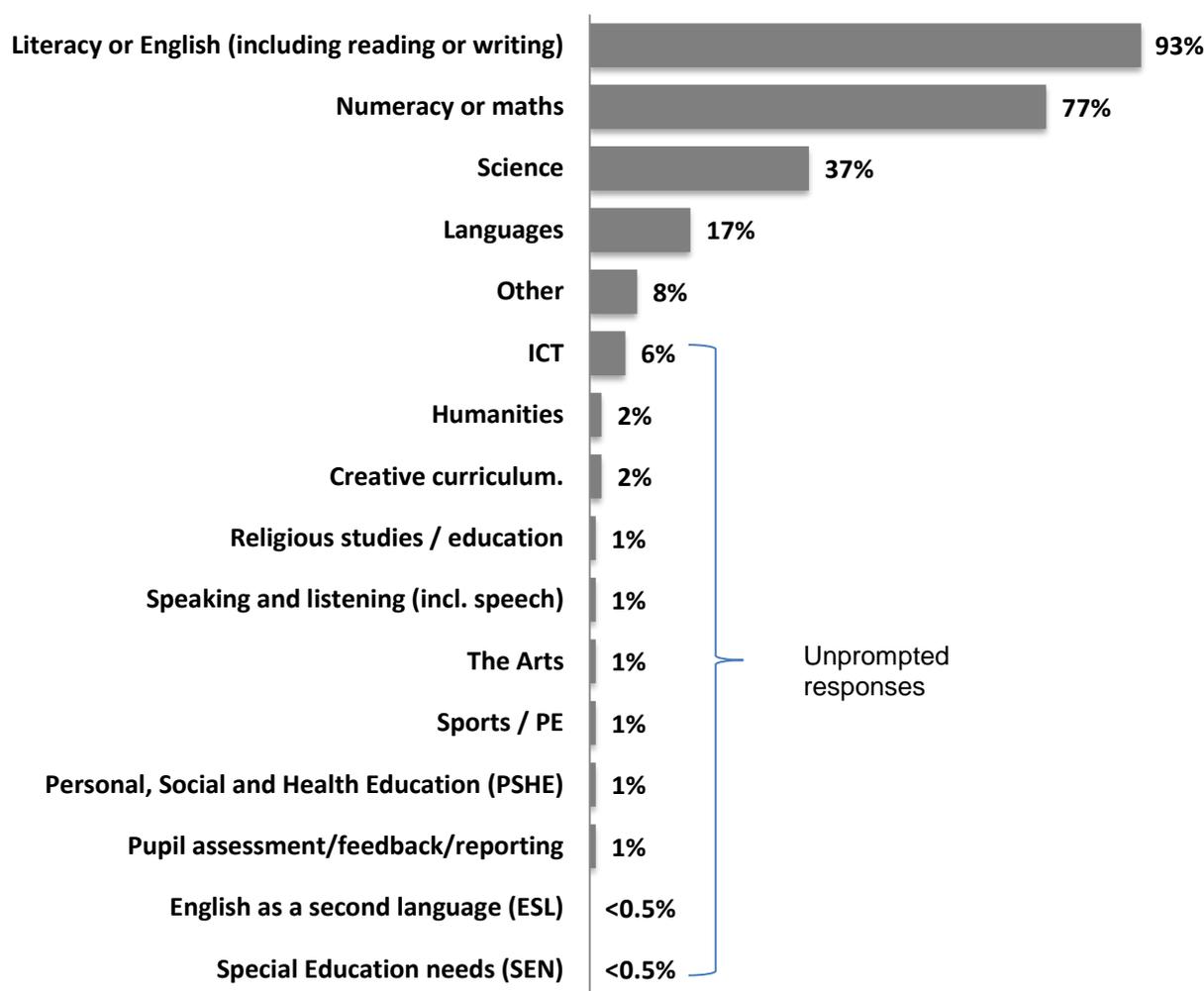
Base: All schools prioritising this i.e. rating it 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10 of relevance to school improvement priorities (457). C2 *What is your school's current focus in terms of...?*

Projecting these numbers onto the target London school population as a whole (including 15% or 340 schools for whom raising participation/standards in core

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[17] Core subjects were not defined by the interviewer and were allowed to be defined by the respondent.

subjects is not a current school improvement focus[18]), the survey indicates that of 2,201 schools:

- 1,725 prioritise Literacy or English (78%)
- 1,427 prioritise Numeracy or Maths (65%)
- 683 prioritise Science (31%)
- 310 prioritise Languages (14%)

Literacy/English includes the core skills of reading and writing, and this may be one factor in it being prioritised in school improvement planning more widely than maths (English and literacy being treated as essential in order to establish a medium in which all other subjects may be taught). However, this does not fully explain why English and literacy are currently more focused on than maths and numeracy in the secondary sector also (see Figure 31 below). A range of potential hypotheses exist, and qualitative research with consenting respondents from this survey may be one useful tool to further investigate this area, if required.[19]

As reflected in Figure 31, in the secondary sector there are more subject areas that receive focus in terms of 'raising standards/participation in core subjects' and science takes second place from maths in terms of this group's secondary sector improvement planning. Secondaries are also nearly four times as likely as primaries to focus on languages in school improvement planning (45% and 12% respectively).

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[18] They do not rate this 8-10 on a 1-10 scale of relevance to their school improvement priorities.

[19] 80% of school leaders interviewed responded that they would be willing to be contacted again in the future to take part in any further research for the Greater London Authority working with the Department for Education on School Improvement research.

Figure 31: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of raising standards or participation in core subjects, by phase
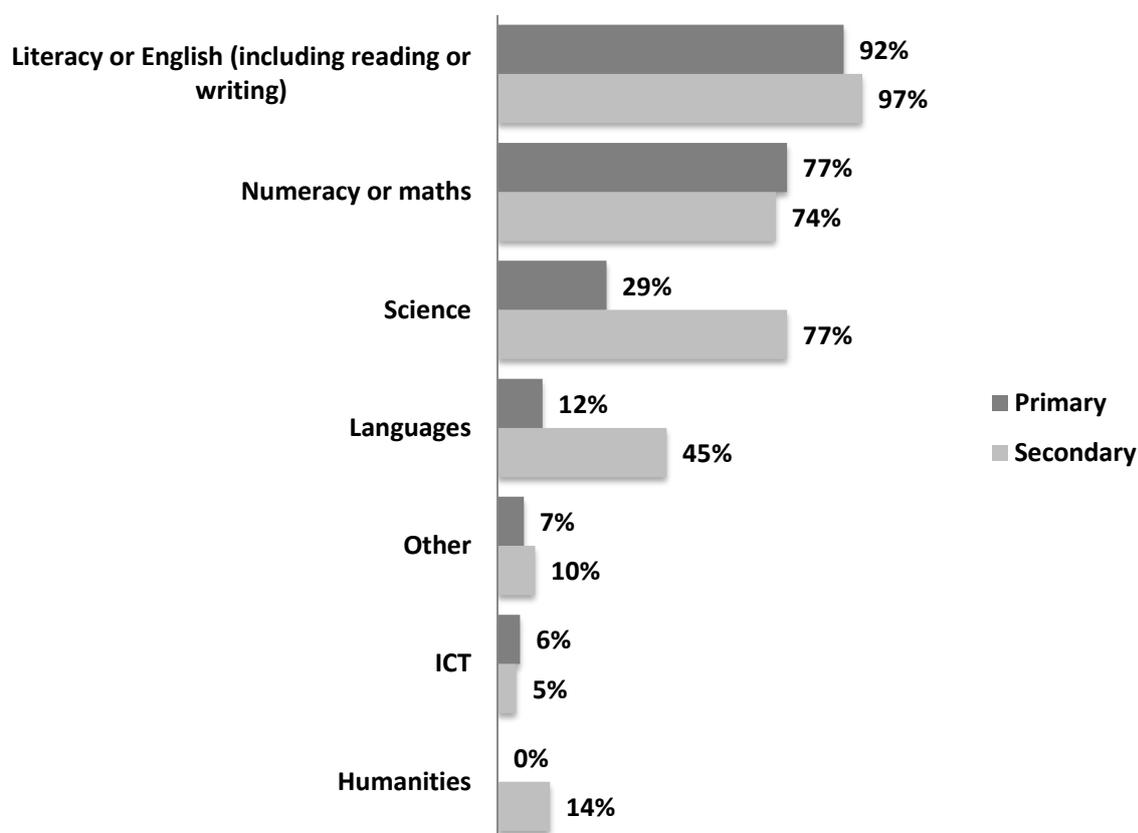
Base: All schools prioritising this i.e. rating it 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10 of relevance to school improvement priorities (457). *C2. What is your school's current focus in terms of...?*

It may be useful to recall that smaller proportions of schools in the secondary sector count raising standards/participation in core subjects per se as being relevant to their current school improvement priorities (as set out in section 5.1.2 above).

If we were to include all schools within the sample, we would see 33% of secondaries and 11% of primaries not considering it a school improvement priority to raise standards/participation in core subjects. As a result, there is a greater focus on both Maths and English in the primary sector as a whole (81% and 68% respectively) relative to the focus they are given in the secondary sector (65% and 50% respectively).[20]

5.2.1.1 Raising standards or participation in core subjects: Variation by key stage attainment and Ofsted grade

Using performance measures from the National Pupil Database, the subject areas receiving focus can be compared against school performance in these subjects.

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[20] In this analysis, including the 15% of schools who do not currently prioritise the raising of standards in core subjects, the total sample percentages of In schools focusing on these areas are: Literacy or English: 78%; Numeracy or maths: 65%; Sciences: 31%: Languages: 14%.

This comparison confirms that the focus on a subject areas increases where key stage performance in that subject is lower.

Looking at English (as shaded in the left-hand segment of Figure 32), we see that focus increases significantly in schools when KS2 performance drops below 75% at levels 4 or above (to 93%[21]). However, focus remains at relatively high levels even where KS2 performance is highest: 78% of all schools in the highest KS2 bracket consider English a focus.

Looking at Maths/numeracy, the increase in focus is significant at the level where KS2 performance drops below 90%, but this is from a significantly lower baseline than English: Only 55% of schools in the highest KS2 performance bracket focus on numeracy or mathematics.

The focus on English and Maths is also seen to correlate with Ofsted grading. Both subjects receive significantly less focus across the sector with every increase in Ofsted grade.

Among schools with the lowest Ofsted grades, 87% focus on literacy/English and 77% focus on numeracy/Maths.

Figure 32: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of raising standards or participation in core subjects, by Key Stage 2 (KS2) performance and Ofsted grade

	KS2 English % Level 4+			KS2 Maths % Level 4+			Ofsted			Total sample
	Up to 75%	76% to 89%	90% to 100%	Up to 75%	76% to 89%	90% to 100%	Grade 3 / 4	Grade 2	Grade 1	
Literacy or English	93%	82%	78%	88%	85%	75%	87%	79%	68%	**78%**
Numeracy or maths	84%	67%	64%	87%	69%	55%	77%	64%	53%	**65%**
Science	29%	23%	29%	32%	23%	26%	34%	31%	27%	**31%**
Languages	11%	8%	16%	11%	11%	12%	15%	14%	13%	**14%**
N/A: core subjects not a focus	5%	10%	14%	5%	8%	17%	8%	13%	28%	**15%**
Bases (all schools)	(92)	(185)	(147)	(107)	(195)	(122)	(146)	(250)	(128)	**(530)**

Sub-sample sizes are not large enough to allow comparison by GCSE data, but suggest a similar general pattern in terms of performance having an impact on English and Maths measures.

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[21] Please note that the data is rebased as a sample of all schools (including those who do not focus on core subjects as 'not applicable'), since patterns appear more clearly defined.

5.2.2 Underperformance in general or for pupil groups with specific characteristics

Among schools that prioritise pupil underperformance, nearly nine in ten focus on this in general or at specific key stages (87%).

Looking at mentions of pupil groups with specific characteristics, those most likely to be targeted for school improvement were pupils with SEN (80%).

Pupils eligible for FSM or from deprived backgrounds were the next most mentioned group (78%) alongside children judged by the school to be vulnerable (77%).

Slightly less likely to be mentioned were pupils with English as an additional language (71%) and specific ethnic groups (61%).

As shown in Figure 33, a wide range of groups were mentioned outside of the prompted list here, including boys (10%) and gifted and talented children (10%). White British boys appear as more likely area of focus for secondaries (5%) than primaries (1%)

Figure 33: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of pupil underperformance

Category	Percentage
Underperforming pupils in general incl below expected levels of attainment/progress	87%
Pupils with SEN	80%
Pupils eligible for FSM or from deprived backgrounds	78%
Children judged by school to be vulnerable eg in care/with caring responsibilities	77%
Pupils with English as an Additional Language	71%
Particular ethnic groups	61%
Boys	10%
Gifted and talented children	10%
Other	3%
Mobile Children/short-stay/frequently relocating children (incl. Armed forces)	2%
White British / English (General)	2%
Summer-born children	1%
White British / English boys	1%
Girls	1%
Gender (unspecified)	1%
Travellers / gypsy community	1%
Refugee / asylum seekers	1%
Late admissions	1%

Unprompted responses

Base: All who prioritised this by rating it 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10 of relevance to school improvement priorities (428).*C5.What is your school's current focus in terms of ...?* Multiple responses were permitted, including underperforming pupils in general and mentions of specific groups.

Projecting these numbers onto the target London school population as a whole (including 20% or 438 schools for whom underperformance is not a current school improvement focus[22]), the survey indicates that of 2,201 schools:

- 1,542 prioritise underperforming pupils in general/ below expected levels of attainment or progress (70%)
- 1,410 prioritise pupils with SEN (64%)
- 1,373 prioritise pupils eligible for FSM or from deprived backgrounds (62%)

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[22] They do not rate this 8-10 on a 1-10 scale of relevance to their school improvement priorities.

- 1,358 prioritise children judged by the school to be vulnerable e.g. in care or with caring responsibilities (62%)
- 1,244 prioritise pupils with English as an Additional Language (57%)
- 1,068 prioritise particular ethnic groups (49%).

5.2.3 Design of the school curriculum: Curriculum enrichment

For schools prioritising school curriculum design, enrichment is a particularly high priority at the moment: 84% stating that they are focused on developing a more creative curriculum or cross-curricular links and a similarly high 80% are focusing on curriculum enrichment or learning outside the classroom.

The results shown below cover both phases, with notable differences in some areas. Not least, careers guidance becomes important in the secondary sector (80% mentioning this as a focus area), while learning outside the class is a more commonly mentioned priority for the primary sector (mentioned by 90%, compared to 58% of primaries included in this measure).

Figure 34: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of curriculum design
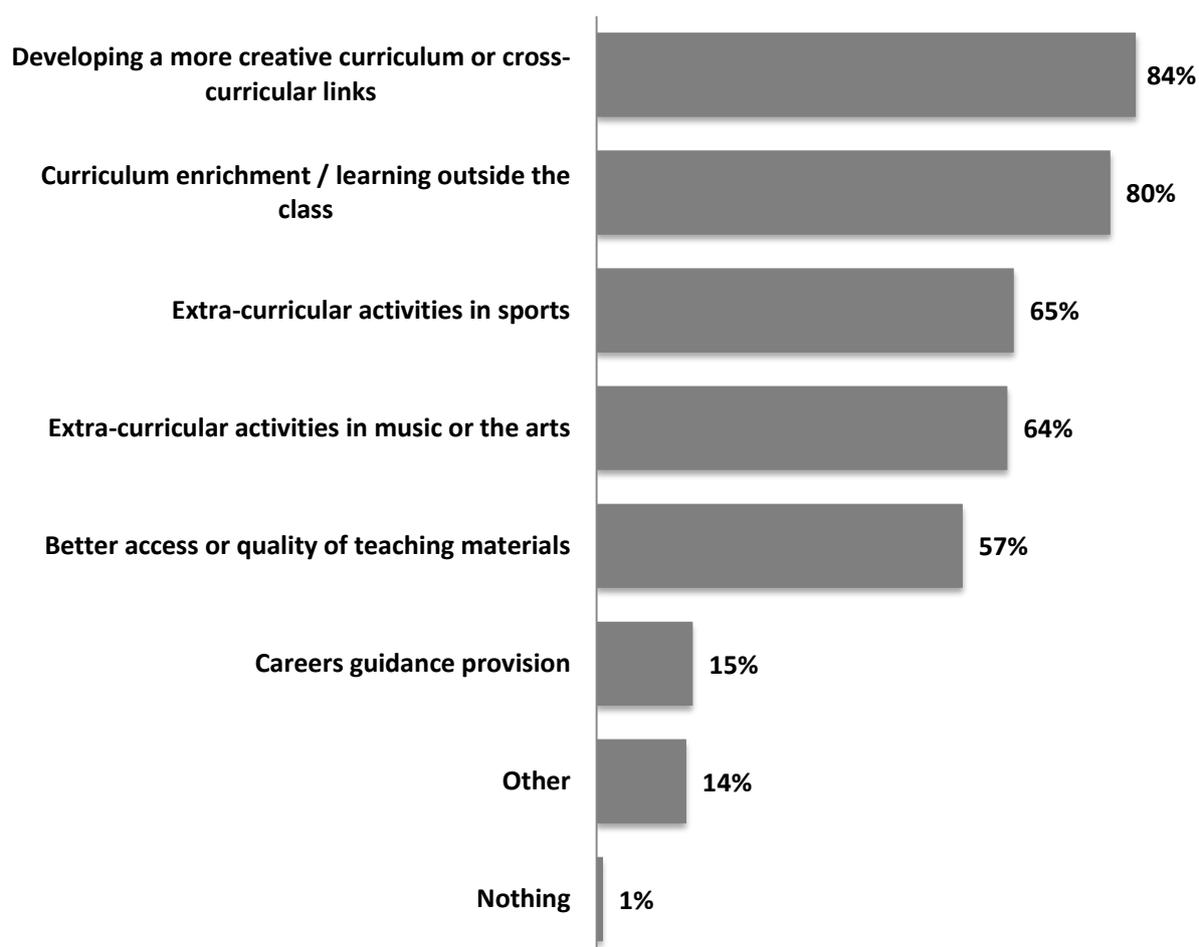
Base: All who prioritised this by rating it 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10 of relevance to school improvement priorities (327). C6. *What is your school's current focus in terms of ...?*

Schools seeking more help in this improvement area tended to report unmet needs in resourcing the improvement and in getting impartial information on strategy effectiveness or what has worked in other schools. This is detailed further in section 6.2 below.

Projecting these numbers onto the target London school population as a whole (including 38% or 846 schools for whom the curriculum is not a current school improvement focus[23]), the survey indicates that of 2,201 schools:

- 1,144 prioritise developing a more creative curriculum or cross-curricular links (52%)
- 1082 prioritise curriculum enrichment /learning outside the class (49%)
- 882 prioritise extra-curricular activities in sports (40%)
- 870 prioritise extra-curricular activities in music or the arts (40%)
- 776 prioritise better access or quality of teaching materials (35%)
- 203 prioritise careers guidance provision (9% of all schools, or 48% of all secondary schools).

5.2.4 Pupil transitions and destinations

Where schools count pupil transitions and destinations as a current improvement priority area, the most common area of focus is on supporting pupils moving from primary to secondary, which is mentioned by 80% in this sample (see Figure 35).

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[23] They do not rate this 8-10 on a 1-10 scale of relevance to their school improvement priorities.

Figure 35: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of pupil transitions and destinations
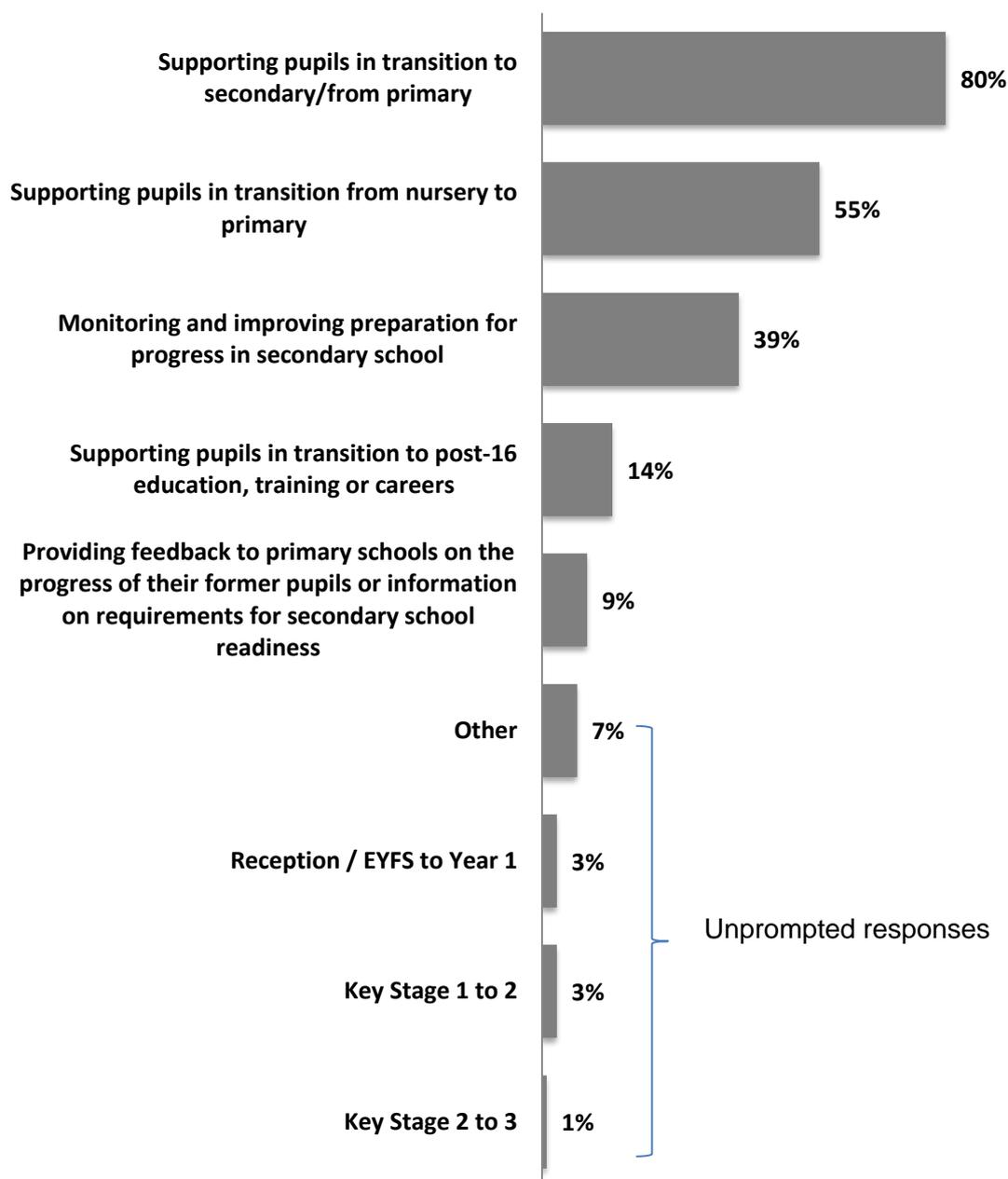
Base: All who prioritised this by rating it 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10 of relevance to school improvement priorities (208). *C4. What is your school's current focus in terms of ...?*

Projecting these numbers onto the target London school population as a whole (including 43% or 953 schools for whom transitions and destinations are not a current school improvement focus[24]), the survey indicates that of 2,201 schools:

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[24] They do not rate this 8-10 on a 1-10 scale of relevance to their school improvement priorities.

- 995 prioritise supporting pupils in transition to secondary / from primary (840 primary and 155 of secondary schools)
- 681 prioritise supporting pupils in transition from nursery to primary (all primaries)
- 485 prioritise monitoring and improving preparation for progress in secondary school (all primaries)
- 177 prioritise supporting pupils in preparation for post-16 education or careers (all secondaries)
- 106 prioritise providing feedback to primaries on the progress of their pupils or information on requirements for secondary school readiness (all secondaries).

The percentages of schools focusing on each area (as a total of all schools) are summarised in Figure 36 below. As shown, primaries are particularly focused on preparation for secondary school and secondaries are focused on preparation for post-16 education or employment.

This suggests that the norm across the sector is to focus most strongly on preparation for the next stage, relative to settling pupils into the current stage. The data appears to reflect a similar level of focus on transitions and destinations in both phases.

Figure 36: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of pupil transitions and destinations: Rebased as a percentage of all schools and compared by phase
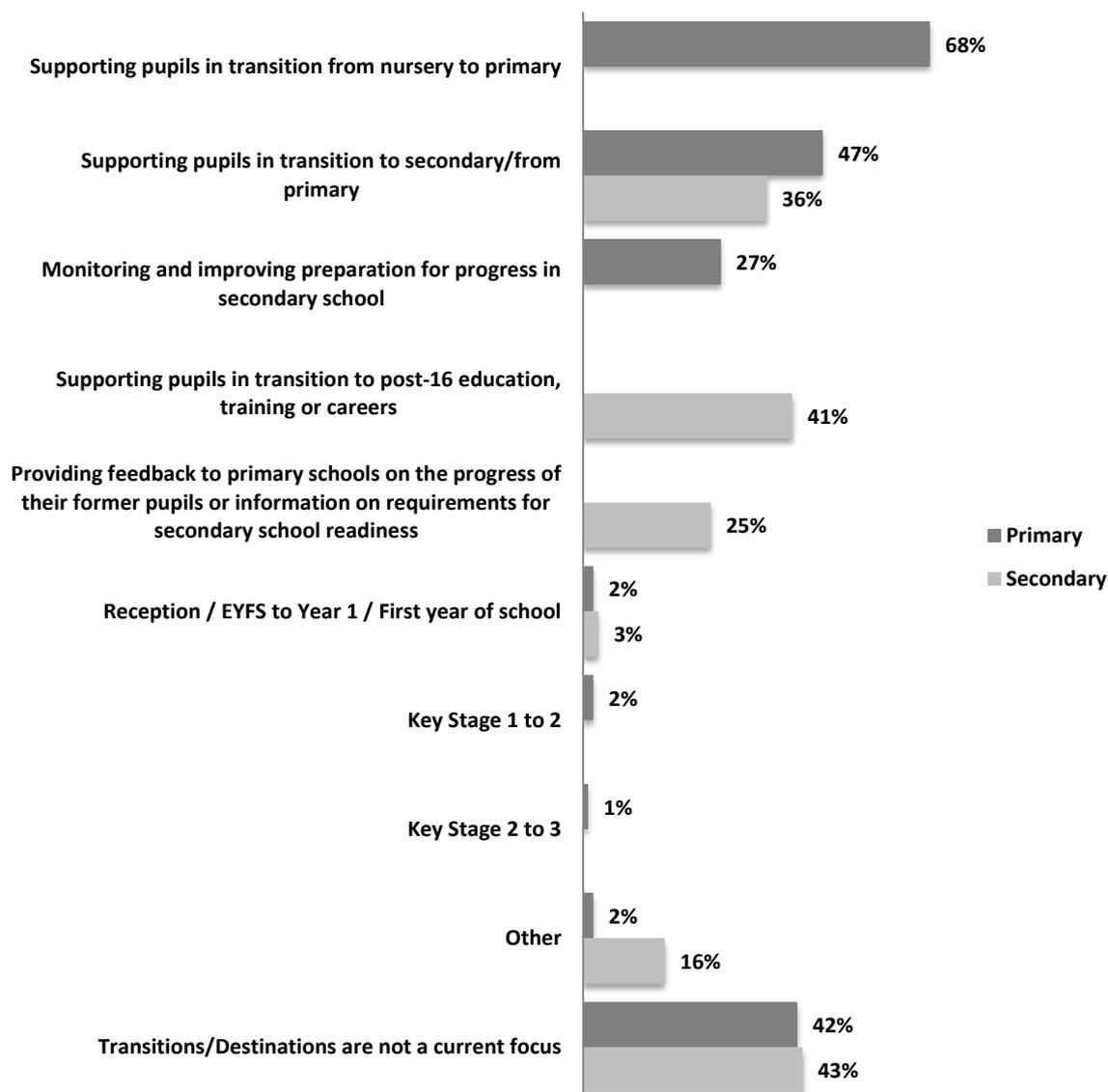
Base: All schools (530) *C4. What is your school's current focus in terms of ...?*

5.2.5 Pupil behaviour and safety

Among the schools that focus on pupil behaviour and safety, three in four prioritise attendance and engagement in education (75%) compared to just under two in three who focus on behaviour and discipline (64%).

Just over half of these schools (52%) agree that safety in school and when travelling to school is a priority, while a wide range of other target areas were mentioned unprompted, including child protection and uniforms

Figure 37: Percentage of schools that focus on this aspect of behaviour or safety
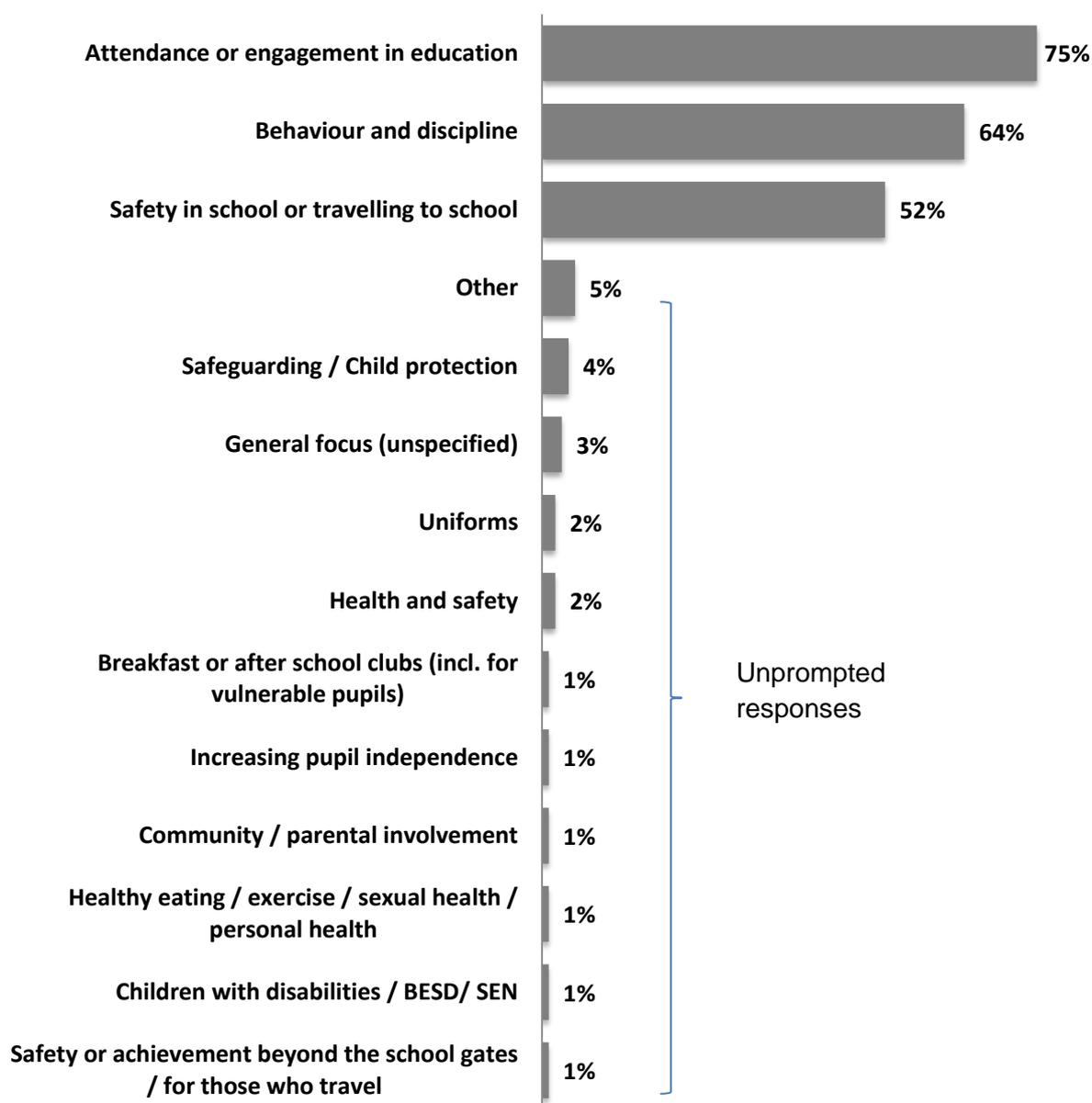
Base: All who prioritised this by rating it 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10 of relevance to school improvement priorities (208).C3. *What is your school's current focus in terms of ...?*

With only 29 secondaries in this sample, phase comparisons cannot be made on a statistically significant basis. Nevertheless, there is a suggestion of greater focus on behaviour/discipline within secondaries (83%) compared to primaries (58%). In comparison attendance/engagement issues appear to be prioritised to a similar degree in both phases (74% and 76%). 69% of secondaries and 46% of primaries in this sample were focusing on safety in school and travelling to school.

Faith schools appeared to focus more on safety in school and travelling to school than non-faith schools (64% compared to 47%). Non-faith schools in the sample were more focused on attendance (79% compared to 64%). Therefore, in the faith school sector, similarly high levels of focus are seen on safety (64%), attendance/engagement (64%), and behaviour and discipline (62%).

Projecting the numbers onto the target London school population as a whole (including 60% or 1,321 schools for whom behaviour and safety are not a current school improvement focus[25]), the survey indicates that of 2,201 schools:

- 657 prioritise attendance or engagement in education (30% of schools)
- 562 prioritise behaviour and discipline (26% of schools)
- 454 prioritise safety in school or travelling to school (21% of schools).

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[25] They do not rate this 8-10 on a 1-10 scale of relevance to their school improvement priorities.

6 Future Needs and Preferences in School Improvement Provision

6.1 School improvement areas where unmet needs or further information requirements are identified

All school respondents were asked to think of the broad areas of school improvement discussed, and specify any areas where they felt that their school had any particular unmet needs or needed further information or support on at the moment.

Just under half of school leaders (47%) were prompted by this to specify some type of unmet need or information/support requirement. As shown in Figure 38 below, the most common information/support requirement related to design of the school curriculum (17%) followed by pupil underperformance in general or for groups of pupils with specific characteristics (15%).

Figure 38: Areas where the school has any particular unmet needs or needs further information or support on at the moment (prompted): Percentage responses
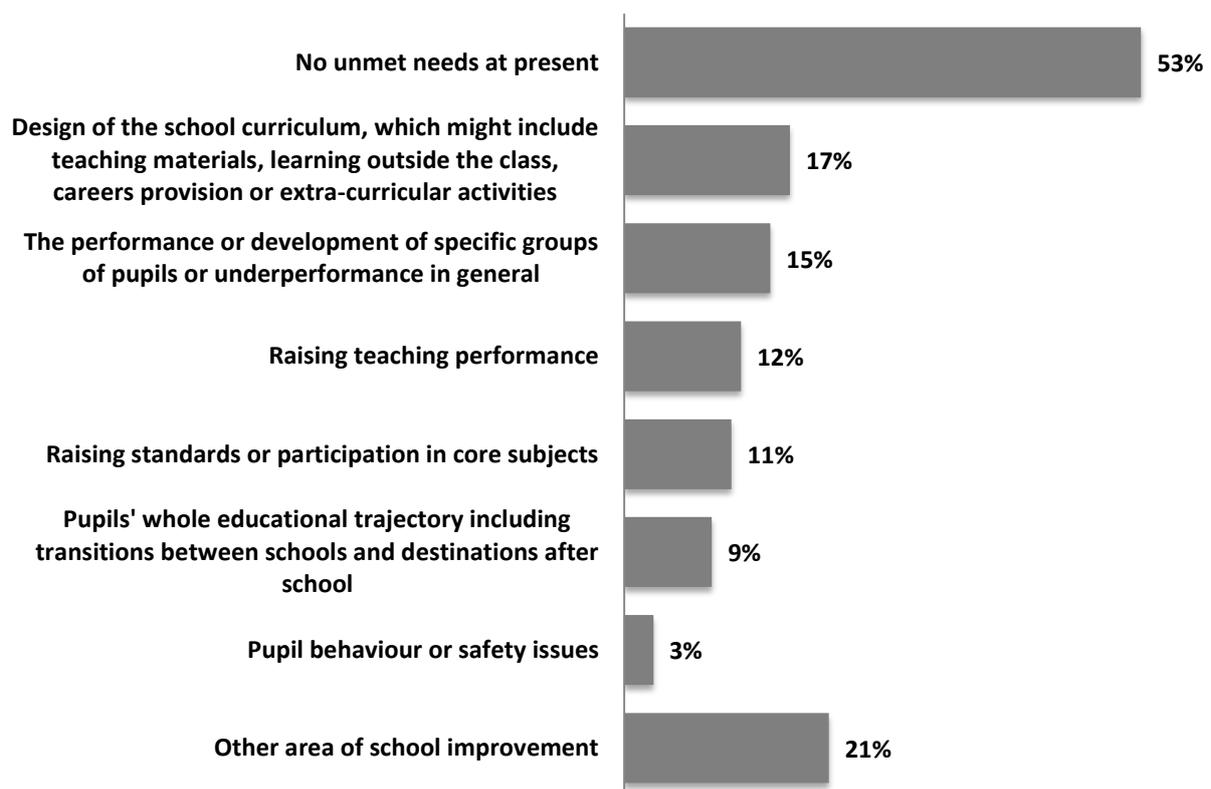
Base: All respondents (530) C7 **NB 'performance or development' refers to educational underperformance.**

As detailed in section 5.1, design of the school curriculum is not the highest school improvement priority on the current agenda (listed fourth in order of areas most relevant to schools). However, the new National Curriculum does appear to be an area where schools are requiring some support, or further information.

Likewise, pupil underperformance is third when school improvement areas are listed in order of most relevance to schools but is second here in respect of requests for more assistance (see section 5.1).

The figure below presents the same findings following the 'grossing up' of the data to the size of the London school population. This provides estimates of the number of schools in London with each specified unmet need or information requirement.

Figure 39: Areas where the school has any particular unmet needs or needs further information or support on at the moment (prompted): Estimated number of London schools
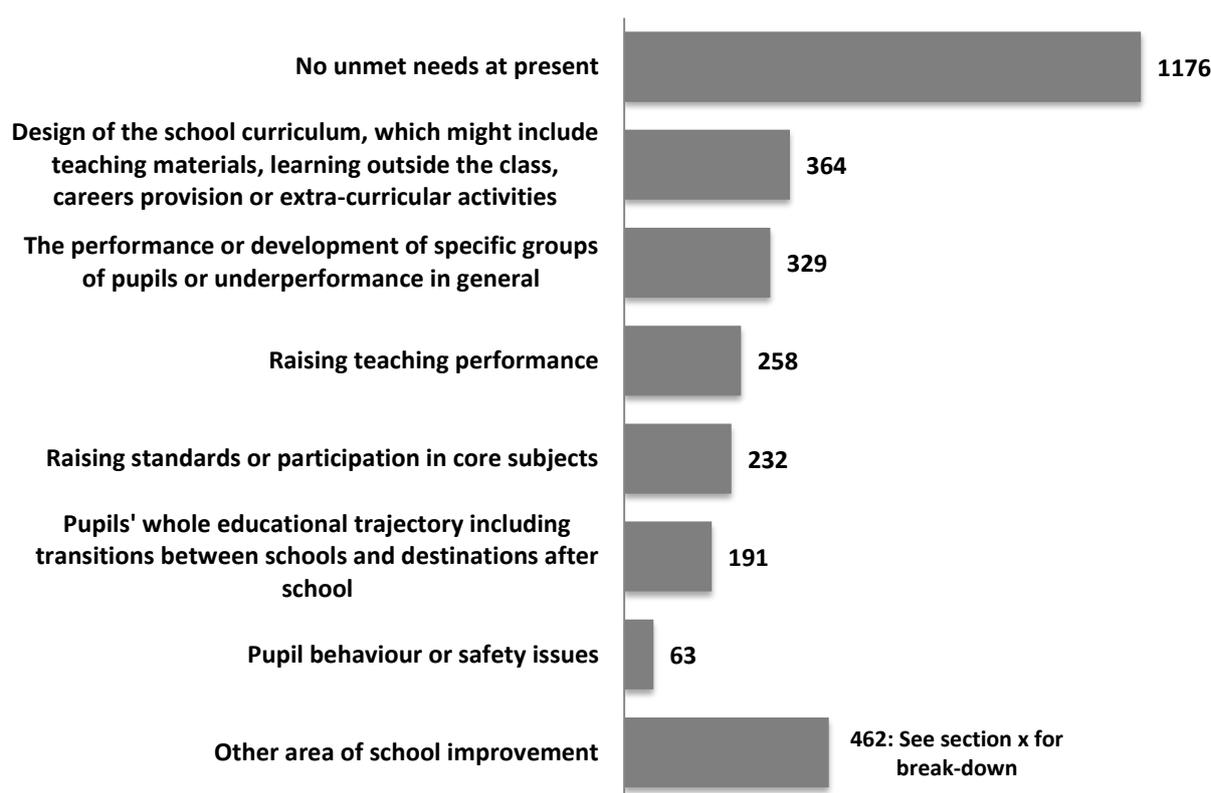
Base: All respondents (530) C7 **NB 'performance or development' refers to educational underperformance.**

The nature of this assistance is explored further in the two sections to follow. Unprompted mentions of 'new curriculum standards' (i.e. the new National Curriculum) and SEN requirements suggest that some schools are seeking more information on these areas in particular (see section 6.2.1). More generally, schools raise resourcing school improvement as one of the key challenges in school improvement, and support with financing improvement would be welcomed widely across the spectrum of different priority areas discussed.

6.2   Types of support in demand

Figure 40 below shows the types of improvement support in demand, as a percentage of all schools with some unmet needs/further requirement. The vertical access is ordered from most to least mentioned, (as an aggregated average across all priority areas discussed), showing that the most common type of support requested relates to

resourcing. This is followed in importance by obtaining impartial information on effective strategies or what has worked for other schools.

Evaluating value for money was described by school leaders as one of the most challenging aspects of school improvement, as detailed in section 3.1. However, it appears that leaders are less likely to seek help from external sources on evaluating value for money (perhaps seeing this as an inherently internal process) than they are likely to seek information and guidance on improvement strategies that have worked for other schools. As shown in Figure 40 below, the percentages range from 58% to 73% in terms of information needs on evaluating value for money, while the range is 62% to 79% in terms of information needs on effective school improvement strategies.

Figure 40: Unmet needs/further information sought, by improvement area (prompted)
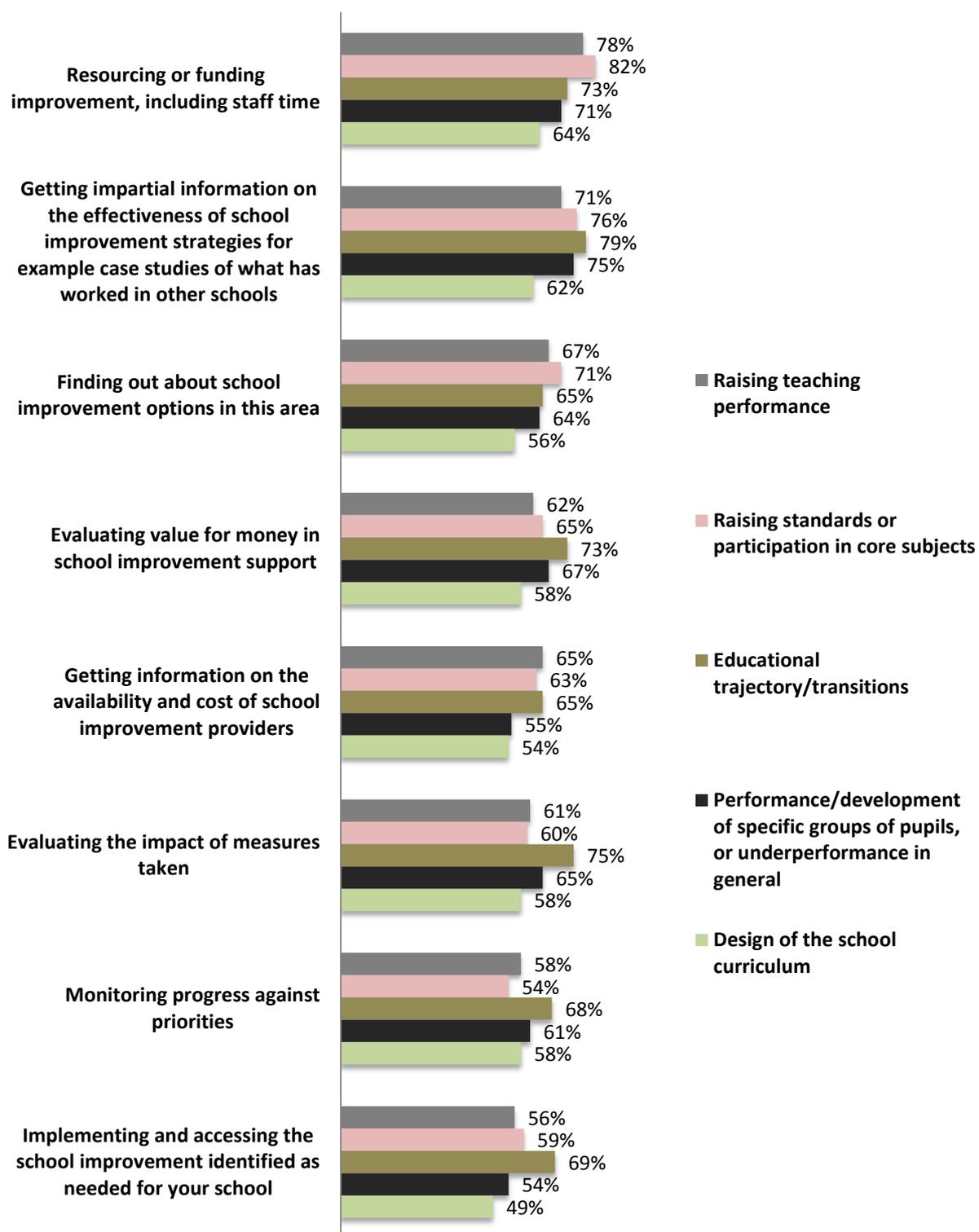
Base: All with a specified unmet need on this school improvement priority (Max 81 for design of curriculum; Min 46 for educational trajectory). Please note that the chart does not show pupil safety/behaviour due to its low base.

As shown from the variations between the differently shaded bars in Figure 40, there are variations in needs specified for different priorities. For example, the purple bars suggest that where schools have unmet needs around pupil transitions or destinations, they are most likely to be seeking impartial information on effective strategies or what has worked for other schools (79%) but they are also widely looking for assistance evaluating the impact of measures they have taken (75%). A more entrenched practice of feeding back on pupil progress following transition onto higher phases may therefore be of benefit.

Help with resourcing school improvement appears to be particularly in demand in relation to raising performance or participation in core subjects: 82% of respondents mentioning this. Assistance was less required in monitoring progress (54%), since this is likely to be monitored through pupil attainment statistics.

6.2.1 'Other areas' where schools have school improvement needs (unprompted)

As shown in section 6.1 of this report, 47% of schools overall stated at least one type of information requirement or unmet need, including 21% who gave a response that was unprompted by the questionnaire (i.e. written into 'other'). These unprompted responses were coded into themes and are summarised in Figure 41 below.

While only small percentages mention each individual theme, it can be noted that the most common issues raised concern financial issues as well as school buildings and the physical school environment. At the time of interviewing there was also a particular demand for more information around requirements for SEN provision in schools, and for information on the new National Curriculum (often described as 'the new curriculum standards'), reflecting policy changes in this area.[26]

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[26] For more information on these national policy reviews, see:
http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum/

http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/sen/b0075291/green-paper

Figure 41: Other areas where the school has any particular unmet needs or needs further information or support on at the moment (Unprompted): Percentages and estimated number of London schools

	Percentage of all schools in the survey raising this need unprompted (% of all 530 schools in survey)	Estimated count of schools in London who would raise this need unprompted (number out of 2,201 schools)[27]
Financial issues/raising funds	4%	85
Buildings and the physical school environment	3%	60
Provision of more information on the new curriculum standards	2%	53
Requirements for providing SEN	2%	45
Leadership training/ development issues	1%	33
Development of pupils' further education/ future employment opportunities	1%	26
Improving links with other schools/ education networks	1%	26
Parental engagement	1%	23
Updating/ improving school ICT systems	1%	23
Improving induction/ entry procedures for pupils	1%	23
Improving/maintaining staff recruitment	1%	22
Reading/writing/literacy	1%	19
Developing programmes targeted at gifted children	1%	19
Reducing government influence on the decision-making process	1%	18
Methods of assessing pupils	1%	15
Widening the range of subjects in the school curriculum	1%	15
English as an Additional Language/EAL	1%	11
More/better support made available generally	1%	11
Other	6%	129

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[27] These figures are achieved using a process of 'grossing-up' of weighted survey data to the sample frame of 2,201 schools.

6.3 Future sources of support

In section 4.4, we explored the sources of external support used to implement school improvement in this academic year, with feedback suggesting that the local authority continues to play a highly pivotal role in the London schools sector.

Respondents were then asked where they anticipate wanting future support to come from. If they had used the channel already, they were asked if they anticipated wanting to use it more, less or to the same extent in future. If they had not used this channel before, they were asked if they anticipated using it at all in future (with explanations provided, of the terms 'NLE', 'TSA'[28] and so on, in rare cases where this as required).

As shown in Figure 42, Teaching Schools attract the highest proportion of responses of 'we anticipate wanting to use it more' (49%). A similar proportion of non-users anticipate wanting to start using teaching school alliance support for school improvement in future (45%, increasing from 42% where the school has no current contact with a TSA, to 63% where a school has some contact with a TSA). Projecting these numbers onto the London school population[29] as a whole, the survey indicates that 395 London schools are already using TSAs at least to some extent and of these 192 seek to use them more. Among the 1806 schools not currently using TSAs as many as 834 anticipate wanting to use TSAs for school improvement in future.

In use already by almost nine-tenths of the sector (see section 4.4), local authority support will be sought after to the same degree by two-thirds of its users in future. This suggests that it will remain a highly-valued channel for school improvement support albeit in an evolving form. Indeed, a tenth of its users anticipate wanting to use this channel more in future. However, eight in ten non-users have no plans to begin using the local authority for improvement support, and one in five users anticipate wanting to use this channel less in future, suggesting that increased autonomies in the sector will lead to a reduction in reliance on the local authority for school improvement support in the long term.

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[28] See glossary of terms

[29] The total sample frame comprises 2,201 schools in the target London school population of primary and secondary schools of maintained or academy status.

Figure 42: In future do you anticipate wanting to use this...? (In order of anticipated future usage)

	Current users					Non Users			
	More	**Less**	**To the same extent**	**Unsure**	**Bases**	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**	**Bases**
A Teaching School or Teaching School Alliance	49%	2%	48%	1%	(89)	Where in contact: 63%	21%	15%	(81)
						No current contact: 42%	45%	13%	(360)
Another school or schools (not organised through an alliance or NLE)	38%	2%	59%	1%	(368)	54%	37%	9%	(162)
A National Leader of Education (NLE) or Local Leader of Education or LLE	31%	8%	57%	5%	(169)	38%	50%	12%	(361)
A consortium of Local Authorities	24%	7%	65%	4%	(151)	23%	66%	11%	(379)
Your Academy Sponsor or Chain (Academies only)	24%	0%	76%	0%	(11)	4%	93%	2%	(27)
A Third Sector or Charity Organisation	22%	2%	75%	1%	(192)	25%	59%	16%	(338)
Commercial services either on a brokered basis or direct. This might include your ex-School Improvement partner now on a commercial basis	13%	7%	79%	2%	(376)	29%	62%	9%	(154)
Your Local Authority	11%	19%	67%	2%	(465)	20%	78%	3%	(65)

Bases as shown. Caution – low base on academies sample.

Support sources are listed in order of most to least % of current users who expect to use this MORE.

6.3.1 Direction of travel in school improvement channel usage

To offer some insight on the likely general direction of travel of school improvement needs, Figure 43 reconfigures responses on anticipated future wants and needs (from those seen in Figure 42).

The figure below categorises respondents into three segments. Far-left-hand segments* denote potential new users and users who plan to use this channel more. Second-from-left segments** combine those who expect to remain as non-users and those who expect to use this channel to the same extent as this year. Second-from-right segments signify users who anticipate wanting to use this channel less in future.

Channels are listed in order of most to least used in the current academic year, with a reminder of these percentages on the right (detailed in section 4.4).

As shown, the three areas where we see highest levels of increased demand, relate to peer-to-peer collaboration: TSAs (47%); other schools more informally (43%); and NLE/LLEs (35%).

Figure 43: Anticipated future wants in channels of school improvement support

	*	**	***	Used at all this year
Your Local Authority	12%	69%	17% 2%	86%
Commercial services either on a brokered basis or direct. This might include your ex-SIP now on a commercial basis	17%	74%	5% 4%	72%
Another school or schools (not organised through an alliance or NLE)	43%	53%	1% 3%	70%
A Third Sector or Charity Organisation	24%	65%	1% 11%	37%
A NLE or LLE	35%	52%	3% 10%	33%
A consortium of Local Authorities	23%	65%	2% 9%	28%
Your Academy Sponsor or Chain (academies only)	10%	89%	2%	27%
A Teaching School or Teaching School Alliance	47%	42%	<0.5% 11%	18%

■ Use more/start using ■ Use to the same extent ■ Use less ■ Unsure/depends on too many factors

Base: All respondents (530) except 'Your academy sponsor or chain (academies Only: 38) If we include non-academies in the sample, for academy sponsor/chain, 1% say more, 10% the same extent, 89% are N/A.

Please note that the chart does not attempt to forecast the percentage of likely users for each channel in future, since leaders were responding about anticipated wants and needs. (Questionnaire piloting found that leaders were not willing to give a definitive response on sources of school improvement support that they would stop and start using in future, seeing this as dependent on too many wider factors.)

Nevertheless, bearing this caveat in mind, along with small bases in some areas) the data tables accompanying this report do offer some suggestions around the likely

profile of new users for the channels specified. For example, future use of local authority consortia is likely to come from the maintained sector rather than the academy sector (and therefore any new usage of local authority consortia would be lessened by large-scale academy conversion).

New users of NLEs are least likely to be found among grade 1 Ofsted schools. While this may be expected as one of the aims of NLEs and their schools is *'to work with schools and academies in the most challenging of circumstances'*[30], it can be noted that schools with Ofsted grade 2 are similarly likely to want to use a NLE/LLE in future as those with grades 3 or 4: Among non-users, 43% of schools with grades 3 or 4 expect to want to use a NLE/LLE in future in future, and 41% of grade 2 schools state this, compared with 26% of grade 1 schools. (Again, some outstanding schools appear see benefits in working with NLEs in some capacity on school improvement.)

New users of commercial services are equally likely from the primary and secondary phases. When we analyse the views of those already using this channel, we see that primaries are more likely than secondaries to expect to use commercial services *more* in future (16% compared with 2%), and therefore overall, there is likely to be an increase in use of commercial services from the primary sector.

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[30] See http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/docinfo?id=157129&filename=nle-fact-sheet-2.pdf

7   Governors and School Improvement

7.1   Perceived effectiveness of governors' challenge and expertise

As detailed earlier in this report, governors are next most used for identifying school improvement priorities after the school's own internal processes (see section 4.1). However, their role in deciding on school improvement options for the school is currently seen as less important than the judgement of the school leadership team; research and evidence on what is effective/best value; and feedback from parents (see section 4.2).

Respondents were also asked to rate their governors and chair on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of their effectiveness in providing challenge and expertise to support school improvement.

As shown in Figure 44, where 1 is least effective and 10 is most effective:

- Just over half (54%) of schools gave governors a score of 8-10: Effective.
- Nearly two-fifths (37%) gave governors a score of 5-7: Neutral.
- One in twelve (8%) gave governors a score of 1-4: Not effective.

Figure 44: Perceived effectiveness of the school governors/chair in providing challenge and expertise to support school improvement
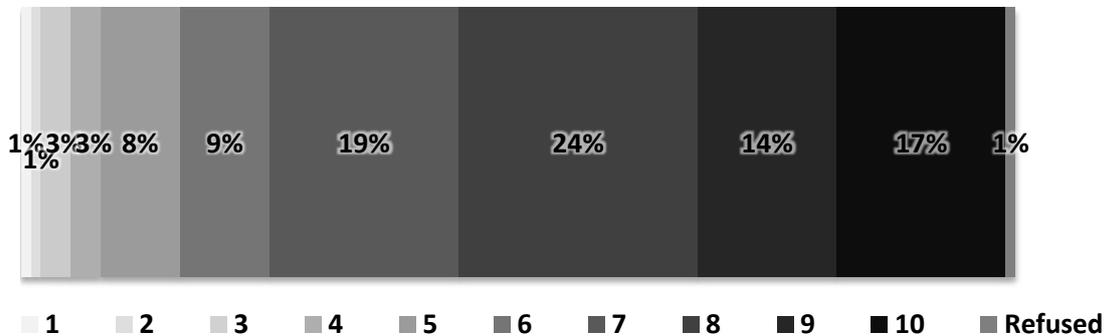
Base: All respondents (530) *D6. How effective do you consider your governors and chair in terms of providing challenge and expertise to support your school improvement?*

Calculating an average 'mean' score from responses, this is 7.43 out of a maximum of 10.

An increase in this rating, to 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 could therefore potentially offer a significant boost to school improvement, increasing the percentage of schools that use governors when deciding on school improvement options for the school.

7.1.1 Perceived effectiveness of governors: Variation by school type

Average scores out of 10 for governor challenge vary across different sub-groups of schools, which gives some indication of where relationships are stronger and/or governing bodies are playing a stronger role in school improvement.

As detailed below, academies tended to rate their governors more highly than maintained schools in terms of their role providing challenge and expertise to support school improvement. Indeed, one third of academies gave their governors a score of 10/10, compared to only 14% of maintained schools.

Higher Ofsted-graded schools and schools with lower free school meal eligibility likewise rated their governors more highly in the challenge and expertise that they bring to school improvement. Average scores out of 10 are listed below:

- Academies = 8.10
- Maintained = 7.34

- Ofsted grade 1 = 7.77
- Ofsted grade 2 = 7.50
- Ofsted grade 3 = 6.89

- Up to 20% FSM = 7.76
- 20.1% to 35% FSM = 7.34
- 35.1%+ FSM = 7.04

7.2 What type(s) of improvement might enhance governors' support and challenge?

Respondents identifying some room for improvement in their governing body (i.e. rating this less than 9 out of 10) were asked to consider a number of different ways that value might be added to their support. Respondents gave each type of intervention a value rating on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 meant it would add the least value and 10 meant it would add the most value.

As shown in the figure below, leaders appear to consider that increasing skills should add the most value: Three-fifths of these schools (57%) saw maximum value in improving the level of skills within the governing body. Having governors with more time available for school business was also widely seen as beneficial, 54% considering that this would add maximum value.

Fewest respondents considered that improving clerking or administration would add value, although a quarter (24%) still rated this 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 (maximum value) in terms of the potential value it could bring.

Figure 45: **Extent of value-add anticipated from potential changes to governors to increase their support of school improvement**
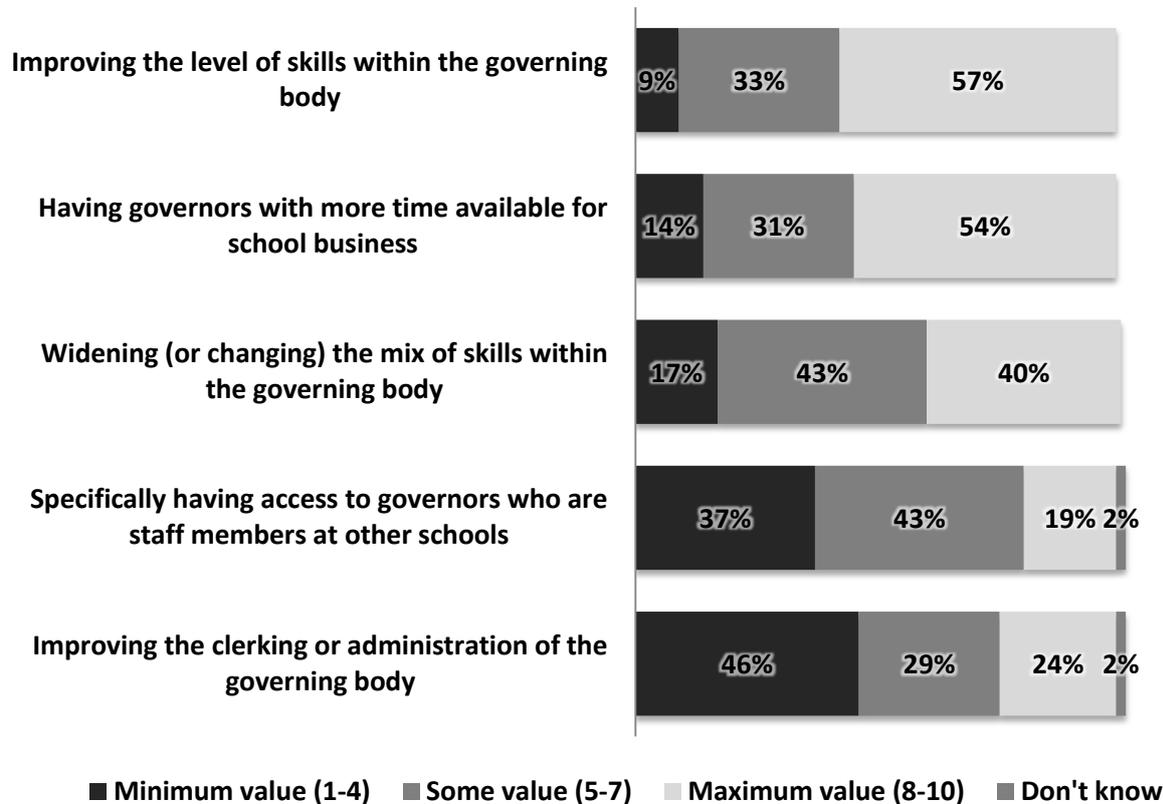
Base: All respondents who consider improvement possible, i.e. scoring their governors 8 or less out of 10 (366) D7-D11

Few variations are seen on this question by school type, although looking at phase, primary schools appear more likely to see a benefit in having governors with more time available (giving this a value rating of 7.32 compared to 6.41 among secondaries).

In two aspects, deprivation levels also appear to impact the value attributed to support.

Firstly, schools with FSM levels over 20% were more likely to value 'improving the level of skills'. Mean value scores were attributed as follows:

- Up to 20% FSM = 7.03
- 20.1% to 35% FSM = 7.63
- 35.1%+ FSM = 7.61.

Schools with FSM levels above 20% were also more likely to value 'having governors with more time'. Mean value scores were attributed as follows:

- Up to 20% FSM = 6.71
- 20.1% to 35% FSM = 7.52
- 35.1%+ FSM = 7.38.

8 School-to-School Support

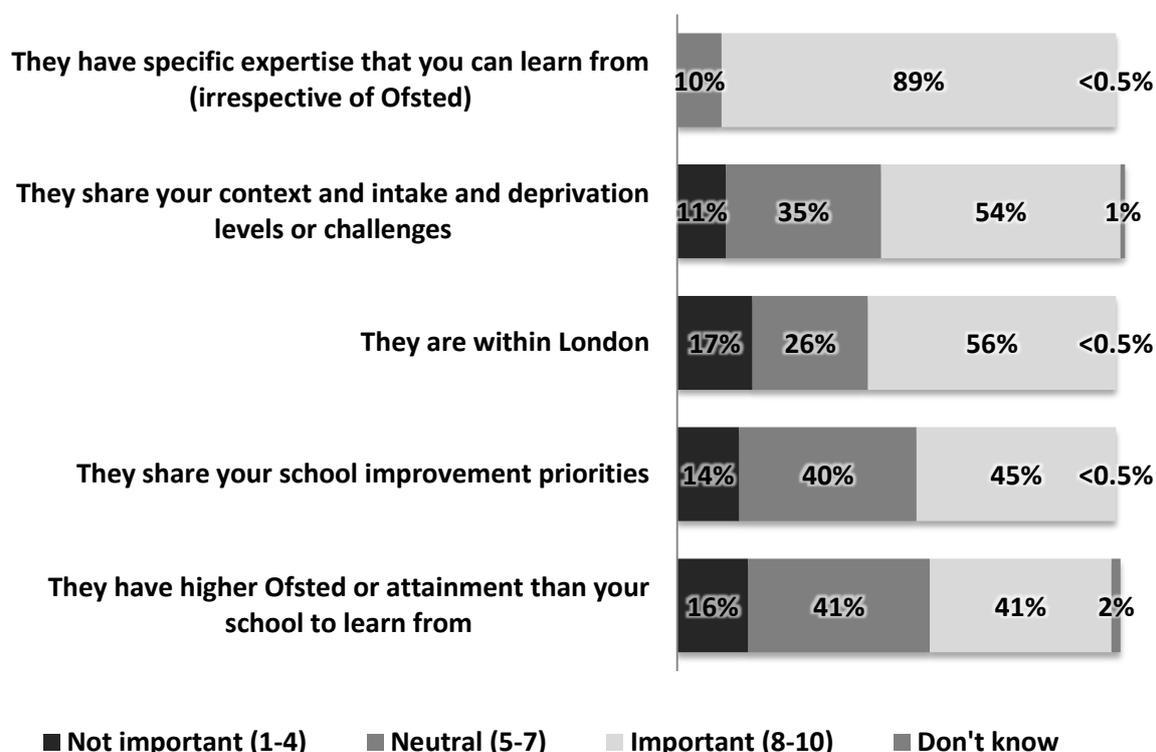### 8.1 Priority areas when working with other schools

The majority of schools (86%) were either already working with other schools on school improvement or anticipated wanting to do so in future (as identified from their responses to prior questions in the survey). These schools were asked to think about their preferences when working with other schools for school improvement.

School leaders considered the importance of five different features, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is least important and 10 is most important.

As shown in Figure 46 below, all of these five factors are considered important by significant proportions of schools, but by far the most important factor is that the other school has a particular expertise that they can learn from (irrespective of Ofsted). This is said to be important (rated 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 in importance) by 89% of these schools. The mean importance rating for this aspect was 8.87.

Views were more neutral in respect of the importance of schools sharing their context and intake and deprivation levels or challenge (7.32), and being located within London. (7.16). Fewer felt that it was important for schools to share the same school improvement priorities as them (6.80). Least important was school Ofsted grade or attainment, which was given the lowest average importance rating of 6.62.

Figure 46: Perceived importance in respect of schools in the cluster or network having the following features

	Not important (1-4)	Neutral (5-7)	Important (8-10)	Don't know
They have specific expertise that you can learn from (irrespective of Ofsted)	10%		89%	<0.5%
They share your context and intake and deprivation levels or challenges	11%	35%	54%	1%
They are within London	17%	26%	56%	<0.5%
They share your school improvement priorities	14%	40%	45%	<0.5%
They have higher Ofsted or attainment than your school to learn from	16%	41%	41%	2%

Base: All schools that work with other schools on school improvement or would like to (458)
Excludes the 14% of schools not working with other schools nor wanting to in future. D12 to D16

8.1.1 Priority areas when working with other schools: Variation by sub-groups

Sub-group analysis suggests that primary maintained schools are most likely to seek a more local school network for school improvement support. Using the mean importance ratings to illustrate this, being within London is more important for maintained schools (rating this 7.34 out of 10) than academies (5.56) and also for primary (7.37) more than secondary (6.29). Among schools that are both primary and maintained, the rating increases to 7.40.

While the variation is not significant at the 95% level of confidence, there is a suggestion that being in London is slightly more important for Inner- than Outer-London schools (importance ratings being 7.45 and 6.99 respectively), likely to reflect greater travelling distances to schools outside the city.

Stance on the importance of Ofsted appears to depend very much on the school's own rating: Having a higher Ofsted grade is more important for schools with Ofsted grades 3 or 4 (7.05) relative to grades 2 (6.68) or 1 (6.15).

8.2 Shared characteristics within school improvement networks

If cluster-working were to be organised on a school-type basis, a single-phase approach would be seen as more logical approach and likely to be more welcomed than a single-status or single-borough approach. However, when considering all three scenarios, schools appeared fairly open-minded. This suggests that a less-rigid approach is sought after (or potentially one that is more flexible, dependent on the school improvement priority for example).

As shown in Figure 47, more schools would prefer to work on school improvement with schools of the same phase as them (37%) than with a mix of phases (17%) but the largest proportion of respondents are open to ether scenario, 44% stating 'don't mind'.

Equal proportions of schools prefer to work on an exclusive basis in terms of school status (maintained/academy) as prefer to have a mix of status within the group (15% and 16% respectively). Two in three schools were open-minded on this (64%).

Only 6% prefer to work exclusively within their own borough, while 31% prefer a mix, suggesting that schools like to get out of their local areas and feel they learn more by doing so. Again, the majority (61%) are open to different scenarios.

Figure 47: Would you prefer the schools you work with on school improvement to be a mix of ...; exclusively your own ...; or you don't mind?
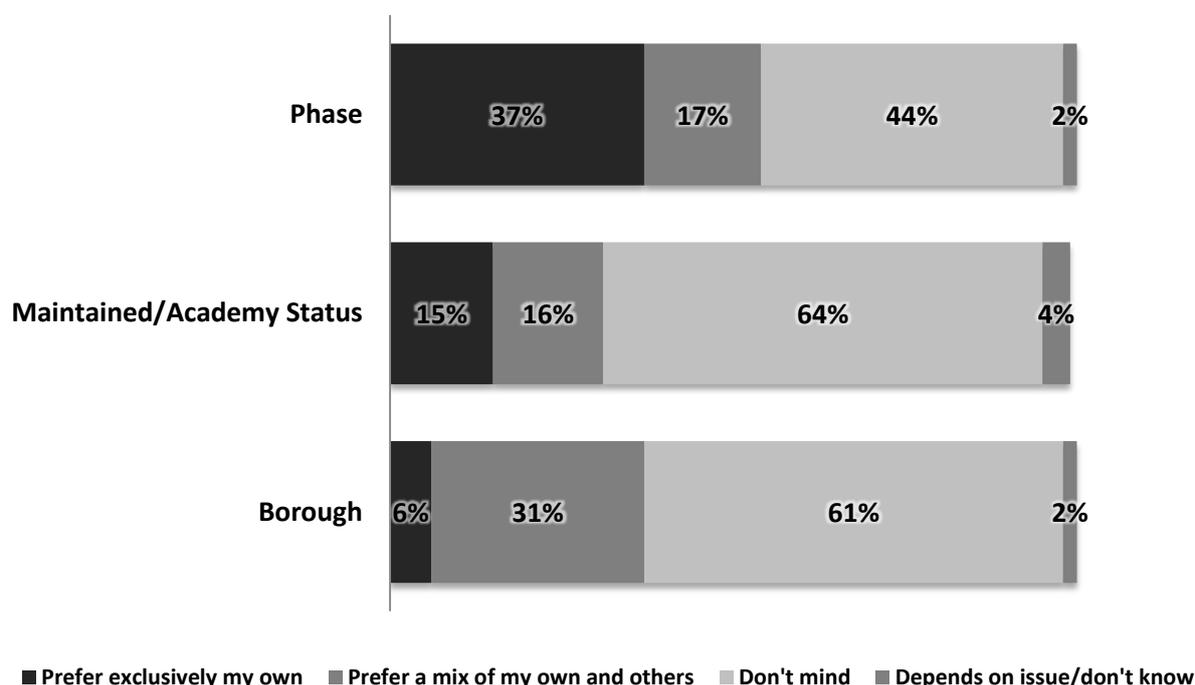
Base: All schools that work with other schools on school improvement or would like to (489) D17 – D19

8.2.1   Sharing characteristics: Primaries are more likely to seek commonalities

Primary maintained schools appear more keen than others to work with other schools sharing their status: 18% stated that they preferred working exclusively with maintained schools, which is a significantly stronger preference than that seen in the secondary maintained sector (only 3% of these stating that they only wished to work with maintained schools, 85% not minding and 9% preferring a mix).

The primary sector as a whole is also keener to work inside its phase: 40% prefer to work with schools on a phase-specific basis, compared to 26% of secondary schools.

Only 7% of primaries would like to work exclusively with schools inside the borough, while none of the 54 secondaries in this sample said this (0%).

9 Pan-London Provision

9.1 Connecting secondary schools with employers and universities

A range of questions were asked to explore the potential usefulness of a range of pan-London school improvement support measures, some of which may be designed specifically for the secondary sector.

As shown in Figure 48, the vast majority of secondary schools would value *"working with employers or the business sector on school improvement"* (92%), including half who are particularly enthusiastic about this (48% stating 'very much so').

Figure 48: Would your school value working with employers or the business sector on school improvement?
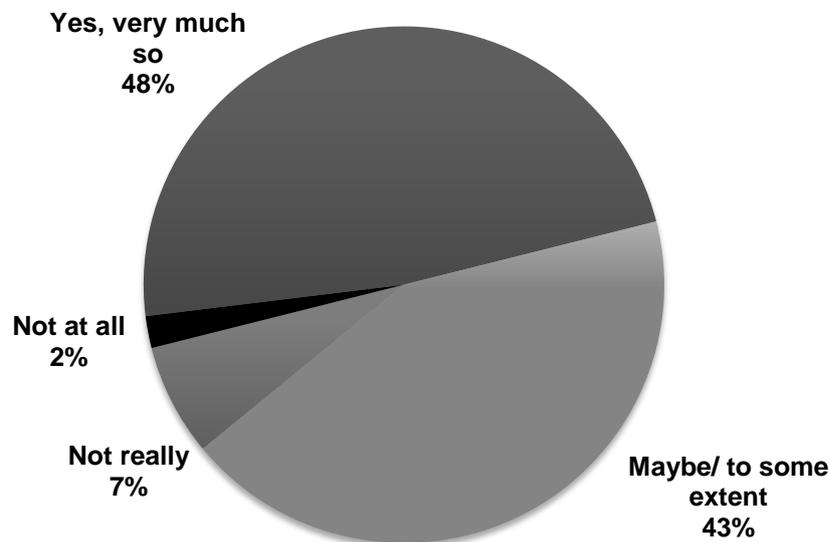
Base: All secondaries (61) D20

A similar question confirms interest in this provision, this time evaluating views on *"extra support for engaging with employers and universities, for example, on your careers guidance and wider careers activities"*. The same proportion overall would value this (92%), with as many as 75% stating 'yes, very much so', suggesting that secondary leaders are very keen to forge stronger relationships with universities.

Figure 49: Would your school value extra support for engaging with employers and universities, for example, on your careers guidance and wider careers activities?

Yes, very much so 75%

Maybe/ to some extent 17%

Not really 5%

Not at all 3%
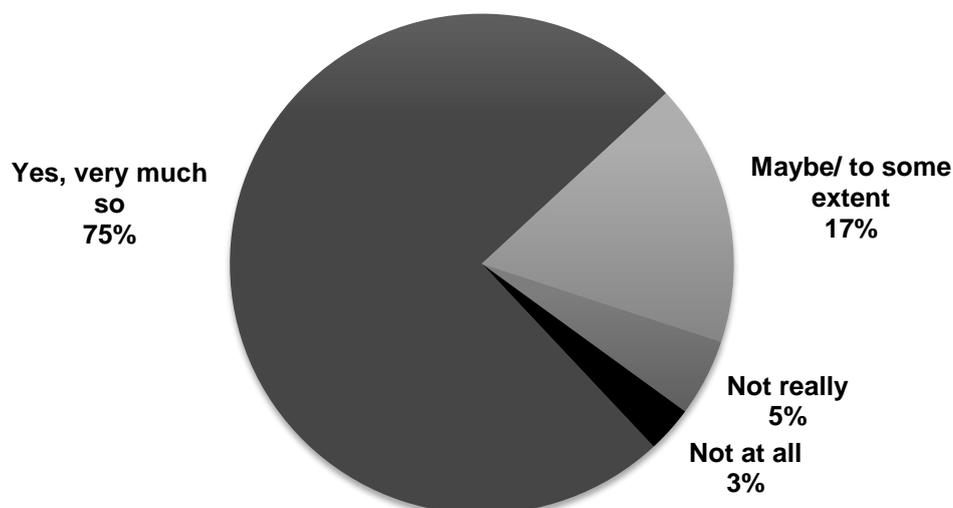
Base: All secondaries (61) E5

The sample base for secondaries does not enable detailed subgroup analysis but generally differences by subgroup do not appear to be significant. On both of the above questions, 95% of inner-London secondaries and 90% of outer-London secondaries answered very much so or to some extent.

Where necessary at E5, interviewers clarified *"this might include London-wide resources and a portal for engagement on work experience and placements, inspiring visits or networking events."*

## 9.2 A London curriculum enrichment offer for secondaries

Secondaries were asked to consider the usefulness of a potential set of London-oriented teaching materials to support the National Curriculum in key subjects[31].

As shown in Figure 50 below, three in ten said maybe (30%) and just over half very much so (53%), aggregating to 83% of secondary school leaders who would value London-focused teaching materials.

A slightly higher percentage say 'not at all' on this measure when compared against questions on university and employer engagement (above), but still only one in twelve say that they would not use materials of this kind at all (8%).

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[31] At the time of survey design, the primary phase was not under consideration for this provision.

Figure 50: Would your school value a set of teaching materials and activities focused on the particular history, culture and geography of London, to support aspects of the National Curriculum in key subjects*?*
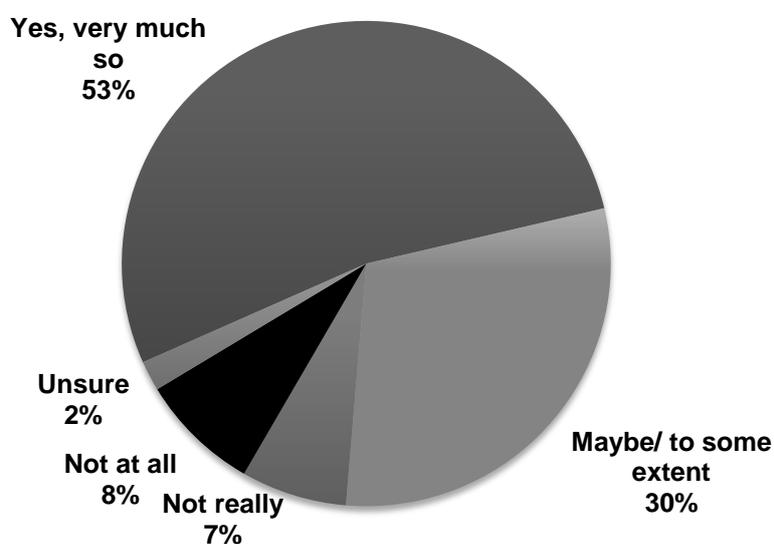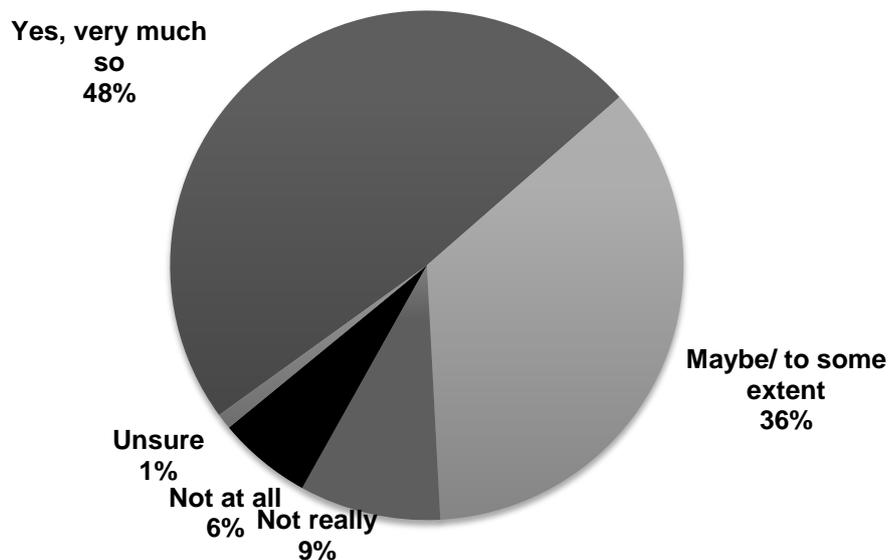

Base: All secondaries (61) E4

Although the difference is not statistically significant, there is again a slightly higher percentage of schools in support of such provision in Inner London (90%) compared with Outer London (80%), noting bases of 21 and 40 respectively.

9.3 A school improvement signposting service

All schools (primary and secondary) were asked whether they would value an online signposting service providing help in identifying sources of support and information on school improvement support. Overall, 85% of all schools considered that they would value an online service of this kind: 48% 'very much so' and 36% 'maybe/to some extent'.
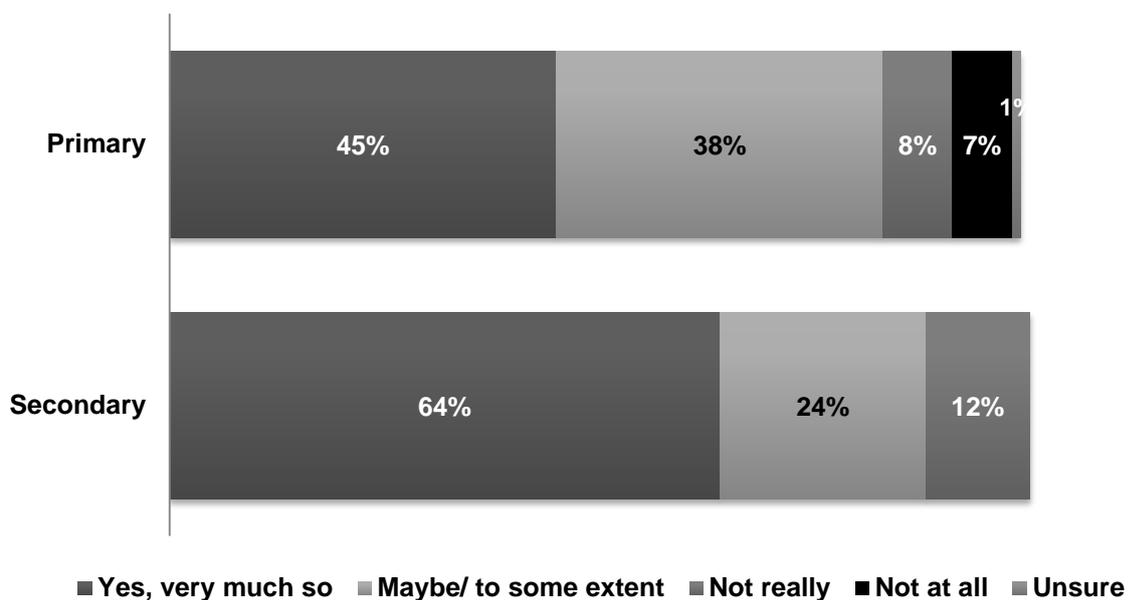
Figure 51: Would your school value an online signposting service providing help in identifying sources of support and information on school improvement support?

Yes, very much so 48%

Maybe/ to some extent 36%

Unsure 1%

Not at all 6%

Not really 9%

Base: All respondents (530) E1

This service may be used to a slightly greater degree in the secondary sector: 88% of secondaries stated that they would value this, compared with 83% of primaries.

Figure 52: Would your school value an online signposting service providing help in identifying sources of support and information on school improvement support?

Primary: 45% | 38% | 8% | 7% | 1%

Secondary: 64% | 24% | 12%

■ Yes, very much so   ■ Maybe/ to some extent   ■ Not really   ■ Not at all   ■ Unsure

Base: Primaries (469); Secondaries (61) E1

The largest schools in the sample were particularly likely to value an online signposting service: 91% of schools with more than 1000 pupils, compared with 83% and 84% of lower size-bands respectively.

9.4 A shared London vision

All schools were asked to rate the usefulness of having a shared vision and ambition for schools in London, using a response scale from not at all to very useful. A large majority were positive about this vision, with 8 in 10 (79%) stating very useful or fairly useful, and only 5% stating 'not at all useful'.

Figure 53: In general, do you consider having a shared vision and ambition for schools in London to be...?
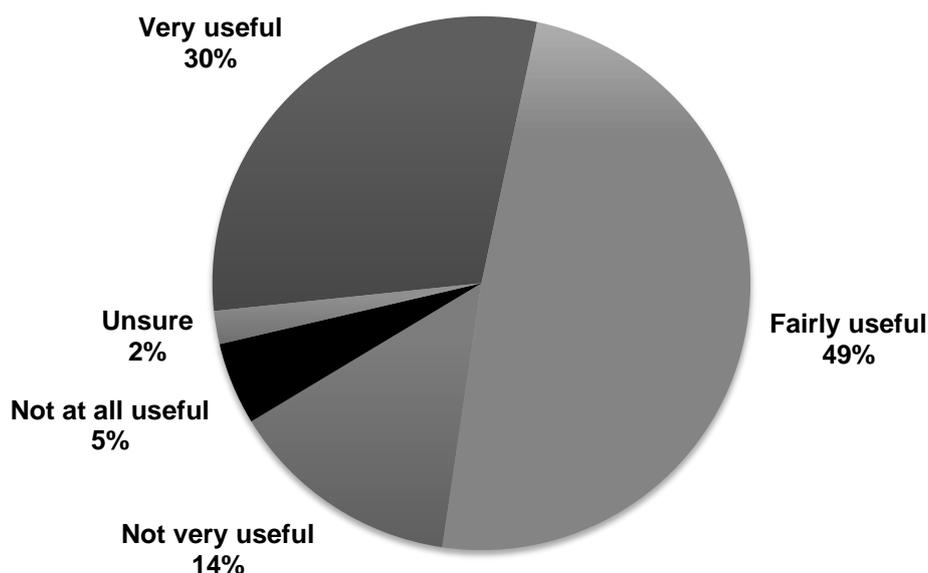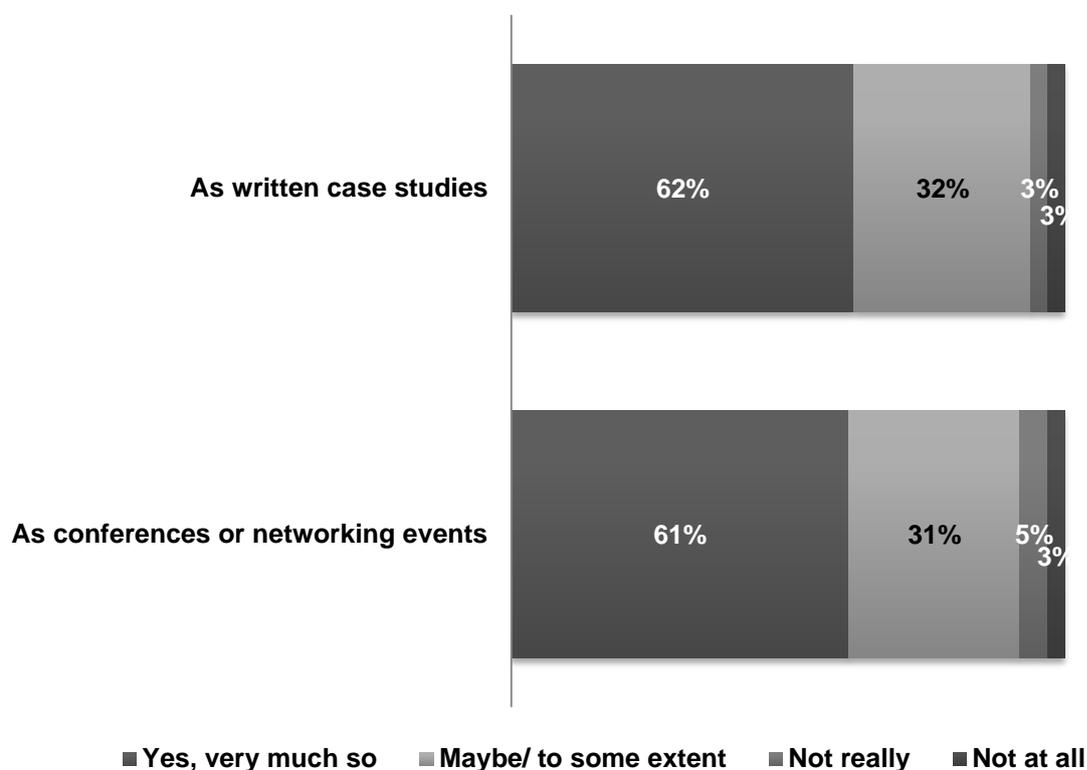

Base: All respondents (530) E3

The only significant variation by sub-group on this measure relates to the leader's length of time in the role: Where leaders had been in their current role for more than 10 years, 68% considered a shared vision and ambition to be very/fairly useful. This showed an increase to 80% where leaders had not been in post this long.

9.5 Inspiration from other London schools

As shown in section 6.2 of this report, school leaders seeking further school improvement support are quite commonly looking for impartial information on effective strategies and what has worked for other schools.

This enthusiasm for learning via peers was further confirmed when schools were asked to consider whether they would value opportunities to gain information and inspiration from school improvement approaches that have proved successful for other schools in London. More than 9 in 10 schools said that they would value this type of support, either written case studies (94%) or as conferences/networking events (92%).

Figure 54: Would your school value opportunities to gain information and inspiration from school improvement approaches that have proved successful for other schools in London?

■ **Yes, very much so** ■ **Maybe/ to some extent** ■ **Not really** ■ **Not at all**

Base: All respondents (530) E2

Where schools were less interested, they were slightly more likely to be primary, although feedback remained largely positive: 7% of primaries considered that written case studies would be of little or no value to them (compared to 0% of secondaries), and 9% of primaries stated that conferences/networking events would be of little or no value to them (compared to 3% of secondaries).

10 Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

- **Academy School:** School outside of Local Authority control. This includes sponsor-led academies, converter academies and free schools. All other schools in the sample are categorised as maintained schools.

- **EAL:** English as an additional language

- **ESBD:** Emotional, social and behavioural difficulties

- **FSM:** Free School Meals.

- **% FSM:** The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for Free School Meals

- **Grossing up of weighted data:** The survey data was weighted to the structure of the sample frame (i.e. the known London school population) to provide proportionality by school phase and by school status. Counts were then multiplied by the number of schools in the sample frame (i.e. the known London school population) to provide estimates for survey findings, were the full London school population targeted for this survey to have been interviewed.

- **Grade 1 Schools:** Schools designated by Ofsted[32] as achieving Grade 1 for overall school effectiveness, currently equivalent to 'Outstanding.

- **Grade 2 Schools:** Schools designated by Ofsted as achieving Grade 1 for overall school effectiveness, currently equivalent to 'Good'.

- **Grade 3 Schools:** Schools designated by Ofsted as achieving Grade 1 for overall school effectiveness, currently equivalent to 'Satisfactory.

- **Grade 4 Schools:** Schools designated by Ofsted as achieving Grade 1 for overall school effectiveness, currently equivalent to 'Poor.

- **KS2:** Key Stage 2

- **LA:** Local Authority

- **LLE:** Local Leader of Education. There are successful head teachers designated by the National College who provide coaching and mentoring support to head teachers of other schools. For further information, visit: **http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/docinfo?id=149889&filename=lle-fact-sheet.pdf**

- [32]For further information on the Ofsted framework see http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection-january-2012

- **Maintained School:** For the purpose of this project, this is defined as all schools of non academy status. These include community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided schools and voluntary controlled schools. All other schools in the sample are categorised as academy schools.

- **NLE:** National Leader of Education. These are outstanding school leaders designated by the National College, sometimes known as College Leads. Together with the staff in their schools, they use their skills and experience to support schools in challenging circumstances. In addition to leading their own schools, NLEs work to increase the leadership capacity of other schools to help raise standards. For further information, visit: **http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/docinfo?id=157129&filename=nle-fact-sheet-2.pdf**

- **NPQH:** National Professional Qualification for Headship. A National College qualification, the NPQH follows a modular curriculum based on Master's level criteria and focuses on developing the knowledge, skills and attributes of a successful head teacher. To achieve the NPQH qualification you'll need to successfully complete three essential and two elective modules involving extended case studies and related in-school assignments with a stronger focus on leading teaching, behaviour and performance management. You will also complete a placement of a minimum of nine days at another school.

- **PRU:** Pupil Referral Unit

- **Sample frame:** The sample frame is the source material or device from which a sample is drawn. It is a list of all those within a population who can be sampled, and may include individuals, households or institutions. In the case of this survey, it denotes all primary and secondary schools in London of maintained or academy status, excluding special schools, Pupil Referral Units and sixth-form only colleges. At the time of interviewing, this was 2,201 schools.

- **SEN:** Special Educational Needs

- **SLT:** Senior Leadership Team

- **TSA:** Teaching School Alliance. Teaching schools give schools rated by Ofsted as outstanding a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and head teachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support. Schools work together within a teaching school alliance i.e. a group of schools and other partners that are supported by the leadership of a teaching school. Teaching School Alliances include all those schools that benefit by receiving support, as well as strategic partners that will lead on certain aspects of delivery. Alliances may be cross phase and cross sector, may work across local authorities and may include different types of organisations. Further information is available at: **http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/teachingschools.htm?WT.ac=PP039**

11 Appendix 2: Overview of geographical analysis undertaken

A number of multi-variate data analysis techniques were utilised to investigate any potential geographical patterns in the survey i.e. schools in a strong position for school improvement or in a weak position for school improvement, based on their location independently from other variables (i.e. questions in the survey or known characteristics about the school, from the database). The aims of this were:

- To help identify clusters of excellence that could feed into case study and conference type recommendations for sharing learning.
- To find areas most in need of help, which could feed into 'piloting' approaches in some of the recommendations

No evidence could be identified from these techniques that would indicate that such patterns exist.

The potential for factor analysis was explored by selecting a number of variables (questions) from the survey that would suggest that a school was in a strong position to deliver school improvement or a weak position to deliver school improvement, including views around ease/difficulty of aspects of school improvement, level of external support utilised in identifying and implementing improvement and anticipated channels of future support. Factor analysis was shown not to be a good model for analysis, due to the lack of adequate correlation between these variables. A general rule of thumb is that correlations should be greater than +/-0.3, but very few of the 28 variables selected correlated with one another to this level.

A second type of analysis was undertaken, whereby all schools in the sample frame were grouped according to three key variables relating to performance and challenge: Ofsted rating, key stage/GCSE performance, and the percentage of pupils eligible for free schools means [the latter as a proxy measure of deprivation]. Schools were plotted on a 3D scatterplot (see Figure 55) to identify any outliers based on these three variables.

Three different scatterplot models were constructed, each with one of the variables acting as the dependent variable. Each model produces a different regression plane (or line of best fit) according to which variable is dependent. Combining the regression planes from each of the three models then allowed the data points to be segmented into eight groups according to the spatial position of the data point in relation to each regression plane. (e.g. outlier group 1 returns a positive score in X, Y, and Z, outlier group 2 returns a positive score in X and Y, a negative score in Z etc). A ninth group, 'non-outliers', is bounded by the ellipsoid in Figure 55, and this contains the bulk of data points (these are data points that generally closely match population averages). Outliers fall outside of this ellipsoid. Overall, from circa 2000 schools which contained data for all three variables, just over sixty were identified as outliers.

However, of these sixty outlying schools, only ten were surveyed, and from this, a cross-tabulation of outlier group by borough failed to identify any notable geographic clustering.

In summary, while the possibilities for analysis were to some extent limited by the sample size and questions asked, the above approaches suggest that clusters of strong/weak school improvement potential based on purely-geographical factors do not exist, or at least that these clusters are less notable than clusters based on other variables (which may be based on catchment demographics, the attitudes of the head teacher, and so on).

Figure 55: Example of scatterplot model with Ofsted grade (overall effectiveness) as the dependent variable
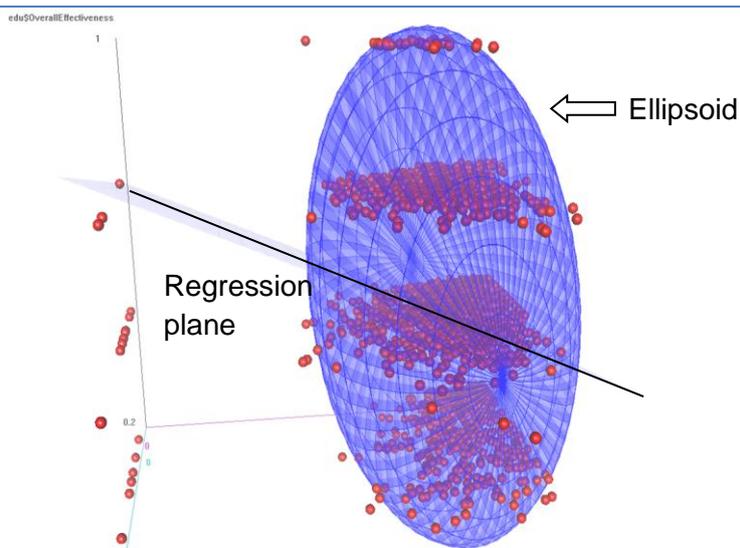
Note that the original 3D plots allowed for the plot to be rotated, which is clearly not reproducible in print.