



Department
for Education



Government
Social Research

COVID-19 School Snapshot Panel

Findings from the March survey

May 2021

IFF Research Ltd

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the third wave of the School Snapshot Panel (conducted in March 2021), a panel run by IFF Research on behalf of the Department for Education. The survey was completed by 2,263 school leaders and teachers.

This wave covers key issues affecting schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Education recovery;
- Support for pupils with SEND; and
- Mass testing in schools.

A note on the reporting

The report covers questions asked about the individual experiences of teachers and leaders, and others asked of leaders at the school level.

Two types of weighting were applied to the data, depending on whether questions were asking for school-level or individual-level answers from leaders and teachers. Where responses from 'leaders' and 'teachers' are referred to in the report, individual-level weighting has been applied. Where responses from 'schools' are referred to, leaders have answered the survey question and a school-level weighting has been applied so the findings are representative of the school population as a whole. Further detail on the weighting approach can be found in the methodology section on page 12.

Findings from each wave should be interpreted in the context of the schools COVID-19 guidelines in place at that time. From 8th March 2021, schools were fully reopened to all children, and the survey explored the experiences of school leaders and teachers since the reopening.

Caution should be taken when comparing results between waves as any changes and patterns to reported behaviours or attitudes may be impacted by the guidelines in place at each timepoint.

Early Career Teachers (ECT)

From September 2021, early career teachers (ECT) will be expected to complete a two-year induction process. Sixty-eight percent of school leaders were aware of the changes to the ECT statutory induction process, with one-in-three (32%) unaware of the changes. A third (31%) of schools had started making preparations for the changes, while one-in-five (21%) were not expecting an ECT to join their schools in September 2021 and one-

in-eight (12%) had not started making preparations, despite being aware that the process was changing.

Confidence relating to implementation of the changes to the ECT induction process was high among schools expecting to host an ECT in September 2021. The vast majority (83%) of schools reported feeling confident; around one-in-ten (9%) were not confident.

Access to technology

Schools were asked whether pupils at their school had been given access to laptops, tablets and the internet during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly all (97%) schools reported that some pupils at their school had been given access to laptops or tablets, and around two-thirds (63%) of schools had given some pupils help to access the internet. These findings were echoed by teachers, nine-in-10 (91%) of whom reported that pupils had been given access to laptops or tablets, and just under half (48%) reported pupils had been given help to access the internet.

Teachers reported that giving pupils access to technology had helped them in a range of ways, most prominently in teaching pupils the curriculum remotely (48% reported this had helped to a great extent) and increasing engagement with remote learning (45%).

Schools that had provided pupils with access to laptops and tablets were asked about their plans for these as pupils returned to school. Most (73%) schools planned to request either some (35%) or all (38%) laptops and tablets to be returned, with a minority (12%) planning to continue to loan them out to all pupils that had received them.

Schools that planned for at least some laptops and tablets to be returned to the school planned to use them in three main ways:

- To distribute them for remote education use on a flexible basis in the event of further school disruption (74%);
- For general in-school learning (72%); and
- To support education recovery (70%).

Education recovery

Teachers were asked how far behind their pupils were in their learning. They most commonly reported that their pupils were, on average, either 1-3 months (30%) or 4-6 months (29%) behind in their learning, but one-in-seven (14%) reported that their pupils were more than 6 months behind. Primary teachers generally felt that their pupils were further behind, with one-in-five (19%) reporting their pupils were more than 6 months behind, compared with one-in-10 (9%) of secondary teachers.

Teachers were also asked which resources they would find most helpful in supporting their pupils' academic recovery. Of the list covered in the survey, access to programmes designed to engage children needing additional support was considered a helpful resource by the highest proportion of teachers (63%). Set texts were considered a helpful resource by the lowest proportion (17%).

The most common measure reported by schools to help pupils recover from lost learning was targeted interventions. This encompassed a range of strategies, including teachers leading intervention groups while supply teachers covered lessons, interventions for key year groups (e.g., Year 10 and 13) and interventions for specialist subjects or skills areas (e.g., engineering or phonics).

Relatedly, schools were asked if they were delivering the same range of subjects since schools reopened as they would typically, with the majority (88%) reporting that they were and one-in-eight (12%) reporting they were not.

School day

Schools were asked how long pupils were expected to be in school for each day prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The average school day pre-COVID-19 was relatively consistent, with the vast majority (93%) of schools reporting the school day lasted between 6 and 7 hours. The average pre-COVID-19 school day across all schools was just under 6 and a half hours (a mean average of 6 hours and 28 minutes), with two-thirds (64%) of schools having a school day that lasted between 6 hours 20 minutes and 6 hours 35 minutes.

Attendance

Leaders and teachers were asked how concerned they were about various factors relating to school attendance. Both groups tended to be most concerned about pupil disengagement from learning – 15% of leaders, and 34% of teachers were concerned about this to a great extent.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Both schools and teachers were significantly more likely to agree that they could support pupils with SEND in the March survey than previously (87% of leaders and 54% teachers agreed with this statement in March, compared with 73% of leaders in late February and 49% of teachers in early February).

The barriers to supporting these pupils centred around capacity in the workforce (5% of all schools reported this as a barrier) and lack of access to specialist service or professionals (4%).

Rapid asymptomatic testing

At the time of the March 2021 survey, most (70%) secondary schools reported that their pupils were administering COVID-19 tests at home, either only at home (51%) or mostly at home (20%). Roughly one-in-five (22%) reported that their pupils were administering tests in school (with 13% reporting mostly, and 9% reporting testing only in school).

Schools were asked to reflect on the challenges of testing since the return of all students to face-to-face education earlier in March. Having enough staff to oversee the tests represented the most common challenge to schools: the vast majority (81%) of secondary schools reported this had been challenging. Other key challenges included testing on site when pupils returned to school (69%) and collating test information and results from pupils (68%).

Introduction

This report details findings from the March 2021 wave of the School Snapshot Panel, a panel of leaders and teachers sampled from the Schools Workforce Census to provide rapid feedback to the Department for Education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The five-minute survey covered a range of topical issues in education following the reopening of schools to all pupils from the 8th March. This involved all pupils returning to school and education being delivered in the classroom.

In this report there is occasional reference to findings from previous School Snapshot Surveys (including the COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey run in May 2020). Due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.¹

Methodology

The School Snapshot Panel consists of a group of teachers and leaders that have agreed to participate in short regular research surveys on topical issues in education. Teachers and leaders agreed to be part of the panel in late 2020 and early 2021. They were recruited from school workforce census data provided by the Department for Education. One leader from each chosen school was invited to take part. Teachers were selected from the full population of teachers, meaning at some schools multiple teachers were invited to participate.

The survey was administered online, and the fieldwork period was one week, from the 19th March to the 26th March 2021. Leaders and teachers received an email invite and two reminder emails as required.

The tables below show the response rate for leaders and teachers, within each school phase, for the survey.

¹ The School Snapshot Survey was administered to one leader and three teachers at each school sampled, whereas the School Snapshot Panel is a randomised sample of leaders and teachers taken from the schools workforce census data. Therefore, teachers are invited from schools that may not have been sampled for a leader survey.

Table 1. Response rate by key group

	Primary Leaders	Secondary Leaders	Primary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Starting sample	1,372	754	969	866
Complete surveys	755	291	649	568
Response rate	55%	39%	67%	66%

Weighting

Two types of weighting were applied to the data, depending on whether questions were asking for school-level or individual-level answers from leaders and teachers.

School-level weighting

At the analysis stage, the school-level/leaders' data was grossed up to the overall population of schools. This process corrects for the over-sampling of secondary schools (relative to the proportion of the population that they represent) so that the findings can be interpreted as being representative of all (in scope) state-funded schools.

The population data for weighting was drawn from Get Information about Schools (GIAS).

Teachers / individual weighting

For the analysis on a teacher rather than a school base, the responses from leaders and classroom teachers were combined and weighted together to the overall population of teachers. The population data for the teachers weighting was taken from the Schools Workforce Census based on November 2019 data (the most current available data).

Interpreting the findings

Data presented in this report is from a sample of teachers and senior leaders rather than the total population of teachers and leaders. Although the leader sample and the teacher sample have been weighted to be nationally representative (by school type and by teacher demographics), the data is still subject to sampling error. The extent of sampling error depends on the sampling approach (the closer it is to a random sample the less the sampling error), the sample size (the larger the sample the lower the likely sampling error) and the survey result (the closer to 50% the less confident statistically we are in the finding).

Given the sample size in this survey (2,263), statistically we can be 95% confident that for a survey finding of 50% based on all respondents, the 'true' value (if all leaders and teachers had answered rather than a sample of 2,263) lies within a +/- 2.1% range of this figure (i.e. 47.9% - 52.1%). Results based on a sub-set of schools interviewed are subject to a wider margin of error. For example, for results among school leaders, we can be 95% confident that for a survey result of 50% the sampling error is +/- 3.0%.

Differences between sub-groups and previous waves are only commented on in the text if they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, unless otherwise stated, i.e. statistically we can be 95% confident that the differences are 'real' differences and not a result of the fact that the findings are based on a sample of schools rather than a census of all schools

Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement is used as a proxy for deprivation levels at the school. All schools in England were listed in ascending order of the proportion of their pupils that are entitled to FSM. This ordered list was then split into five equal groups (or quintiles). Quintile 1, which is referred to as the 'lowest proportion' throughout the report represents the schools with the lowest proportion of pupils entitled to FSM. This group thus equates to the schools with the least disadvantaged/deprived pupil population. The proportion of pupils entitled to FSM increases progressively as the quintiles increase. In the report, significant differences tend to be tested between schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils and schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils.

Due to rounding to the nearest whole number, percentages may not total to exactly 100% or precisely reflect statistics provided in the data tables.

In this report there is occasional reference to findings from previous School Snapshot Surveys (including the COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey run in May 2020). It should be noted that due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.

Early Career Teachers

From September 2021, as part of government reforms, early career teachers (ECT) will be required to complete a two-year induction process. The reforms are part of the government's teacher recruitment and retention strategy, which aims to improve the training and development opportunities available to teachers. In this context, the March survey covered:

- Whether schools had started making preparations for the changes to the ECT statutory induction process (and whether they were aware of the changes); and
- How confident schools were that they will be able to implement the changes from September 2021.

Preparations for changes to the ECT induction process

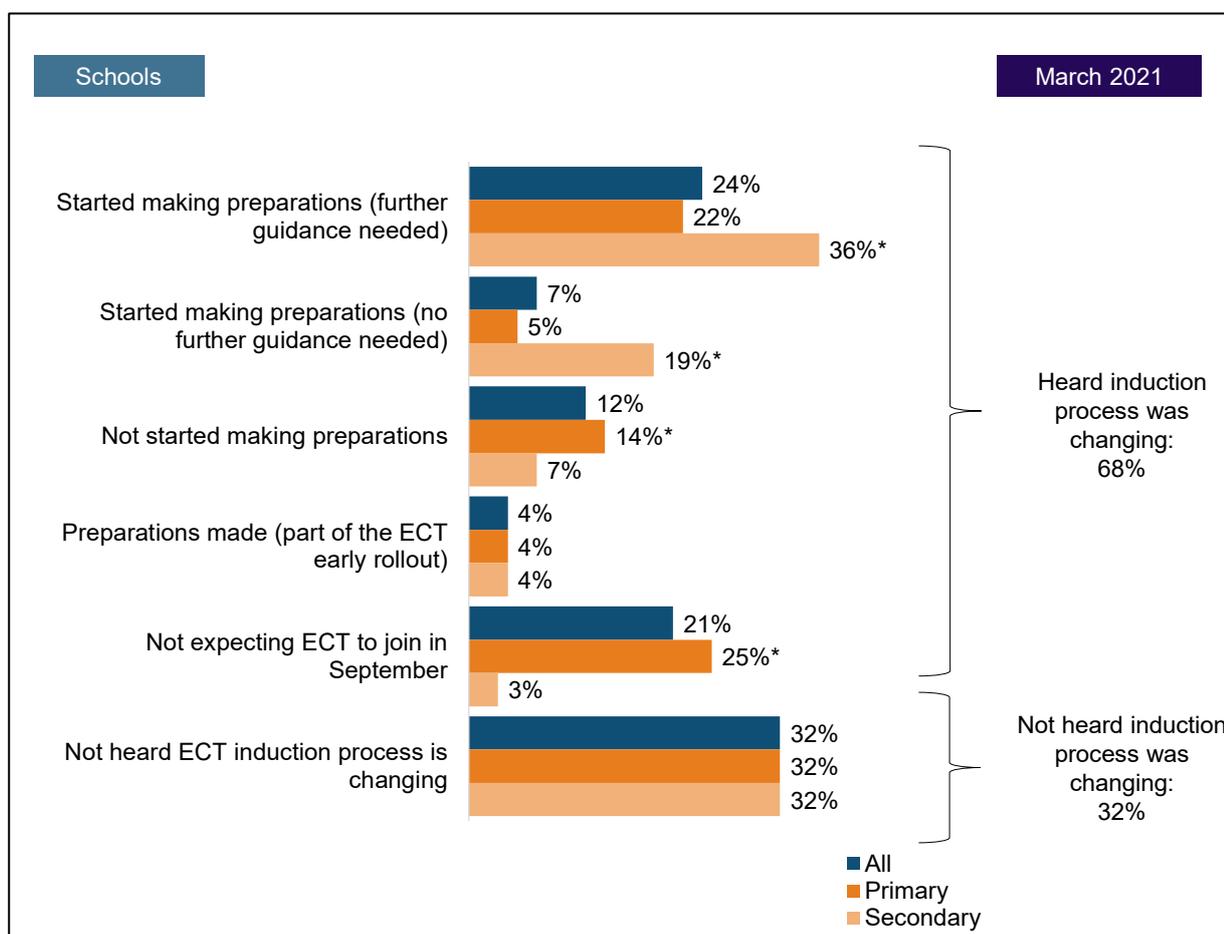
There was a varying level of awareness of, and preparation for, the changes to the ECT induction process amongst schools (see Figure 1):

- Two-thirds (68%) had heard that the induction process was changing;
- One-in-three (31%) had started making preparations for the changes – although they were more likely to need further guidance (24%) than not (7%);
- One-in-five (21%) were not expecting an ECT to join the schools in September 2021;
- One-in-eight (12%) had not started making preparations, despite being aware that the process was changing; and
- A minority (4%) had already made all necessary preparations as they were part of the early rollout of the Early Career Framework reforms.

There were notable differences by phase. Secondary schools were significantly more likely to have started making preparations for the changes to the ECT induction process, with over half (55%) reporting this (36% needed and 19% did not need further guidance). This compared with around a quarter (26%) of primary schools (22% needed further guidance, 5% did not).

Primary schools, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to report they did not expect to have an ECT joining the school in September (25% vs. 3% of secondary schools).

Figure 1. Schools' preparations for the changes to the ECT induction process from September 2021



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. A1/A2: All schools (n=1,046); Primary (n=755); Secondary (n=291). * Indicates a significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

The following schools were more likely to report that they had started making preparations for the changes to the ECT induction process:

- Schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils (35%, compared with 25% of schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils); and
- Urban schools (37%, compared with 14% of rural schools).

Confidence in implementing changes to the ECT induction process

Schools that expect an ECT to join in September were asked how confident they felt that they would be able to implement the changes to the ECT induction process from September 2021.

The vast majority (83%) of schools reported feeling confident; around one-in-ten (9%) were not confident.

Confidence was strongly correlated to whether schools had started to prepare for the change to the ECT induction process (see

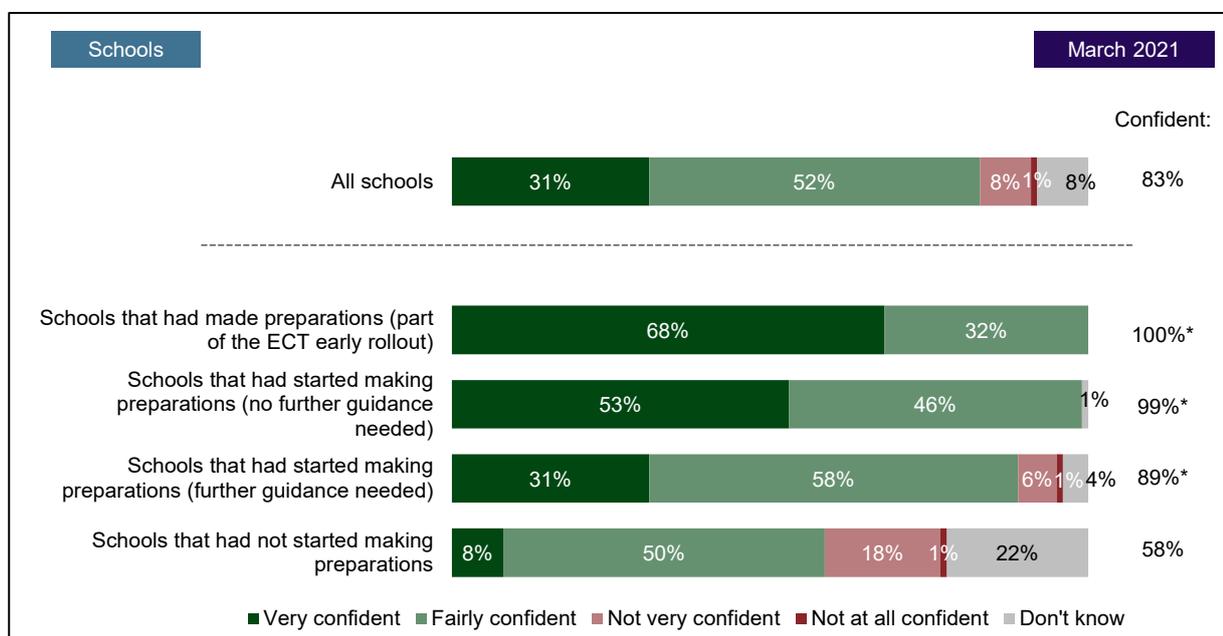
Figure 2).

Schools in the following situations were particularly confident they would be able to implement the changes (significantly more than the 83% average):

- Schools that were part of the ECT induction early rollout (100%); and
- Schools that had started preparing for the changes and did not need further guidance (99%).

On the other hand, schools that had not started preparing were significantly more likely to report that they did not feel confident (20%, compared with 9% on average).

Figure 2. Confidence among schools that they will be able to implement the changes to the ECT induction process from September 2021



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. A3: Schools that expect to have early career teachers join in September 2021 (n=520). * Indicates a significant difference between school types in relation to their preparations for changes to the ECT induction process.

Primary schools were significantly more likely to report they were not confident (10%, compared with 5% of secondary schools). These differences reflect differences explored earlier in this section of the report: secondary schools were significantly more likely to have begun making preparations for the changes to the ECT induction process than primary schools.

Access to technology

Receiving a device / the internet

Since March 2020 schools, local authorities and social workers have been trying to help students learn from home by providing them with devices (such as laptops or iPads) or tools to access the internet (such as 4G wireless routers, mobile network data uplifts or Wi-Fi codes). These efforts have been supported by the Department's Get Help with Technology programme, which has distributed over 1.3 million laptops and tablets to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers for disadvantaged children and young people as part of a £400 million investment to support access to remote education and online social care services. The Department has also provided support for over 100,000 families to get online through uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers.

In this context, questions in the March survey covered:

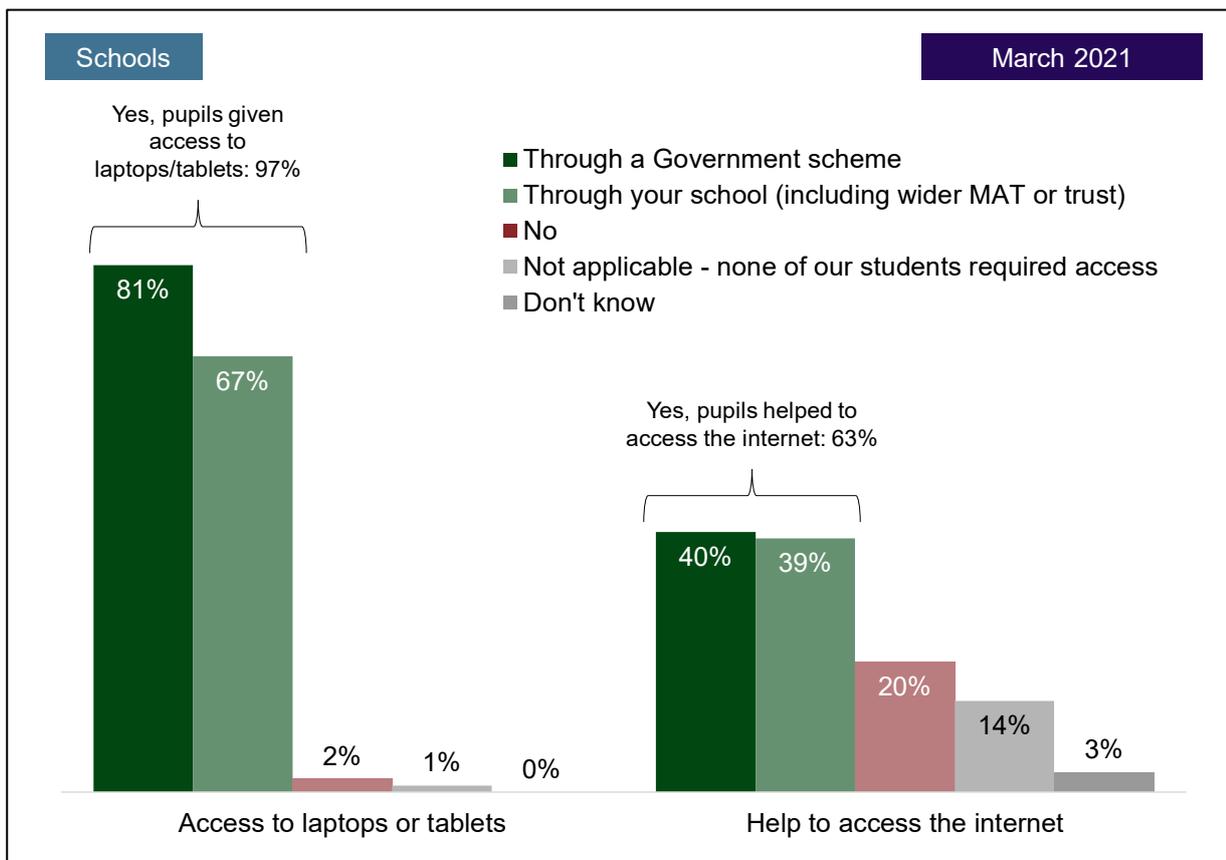
- Whether pupils at their school had been given access to laptops or tablets, and the internet;
- The benefits of this access; and
- Schools' future plans regarding how to use laptops or tablets that had been given to pupils.

Supporting pupils' access to technology (schools)

More schools reported providing access to laptops or tablets than providing access to the internet, although both were common. Nearly all (97%) schools reported that some pupils at their school had been given access to laptops or tablets, and around two-thirds (63%) had given some pupils help to access the internet (see Figure 3).

Laptops and tablets were more likely to be provided through a government scheme than through the school directly (81% vs. 67%, respectively), whereas access to the internet was just as likely to be provided through the school (39%) as through a government scheme (40%).

Figure 3. Whether pupils had been given access to laptops or tablets and help to access the internet (schools)



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. B4/B5: All schools (n=1,046).

Secondary schools were significantly more likely than primary schools to report that pupils were given help to access the internet (90% vs. 57%).

Significantly more schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils had provided access to laptops or tablets through a government scheme (88% vs. 71% of schools with the lowest proportion). Providing access to the internet was also more frequently seen at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils (through either the school or a government scheme - 87% vs. 42% of schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils).

Benefits of access to technology

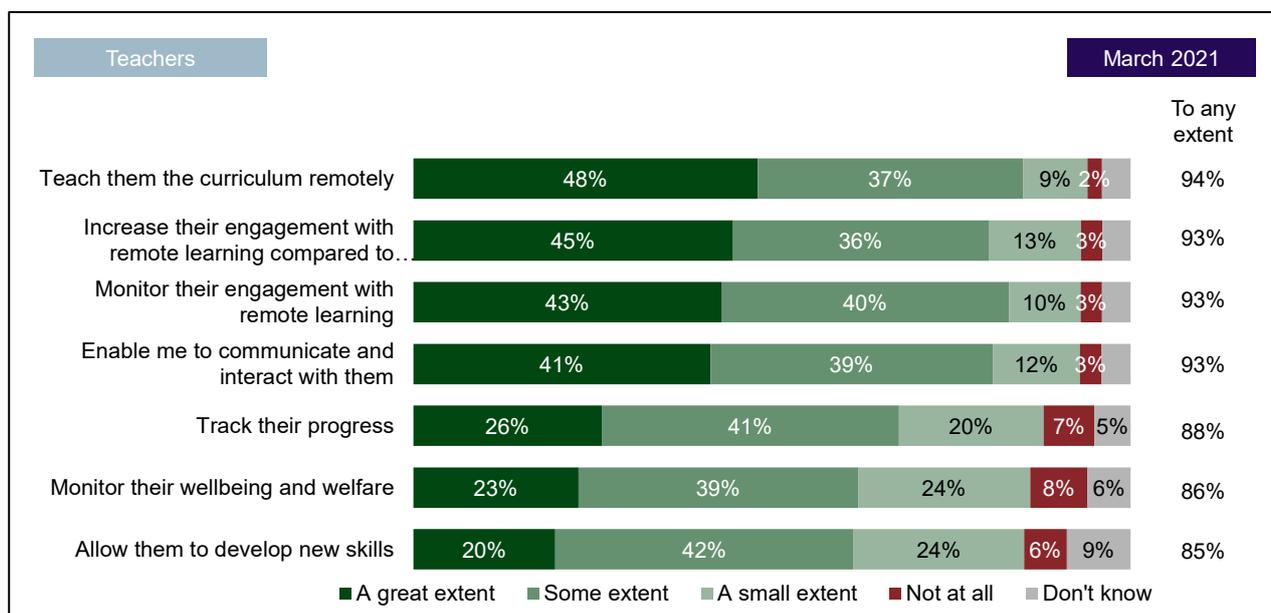
Teachers were also asked about the extent to which providing pupils with access to technology (laptops, tablets or the internet) had helped them with a range of issues relating to delivering remote education.

As shown in Figure 4, access to technology had a positive impact on all remote education issues covered in the survey.

Providing access for pupils to technology was most likely to help in the following ways, to a great extent:

- Teaching pupils the curriculum remotely (48%)
- Increasing engagement with remote learning (45%);
- Monitoring engagement with remote learning (43%); and
- Enabling teachers to communicate and interact with pupils (41%).

Figure 4. Extent to which access to technology helped with the following for the students who were given this access



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. B3: Teachers with pupils that have been given access to laptops/tablets or the internet (n=1,123).

Secondary teachers were significantly more likely to report that providing pupils with access to technology helped with:

- Teaching pupils the curriculum remotely (53% vs. 43% of primary teachers reported access helped to a great extent); and

- Tracking pupils' progress (34% vs. 19%).

On the other hand, significantly more primary teachers felt providing access had helped with monitoring pupil wellbeing and welfare to a great extent (26% vs. 19% of secondary teachers).

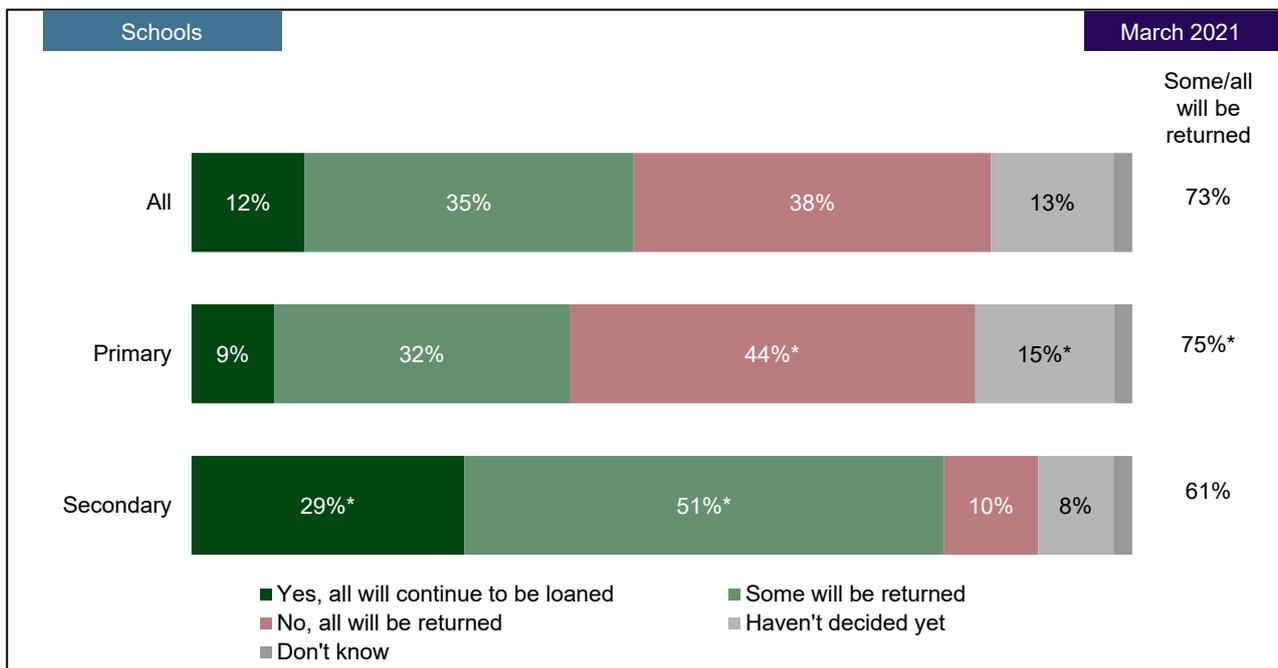
Future plans for loaned laptops and tablets

Schools were asked about their plans for the laptops and tablets they had given to students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most (73%) schools planned to request either some (35%) or all (38%) laptops and tablets to be returned, with a minority (12%) planning to continue to loan them out to all pupils that received them.

Primary and secondary schools had markedly different plans (see Figure 5). Secondary schools were significantly more likely to continue loaning out at least some laptops and tablets, with 10% expecting all laptops to be returned, compared with 44% of primary schools.

Figure 5. Whether schools will ask for loaned laptops and tablets to be returned



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. B6: Leaders with pupils that have been given access to laptops/tablets (n=1,016); Primary (n=725); Secondary (n=291). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

Schools with the highest proportions of FSM pupils were significantly less likely to expect laptops and tablets to be returned; a quarter (27%) reported that all laptops and tablets

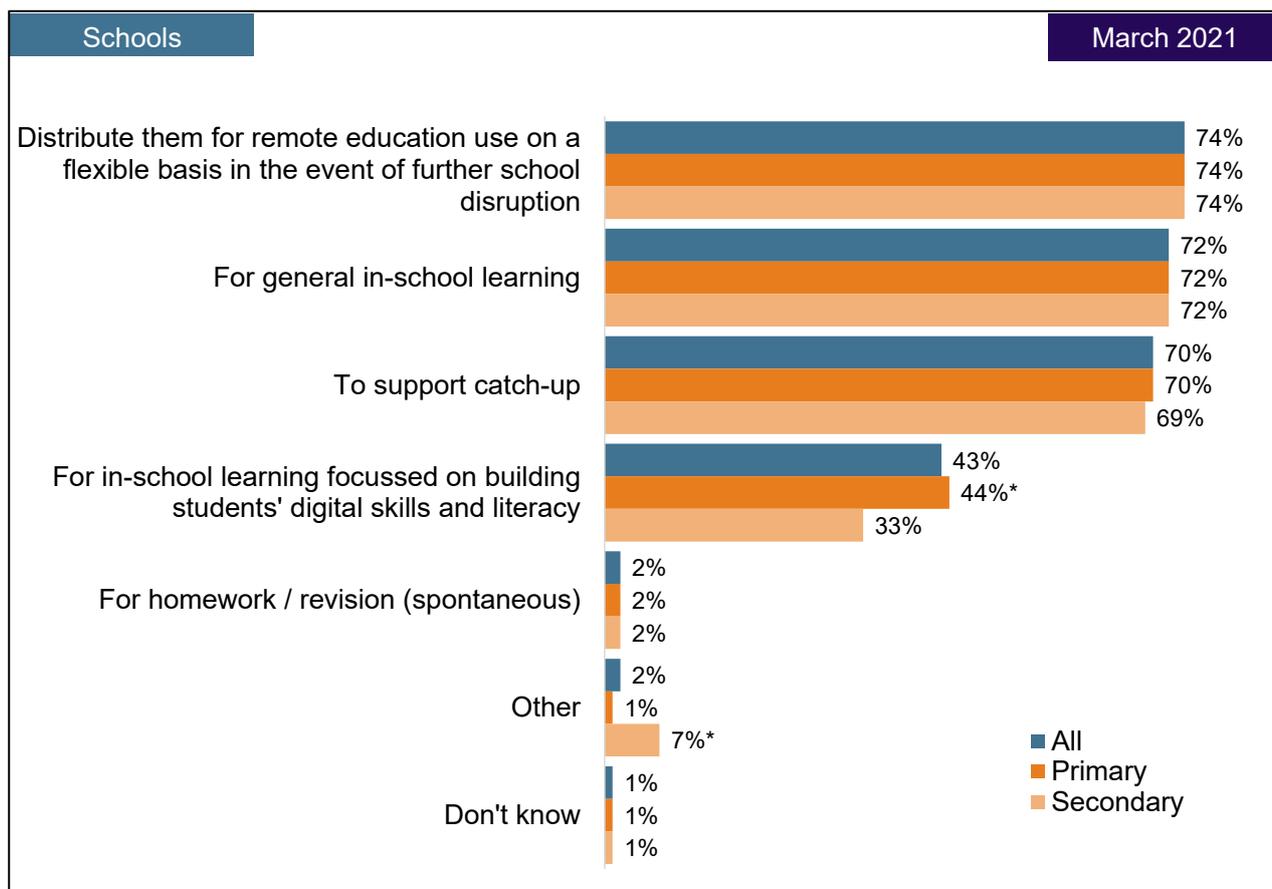
would be returned, compared with half (50%) of schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils.

Schools that planned for at least some laptops and tablets to be returned were asked about how they would use these laptops. Schools planned to use them in three main ways (see Figure 6):

- To distribute them for remote education use on a flexible basis in the event of further school disruption (74%);
- For general in-school learning (72%); and
- To support catch-up (70%).

Primary and secondary schools generally expected to use returned laptops and tablets in similar ways. However, significantly more primary than secondary schools reported that returned laptops would be used for in-school learning with a specific focus on building digital skills and literacy (44% vs. 33%).

Figure 6. How returned laptops and tablets will be used by schools



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. B7: If laptops/tablets will be returned to school (n=726); Primary (n=550); Secondary (n=176). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

Schools with the highest proportions of FSM pupils were significantly more likely than those with the lowest proportion to plan to use returned laptops and tablets in the following ways:

- To distribute them for remote education use on a flexible basis in the event of further school disruption (82% vs. 70%);
- To support catch-up (83% vs. 65%); and
- For in-school learning focussed on digital skills and literacy (54% vs. 35%).

Education recovery

The Prime Minister committed to working with parents, teachers, and education providers to help schools support pupils make up their learning over the course of this Parliament. We have made available £1.7bn in funding to support education recovery. In June 2020 we announced a £1bn catch-up package including a National Tutoring Programme and a Catch-up Premium for this academic year and in February 2021 we committed to further funding of £700m to fund summer schools, expansion of our tutoring programmes and a Recovery Premium for next academic year. Funding will support pupils across early years settings, schools, and providers of 16-19 education. We have also appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to advise on the development of the approach to long term recovery. Sir Kevan will engage with parents, pupils, and teachers in the development of this broader approach and review how evidence-based interventions can be used to address the impact the pandemic has had on learning.

As a result of schools being closed to the majority of pupils over the past year, schools have engaged in various measures to help pupils recover from lost learning. In the March survey, leaders and teachers were asked about:

- Perceptions of how far behind in their learning pupils at the school were;
- Measures provided to help pupils catch up on learning they may have missed; and
- Whether certain subjects or aspects of the curriculum had been prioritised since schools fully reopened for all pupils on March 8th 2021.

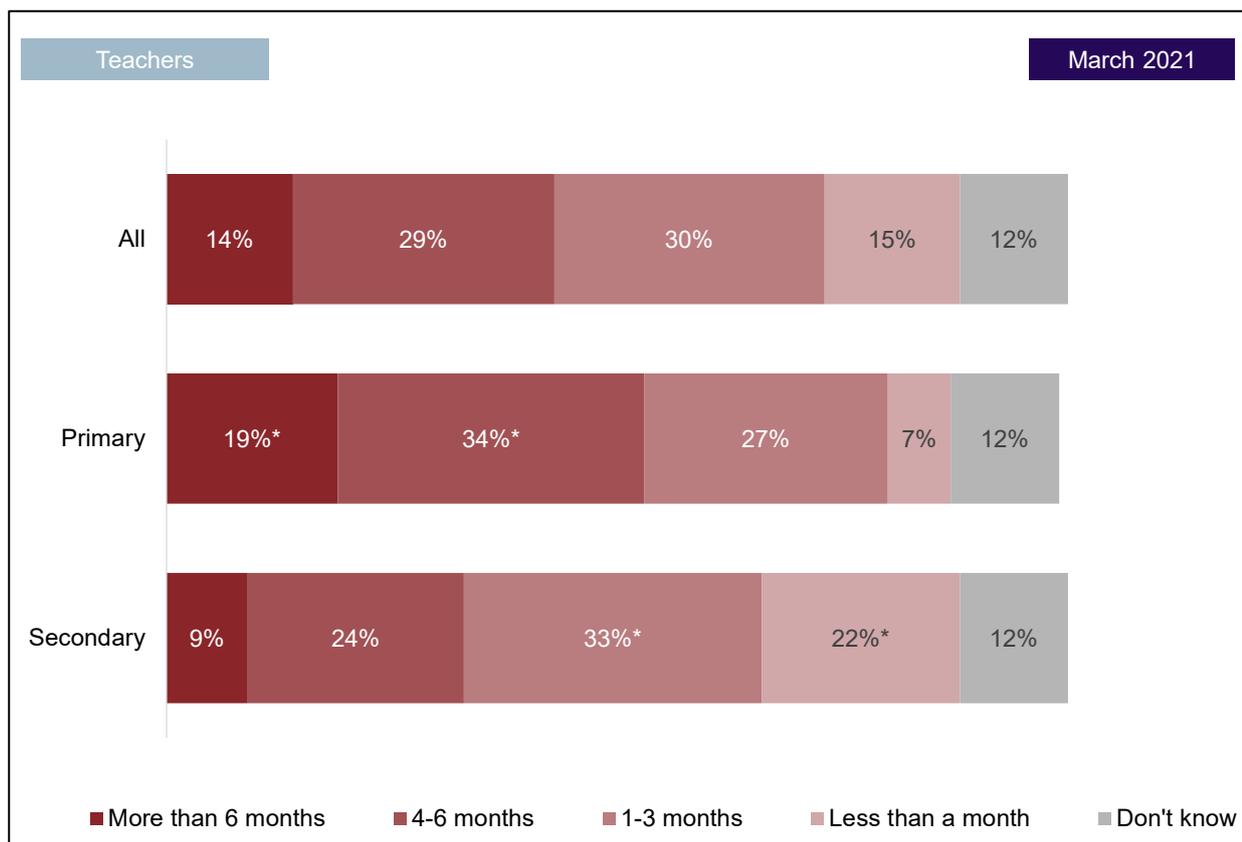
Length of time pupils are behind in their learning

Teachers most commonly reported that, on average, their pupils were either 1-3 months (30%) or 4-6 months (29%) behind in their learning, although one-in-seven (14%) reported that their pupils were more than 6 months behind (see Figure 7).

Primary teachers generally felt their pupils were further behind than secondary teachers. They were significantly more likely to report their pupils were:

- 4-6 months behind (34%, compared with 24% of secondary teachers); and
- More than 6 months behind (19%, compared with 9% of secondary teachers).

Figure 7 How far behind teachers think the pupils in their classes are, by school phase



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. C2: All teachers (n=1,217); Primary (n=649); Secondary (n=568). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary teachers.

Teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to report that their pupils were further behind in their learning. One-in-four (23%) of these teachers reported that their pupils were more than 6 months behind, compared with one-in-10 (9%) teachers based at schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils.

A similar question was asked in the December 2020 Teacher and Leader Panel, with a similar proportion (46%) of teachers reporting that their pupils were more than three months behind in their learning (compared with 43% in March 2021). In the December 2020 survey, however, teachers were significantly more likely to report their pupils were 1-3 months behind (45%, compared with 30% in March 2021). Due to differences in question wording (there were no '4-6 months' or 'more than 6 months' options), and the makeup of that panel, differences should be treated with caution.²

² Please see the School Snapshot Panel Technical Report for more details on the differences between both panels: LINK TBC.

Resources to support pupils' academic recovery

As a follow up, teachers were asked which resources they would find most helpful in supporting their pupils' academic recovery.

Of the list covered in the survey, access to programmes designed to engage children needing additional support was considered a helpful resource by the highest proportion of teachers (63%). Set texts were considered a helpful resource by the lowest proportion (17%).

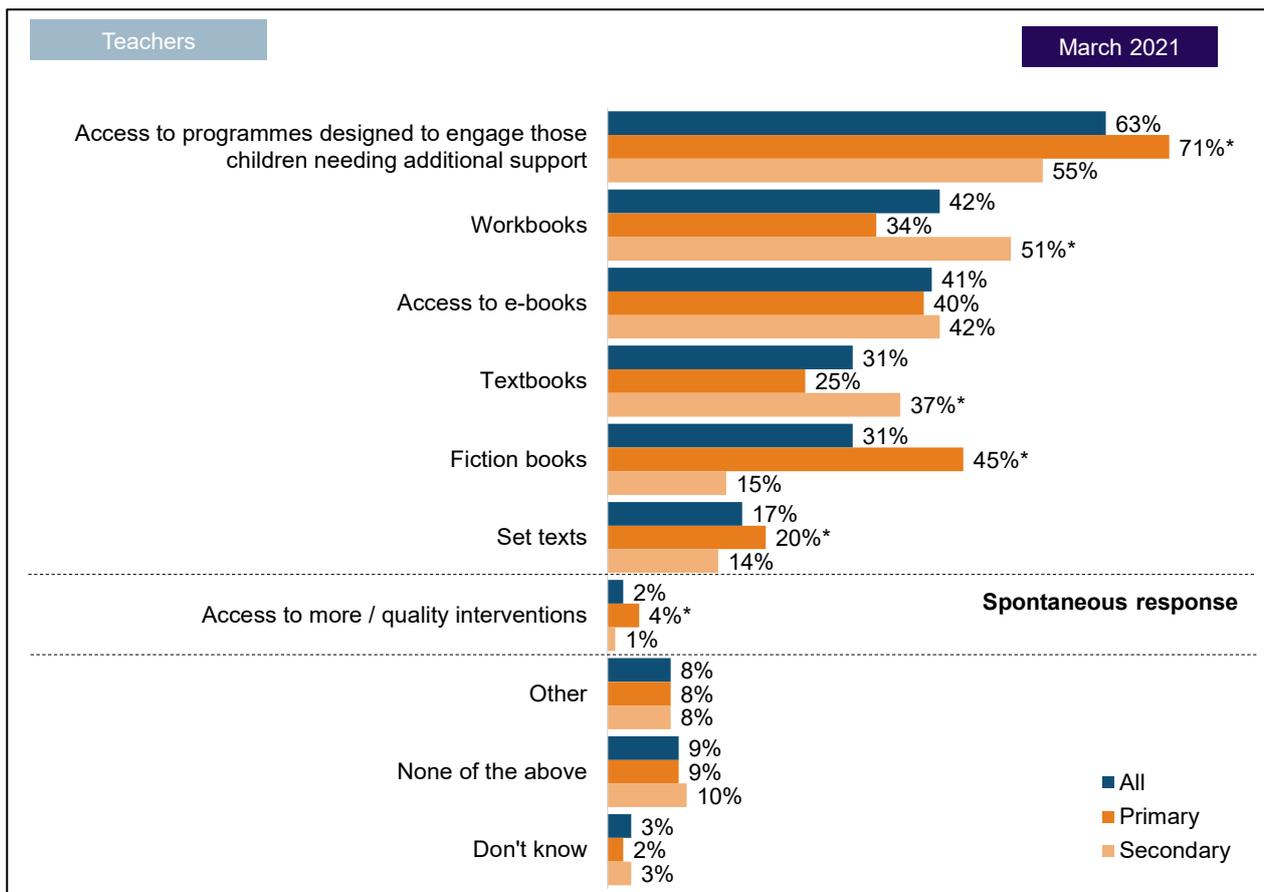
Primary teachers were significantly more likely than secondary teachers to consider the following useful (see Figure 8):

- Access to programmes designed to engage those children needing additional support (71%, compared with 55% secondary teachers);
- Fiction books (45% vs. 15%); and
- Set texts (20% vs. 14%).

Secondary teachers, on the other hand, were significantly more likely than primary teachers to consider the following useful:

- Workbooks (51%, compared with 34% primary teachers); and
- Textbooks (37% vs. 25%).

Figure 8 Resources teachers would find helpful to support pupils' academic recovery, by school phase



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. C9: All teachers (n=1,217); Primary (n=649); Secondary (n=568). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary teachers.

Teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to report that several of the resources covered in the survey would be helpful, most notably:

- Access to programmes designed to engage those children needing additional support (69%, compared with 58% of teachers at schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils);
- Workbooks (49% vs. 30%); and
- Fiction books (36% vs. 26%).

Measures to help pupils recover lost learning

Schools were asked about their experiences providing measures to help pupils catch up on lost learning:

- When schools were closed to most pupils in spring term 2021; and
- When schools had fully reopened on 8th March 2021.

Measures provided whilst school were closed to most pupils (spring term 2021)

Two-in-three (68%) schools reported that they were able to provide measures to help pupils learning remotely catch up on learning they may have missed whilst schools were closed to most pupils in the spring term. While there were no differences by phase, there were key differences by academy status, with primary academies significantly more likely to report they had been able to provide measures (72%, compared with 64% of primary non-academies).

Measures provided since schools fully reopened (from 8th March 2021)

Schools' plans to help pupils catch up on any learning they may have missed following the reopening of schools on 8th March were wide-ranging.

Targeted interventions

The most commonly mentioned measure provided by schools to help pupils recover from lost learning was targeted interventions. This encompassed a range of strategies, including teachers leading intervention groups while supply teachers covered lessons, interventions for key year groups (e.g., Year 10 and 13) and interventions for specialist subjects or skills areas (e.g., engineering or phonics). Primary schools were more likely to report this than secondary schools.

"[We've provided] additional targeted support for children with the biggest gaps in the form of before and after school classes."

Leader, primary school

“We are not planning extra lessons for most pupils as we continued with full online lessons throughout. We are offering bespoke support for key individuals who we were not able to engage during lockdown or had difficulty in accessing the provision.”

Leader, secondary school

Assessments to identify knowledge gaps

Another common measure provided by schools was assessments or reviews to identify gaps in pupils’ knowledge. This was most likely to be provided by schools with a view to developing suitable strategies to address knowledge gaps during the summer term. Schools adopted various means of assessing need, from formal gap analysis tools and learning provider tests (e.g. NFER tests) to more informal teacher assessments in the classroom. Primary schools more commonly said they were providing this measure than secondary schools.

“Following initial assessments of pupils, we have planned in opportunities to cover missed learning and gaps in pupil learning. Summer term units have been altered accordingly.”

Leader, primary school

“We have led CPD (continuing professional development) on assessment to identify individual needs and have talked about ways of filling gaps identified.”

Leader, secondary school

Tutoring or mentoring programmes

Another common measure mentioned was providing support to pupils through tutoring or mentoring programmes. Although secondary school leaders mentioned this more often than primary schools. Schools most frequently cited the National Tutoring Programme and academic mentors to support their pupils recover from lost learning. For many, these were programmes they were already engaging with, but others were planning to engage with the tutoring programme for the first time.

“We have already engaged two very experienced teachers through the National Tutoring Programme they began with us on the 8th March.”

Leader, primary school

Other plans

Other, less common, plans schools reported included adapting timetables or providing extra classes, adapting the focus of the curriculum, and providing additional staff support.

“Subject-specific arrangements such as Saturday workshops for practical subjects, after school catch up for small groups, access to subscription services on-line.”

Leader, primary school

Subjects delivered since schools fully reopened

As well as understanding plans schools have made to help pupils recover from lost learning, schools were also asked if they had been able to deliver the same range of subjects since schools fully reopened on March 8th 2021, as they would normally.

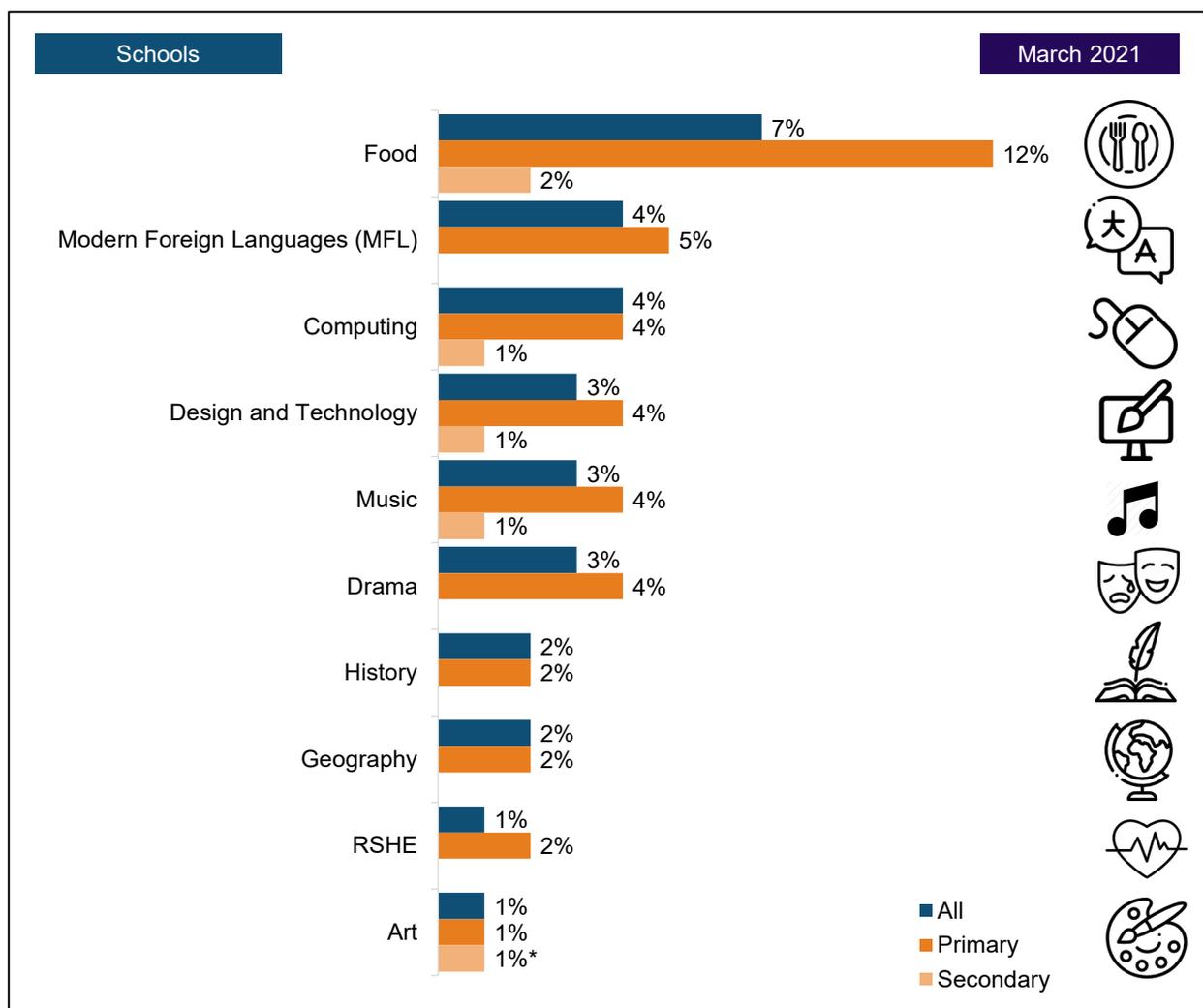
The majority (88%) of schools reported that they were delivering the same range, with one-in-eight (12%) reporting that they were not. Primary schools were three times more likely than secondary schools to report they were not delivering the same range of subjects (14% vs. 3%).

As a proportion of schools that usually offer each subject, the subjects schools were most likely not to be teaching this term were:

- Food (7% of those that usually teach the subject were not currently offering it);
- Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) (4%);
- Computing (4%); and
- Design and Technology (3%).

Figure 9 shows a full breakdown of subjects not being taught by schools since schools fully reopened, as a proportion of schools that usually offer each subject.

Figure 9. Proportion of schools not offering the following subjects, as a proportion of schools that normally teach each subject, by school phase



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. C5/6. All schools that teach: Food (n=397); MFL (n=571); Computing (n=1,005); Design and Technology (n=1,012); Music (n=1,024); Drama (n=501); History (n=1,033); Geography (n=1,032); RSHE (n=960); Art (n=1,030).

Aspects of the curriculum taught since schools fully reopened

As well as understanding if schools had prioritised certain subjects since schools fully reopened, teachers were asked whether they had needed to prioritise certain aspects of the curriculum.

More teachers reported they had needed to prioritise certain aspects of the curriculum than had been able to teach all aspects (57% and 42%, respectively). There were no prominent subgroup differences, suggesting a similar proportion of teachers in all school types needed to prioritise certain aspects of the curriculum.

Teachers that had prioritised certain aspects of the curriculum were asked how they had done this, with clear differences between primary and secondary teachers.

Curriculum prioritisation (primary teachers)

Primary teachers' approach to curriculum prioritisation centred on development and consolidation of core skills. They most commonly reported that they were focusing on pupils' numeracy and literacy skills, or core skills taught in Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. A few reported that they were focusing on the catch up premium or were offering fewer practical classes or fieldwork opportunities.

"We have prioritised writing, especially presentation of handwriting. We have also had to build up the children's independence and have had a real focus on reading as not many children were accessing the online books during lockdown."

Teacher, primary school

"We have had to prioritise key skills in English and maths. English - phonics, basic sentence construction and punctuation. Maths - number place value and addition/subtraction."

Teacher, primary school

Curriculum prioritisation (secondary teachers)

By contrast, secondary teachers' approach to curriculum prioritisation centred around specific styles of teaching and preparation for assessment. They most commonly reported that they were offering fewer practical classes and fieldwork opportunities. They also more often than primary teachers reported offering less collaboration and group work, as well as increased focus on exam materials and topics.

"We have prioritised theory work - practical work takes longer and involves pupils being out of their seats so this is harder to manage should track and trace be needed."

Teacher, secondary school

"With exam classes, I am focusing on topics that we have covered previously and making sure that the skills associated with those topics are useful for the students' further education. For other classes, we are prioritising getting back into extended writing, reading with comprehension and learning new vocabulary."

Teacher, secondary school

The school day

Among several measures to better understand the extent of missed face-to-face learning in England, the government is considering how time is used in and around the school day. To better understand the situation in schools prior to COVID-19 schools were asked:

- When the school day started on a typical day;
- When the school day finished on a typical day;
- How many hours of lessons pupils had on a typical day; and, for comparative purposes,
- How many hours of lessons pupils have this term.

Length of school day

At an overall level, prior to COVID-19, the vast majority of schools started and finished the school day within two half-hour windows:

- 92% of schools reported that the school day started between 8:30 and 9:00 in the morning; and
- 92% reported that the school day finished between 15:00 and 15:30.

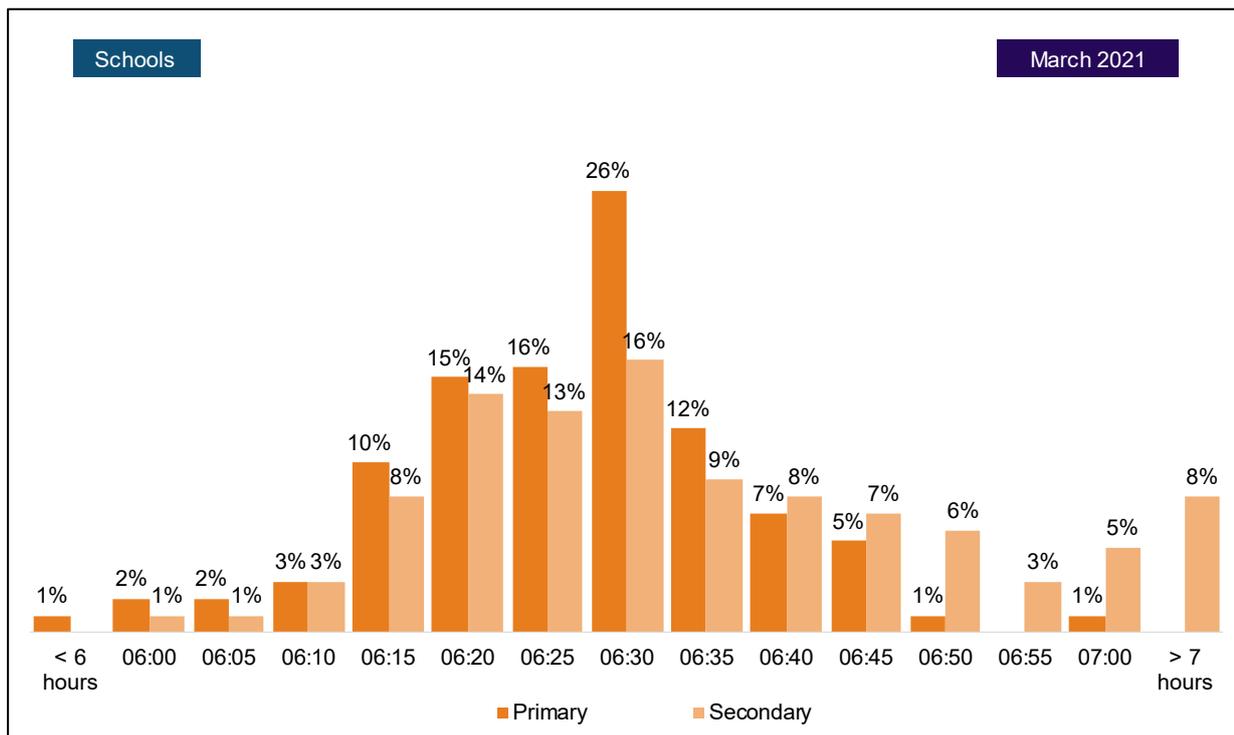
Secondary schools generally started and finished earlier than primary schools:

- 17% reported pupils were expected to arrive at school prior to 8:30 (compared with 1% of primary schools); and
- 12% reported pupils finished school prior to 15:00 (compared with 1% of primary schools).

The length of the average school day was also consistent, with 93% of schools reporting the school day lasted between 6 and 7 hours. Secondary schools were significantly more likely to report the school day lasted more than 7 hours (12%, compared with 1% of primary schools).

The average school day across all schools was 6 hours and 28 minutes, with three-quarters (75%) of schools having a school day that lasted between 6 hours 15 minutes and 6 hours 35 minutes (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Length of school day



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. G1/2: All schools that knew when pupils started and finished school (n=1,010).

The difference in average length of school day between primary and secondary differed by 9 minutes (6 hours 35 minutes for secondary schools and 6 hours 26 minutes for primary schools).

Hours of lessons

Schools were also asked about the number of hours of lessons pupils had on a typical day:

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- In the spring term 2021 (i.e., during the COVID-19 pandemic).

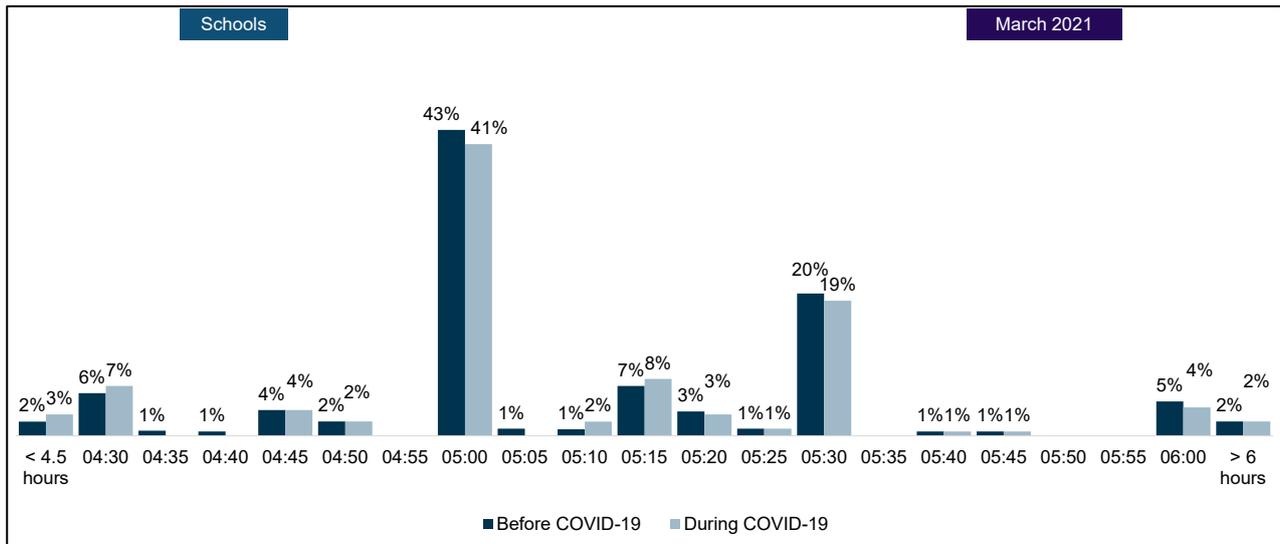
Overall, there was little change in the number of hours of lessons pupils had on a typical day at both points in time, suggesting schools were able to deliver as many lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic as they had before. The average number of hours of lessons schools delivered was:

- 5 hours 9 minutes before the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- 5 hours 7 minutes in the spring term 2021.

There was also no difference in the average number of hours of lessons delivered by primary and secondary schools before or after COVID-19.

Figure 11 shows the spread of the number of hours of lessons delivered across all schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown, schools were most likely to report that they delivered five hours of lessons per day before (43%) and during (41%) the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 11 Number of hours of lessons delivered by schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. G3/4: All schools that knew how many hours of lessons there were before (n=992) and during (n=988) COVID-19.

Support for pupils and parents offered by schools before the COVID-19 pandemic

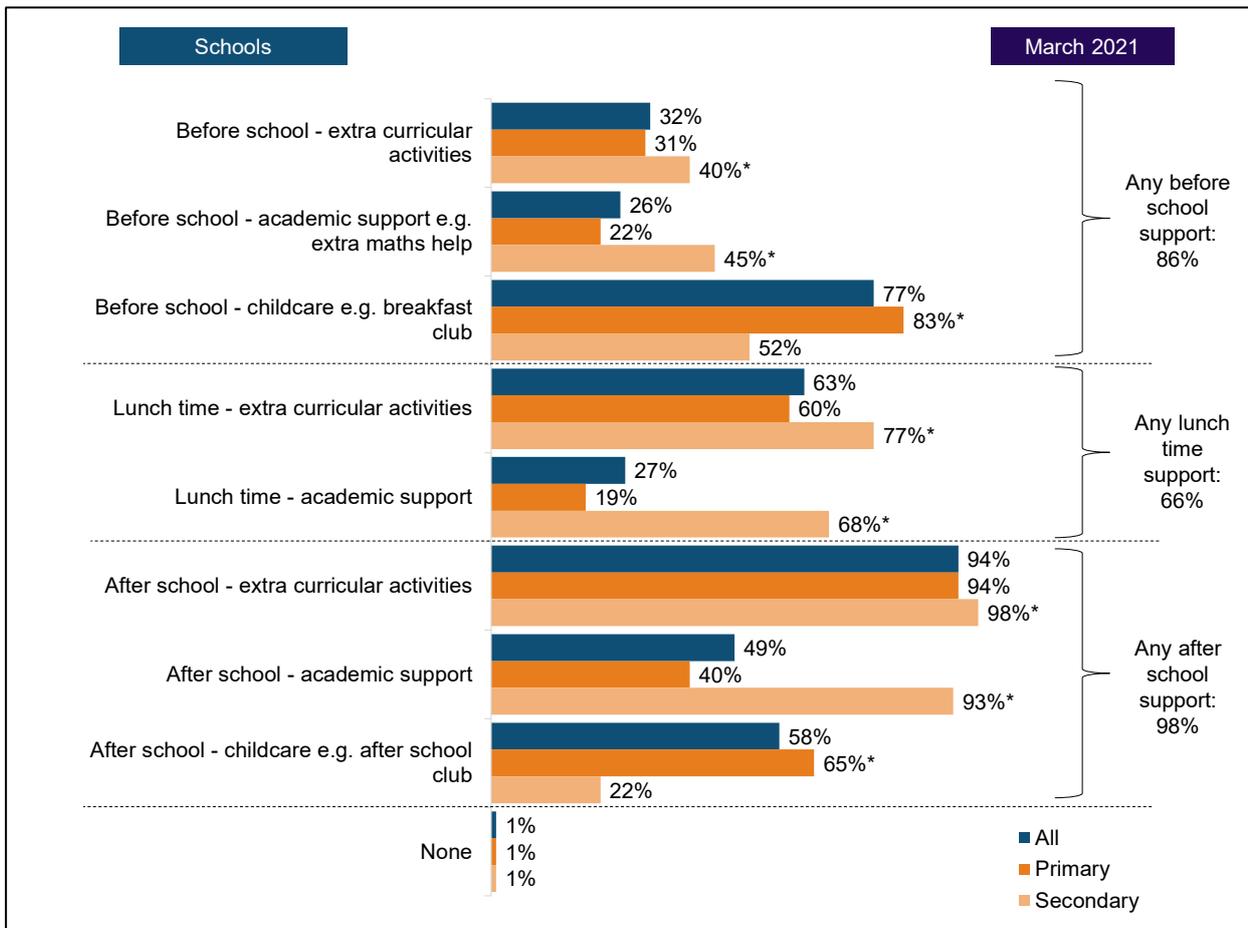
Schools were also asked about the support they provided to parents and pupils before, during and after school (e.g., extracurricular activities, academic support and childcare) before the COVID-19 pandemic.

As shown in Figure 12, schools most commonly offered after school support (98% offered some form of after school support) with 94% of schools offering after school extracurricular activities. They were least likely to offer lunchtime school support (66% of schools offered this).

Secondary schools were significantly more likely to have offered extracurricular activities and academic support at all points of the school day (before, during and after) than primary schools. The most pronounced differences were in relation to academic support – for instance, two-thirds (68%) of secondary schools offered academic support at lunchtime, compared with 19% of primary schools.

Primary schools, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to have offered childcare before and after school (e.g., 65% of primary schools offered childcare after school, compared with 22% of secondary schools).

Figure 12 Types of support offered by schools before the COVID-19 pandemic, by school phase



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. G5: All schools (n=1,046); Primary (n=755); Secondary (n=291). * Indicates a significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

There were prominent differences in relation to childcare support by FSM eligibility. Schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to offer childcare support before school (88%, compared with 72% of schools with the lowest proportion) whereas the reverse was true for after school childcare support (68% of schools with the lowest proportion, compared with 46% with the highest proportion).

Attendance

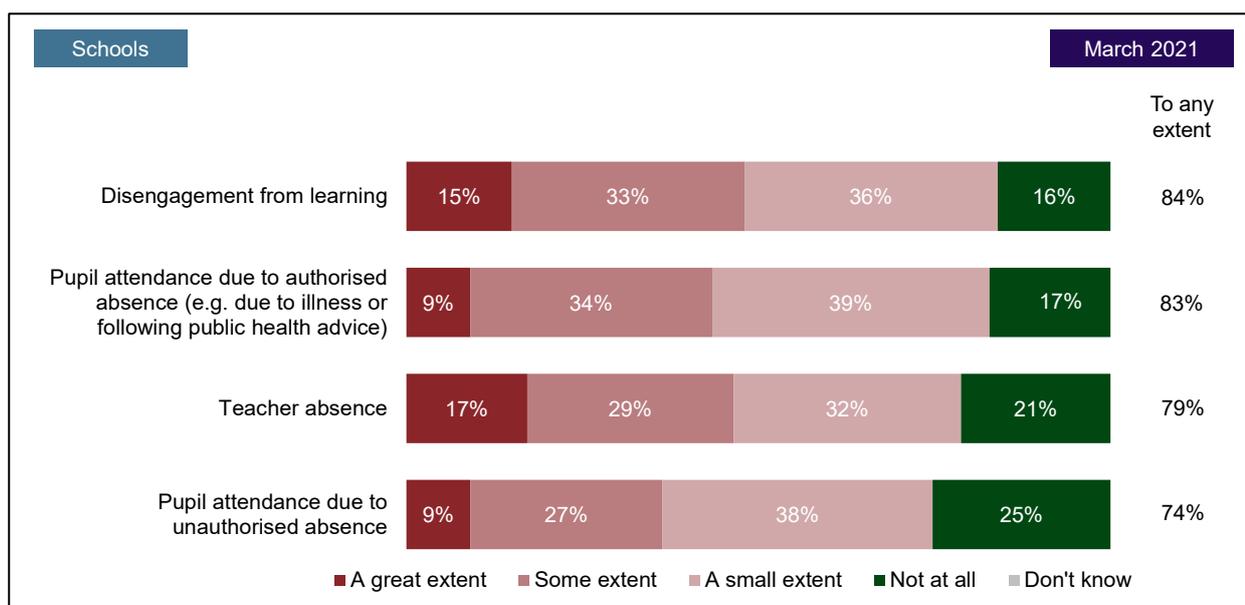
This section of the report looks at leaders and teachers' concerns about aspects of school attendance since the wider opening of schools following the third lockdown. Understanding concern related to attendance and engagement is a priority for DfE and will inform guidance and best practice products for schools and local authorities, and policy development during the medium-term covid-recovery period.

From 8th March 2021, all schools and colleges were permitted to open to all pupils, however not all schools and colleges opened on this date. The exact opening date was flexible, to allow for set up of COVID-19 measures, including asymptomatic testing. Shielding guidance was in place between January 6th and March 31st, 2021 and advised that clinically extremely vulnerable pupils did not physically attend school between these dates (covering the period during the third lockdown and initial weeks following the wider opening of schools). The survey fieldwork was undertaken between 19th March to the 26th March 2021.

Concerns regarding school attendance (leaders)

Most leaders were concerned about each aspect of school attendance explored, with at least three-quarters concerned with each aspect to at least a small extent. They were generally most concerned about teacher absence and pupil disengagement from learning (17% and 15%, respectively, were concerned about these aspects to a great extent) (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Leaders' concerns since schools fully reopened in March 2021



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. D1: All leaders (n=1,046).

There was no significant difference in the proportion concerned to a great extent between primary and secondary leaders. However, leaders at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely than those with the lowest proportion to be concerned by all areas to a great extent. Most notably, over one-in-five (22%) leaders from schools with the highest proportion were concerned about pupil attendance due to unauthorised absence, compared with a small minority (4%) of leaders from schools with the lowest proportion.

A similar question was asked throughout the DfE Teacher and Leader Panel surveys in 2020, and comparisons between the two datasets highlight key changes in leaders' concerns over time. Concern has generally decreased over time, with concern to a great extent about the following aspects of attendance significantly decreasing since the December 2020 survey:

- Teacher absence (down from 45% in December 2020, to 17% in March 2021).
- Pupil attendance due to authorised absence (down from 37% in December 2020, to 9% in March 2021).
- Pupil attendance due to unauthorised absence (down from 19% in December 2020, to 9% in March 2021).

However, concern about disengagement from learning has significantly increased (from 8% who were concerned to a great extent in December 2020 to 15% in March 2021).

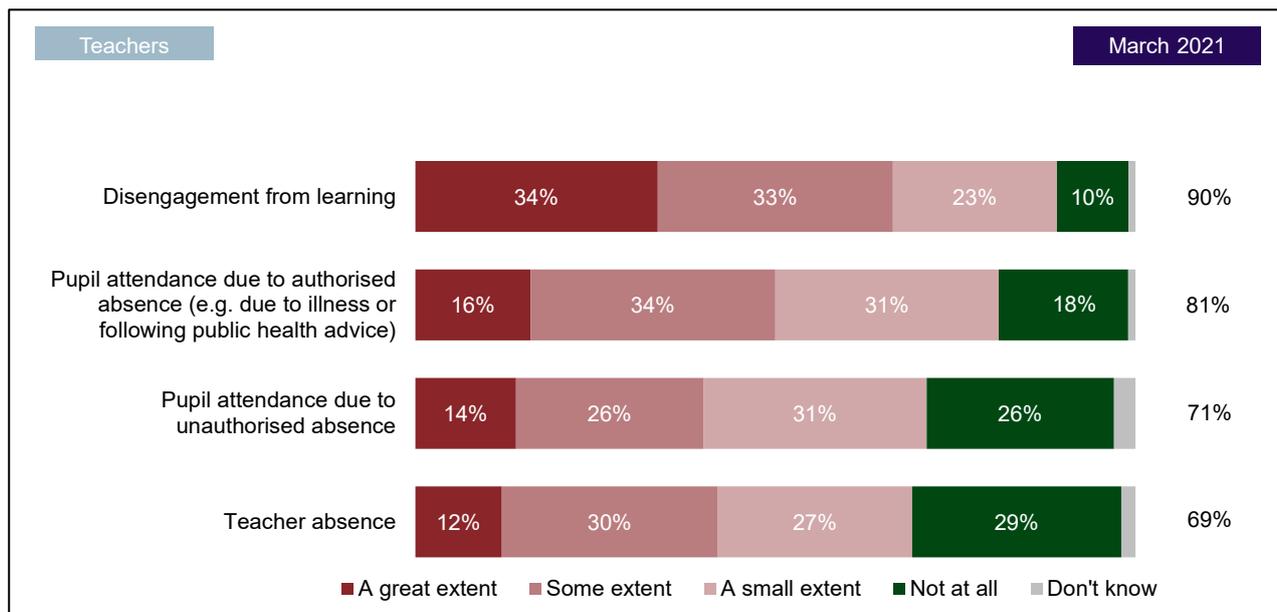
Due to differences in question wording (a different number of statements were covered with leaders and teachers in the DfE Teacher and Leader Panel surveys), and the makeup of that panel, differences should be treated with caution.

Concerns regarding school attendance (teachers)

Compared to leaders, concern with each aspect of school attendance was more variable among teachers (between 34% and 12% were concerned with each aspect to a great extent – see Figure 14).

Teachers were most concerned about pupil disengagement from learning (34% were concerned about this to a great extent). Unlike leaders, they were least concerned about teacher absence (12% were concerned about this to a great extent).

Figure 14. Teachers' concerns since schools fully reopened in March 2021



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. D1: All teachers (n=1,217).

Secondary teachers were generally more concerned than primary teachers about school attendance. They were significantly more likely to report being concerned to a great extent about:

- Pupil disengagement from learning (40%, compared with 28% of primary teachers);
- Pupil attendance due to authorised absence (20% vs. 13%); and
- Pupil attendance due to unauthorised absence (16% vs. 11%).

Differences by FSM eligibility reflected the leader results: teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were more likely to be concerned to a great extent about all areas covered in the survey. Most notably, a quarter (25%) of teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were concerned about pupil absence due to authorised absence, compared with one-in-10 (11%) of teachers at schools with the lowest proportion.

As with leaders, teachers were generally less concerned about aspects of school attendance than they had been previously (during the DfE Teacher and Leader Panel surveys conducted in 2020). This was particularly so for:

- Pupil attendance due to authorised absence, where the proportion of teachers concerned to a great extent decreased significantly from 41% in December 2020 to 16% in March 2021; and

- Teacher absence, which decreased significantly from 28% in December 2020 to 12% in March 2021.

However, concern about disengagement from learning has significantly increased (from 21% who were concerned to a great extent in December 2020 to 34% in March 2021).

Due to differences in the methodologies between the two surveys, differences should be treated with caution.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

This section of the report focuses on support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the barriers to effectively supporting these pupils. It also covers whether these barriers were considered to be short or long-term barriers. It looks at this from schools' and teachers' perspectives.

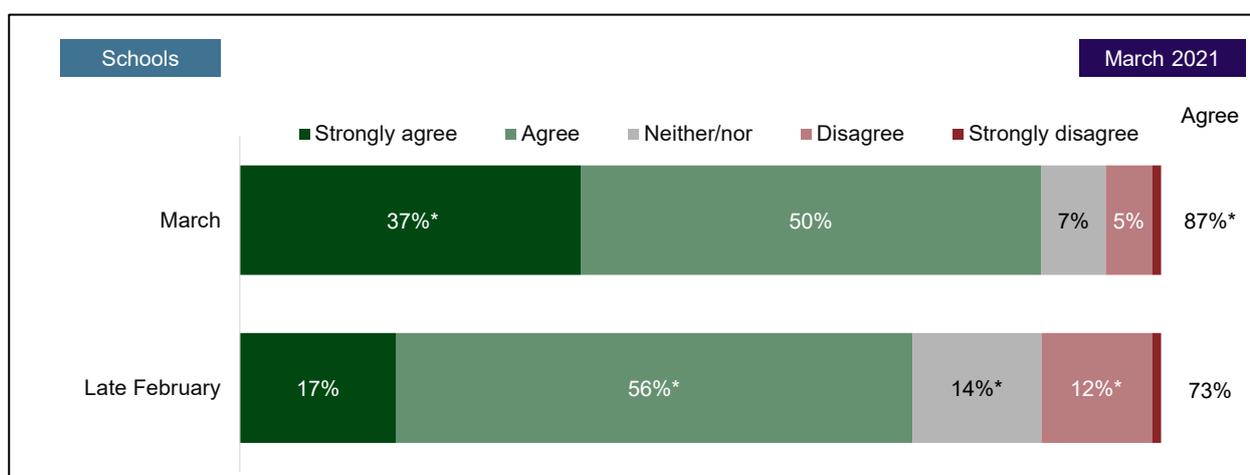
Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a child or young person has Special Educational Needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools (or mainstream post-16 institutions).

Schools' experiences of supporting pupils with SEND

The majority (87%) of schools agreed that they were able to effectively support pupils with SEND since the full reopening of schools on 8th March 2021. This was significantly up from the late February survey (when schools were closed to most pupils) – roughly three-quarters (73%) agreed with the statement in that survey (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. The extent to which schools were able to effectively support pupils with SEND since 8th March 2021



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. E1: All leaders (n=1,046). School Snapshot Panel, late February 2021 survey. B1: All leaders (n=1,178). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between waves.

While there were no differences in levels of agreement with the statement by school phase, academy status had some bearing. Primary academies were significantly more likely than primary non-academies to agree that they could effectively support pupils with SEND (90% vs. 85%).

Additionally, the following schools were significantly more likely to strongly agree with the statement that they were able to effectively support pupils with SEND:

- Schools with the lowest proportions of FSM pupils (47% vs. 36% of those with the highest proportion);
- Schools with an outstanding Ofsted rating (47% vs. 31% of those requiring improvement).

Barriers to meeting needs of pupils with SEND (schools)

Schools that did not feel they could effectively support pupils with SEND were asked about the barriers to meeting the needs of these pupils.³

The most common barriers were a lack of capacity in the school workforce (5%), a lack of access to specialist services or professionals (4%) and supporting a large number of pupils with differing needs (4%).

There were key differences between the late February and March surveys (see Figure 16). Due, principally, to the proportion that did not report any barriers (94% in March and 87% in late February), schools in the March survey were significantly less likely to report a range of barriers including:

- Lack of access to specialist services or professionals (4% in March, compared with 8% in late February);
- Supporting a large number of pupils with differing needs (4% vs. 6%); and
- Pupil access to appropriate technology and equipment (1% vs. 5%).

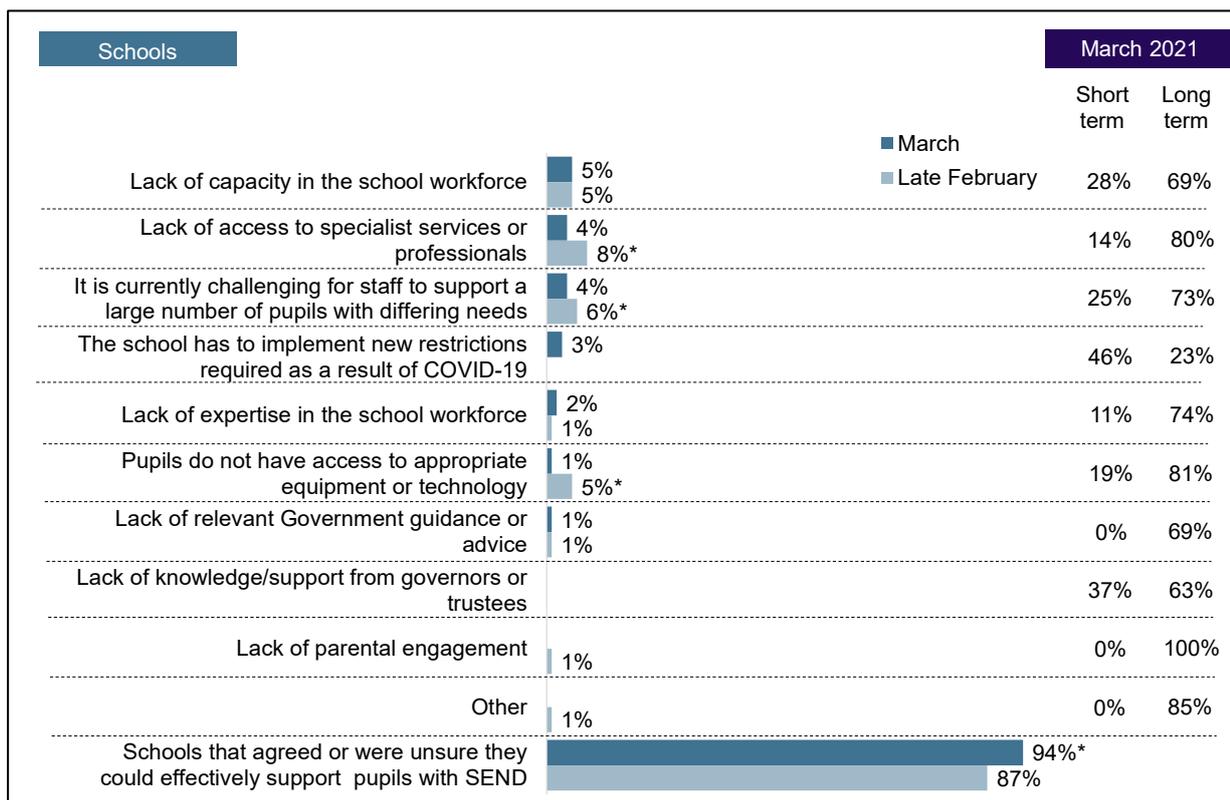
In the March survey, schools were also asked to indicate whether they felt the barriers they reported were short-term or long-term barriers. As shown by Figure 16, with the exception of a lack of access to specialist services or professionals, all the barriers reported were long-term issues for the majority of schools.⁴

Pupils not having access to appropriate equipment or technology (81% of schools who said this was a barrier), a lack of access to specialist services (80%), and lack of expertise in the school workforce (74%) were seen to be the greatest long-term barriers.

³ In order to compare between waves of the survey, the question has been rebased to include all schools – this is because the number of schools that reported their school could not effectively support pupils with SEND reduced by over 50% between waves (from 162 to 66) which affects the proportion reporting each barrier substantially.

⁴ Please note, some iterations at this question have a low base size, so findings should be treated with caution.

Figure 16. Barriers for schools in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, by wave



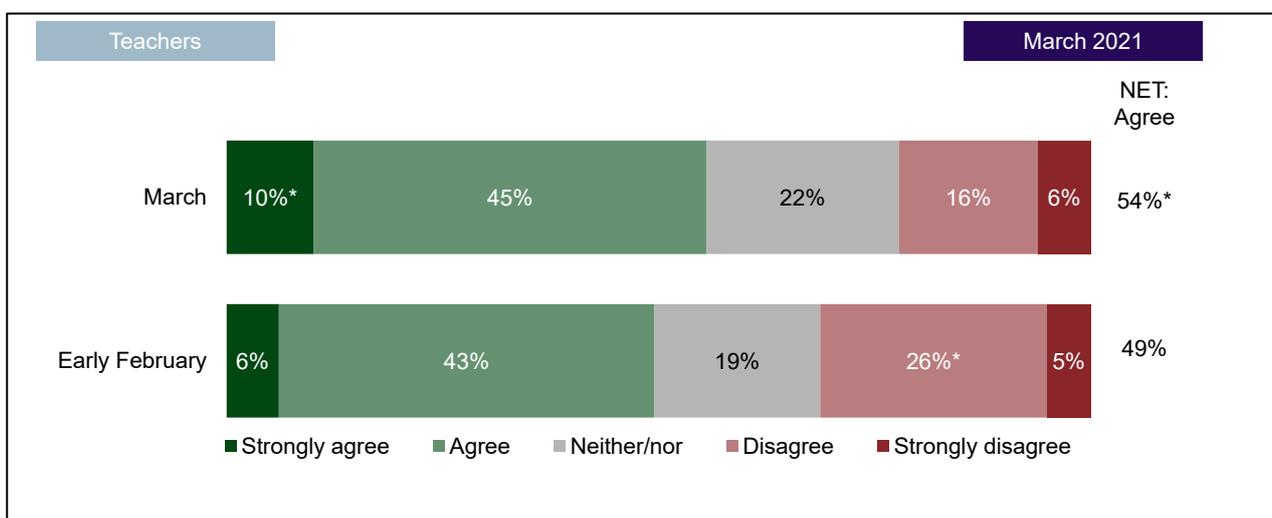
Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. E2/3: All leaders (n=1,046). School Snapshot Panel, Late February 2021 survey. B2: All leaders (n=1,178). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between waves. Please note: the short and long-term barrier percentages may not always add up to 100% as some leaders selected don't know at this question. The short and long-term percentages are of those who reported each as a barrier.

Teachers' experiences of supporting pupils with SEND

The teacher perspective on supporting pupils with SEND was less positive than the school perspective. Although over half (54%) of teachers agreed (45%) or strongly agreed (10%) that they felt personally equipped to support SEND pupils, around one-in-five (22%) disagreed.

There was, however, a significant increase in the proportion that agreed with the statement since the early February wave (49% agreed in early February vs. 54% in March).

Figure 17. Extent to which teachers felt personally equipped to support pupils with SEND since schools fully reopened



School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. E4: All teachers (n=1,217). School Snapshot Panel, Early February 2021 survey. D1: All teachers (n=1,266). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between waves.

Teachers based in rural schools were significantly more likely to agree that they felt personally equipped to support SEND pupils (61%, compared with 53% of teachers based in urban schools).

Barriers to meeting needs of pupils with SEND (teachers)

As with schools, teachers that disagreed that they could effectively support pupils with SEND were asked about the barriers to supporting these pupils, and whether these were short- or long-term barriers.⁵

The most common barrier reported was that it is difficult for staff to support a large number of pupils with differing needs (17% of all teachers). Other common barriers reported by teachers included a lack of time to provide additional support (15%) and having to implement new restrictions as a result of COVID-19 (11%).

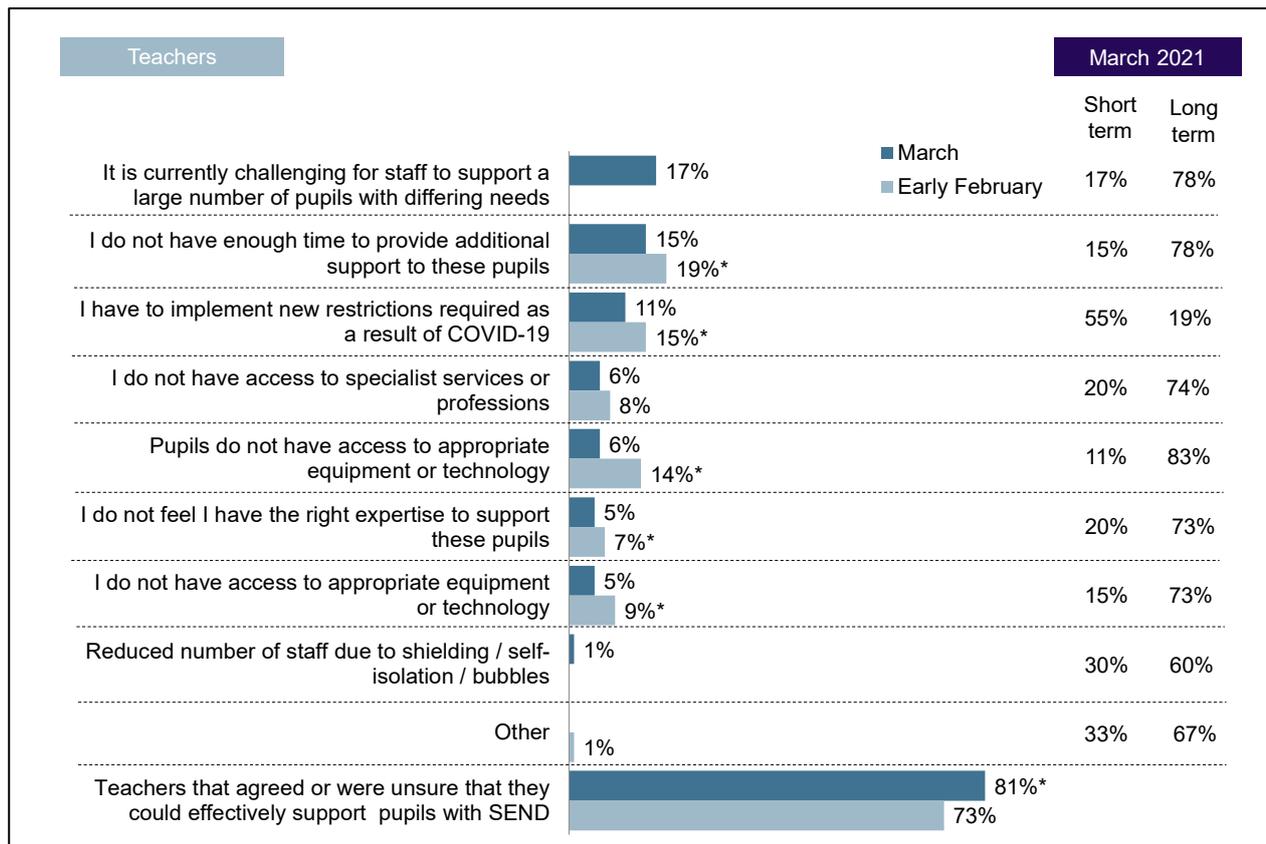
There were changes in the barriers mentioned since the question was last asked to teachers in early February (see Figure 18). Owing to increase in the proportion reporting no barriers, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of teachers reporting a range of barriers, most notably pupils not having access to appropriate equipment or technology (6%, compared with 14% in early February).

With the exception of barriers relating to implementing restrictions required as a result of COVID-19, the majority of teachers felt the barriers to supporting pupils with SEND were long-term barriers. The barriers considered to be long-term by the largest proportion of teachers were:

- Pupils not having access to appropriate equipment or technology (83% of those who saw this as a barrier to supporting SEND pupils);
- Supporting a large number of pupils with differing needs (78%); and
- Not having enough time to provide additional support (78%).

⁵ As with the school findings, in order to compare between waves of the survey, the question has been rebased to include all teachers.

Figure 18. Barriers for teachers in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, by wave



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. E5/6: Teachers that do not feel able to support SEND pupils effectively (n=274). School Snapshot Panel, early February 2021 survey. D2: Teachers that do not feel able to support SEND pupils effectively (n=386). * Indicates a statistically significant difference between waves. Please note: the short and long-term barrier percentages may not always add up to 100% as some leaders selected don't know at this question. The short and long-term percentages are of those who reported each as a barrier.

Rapid asymptomatic testing

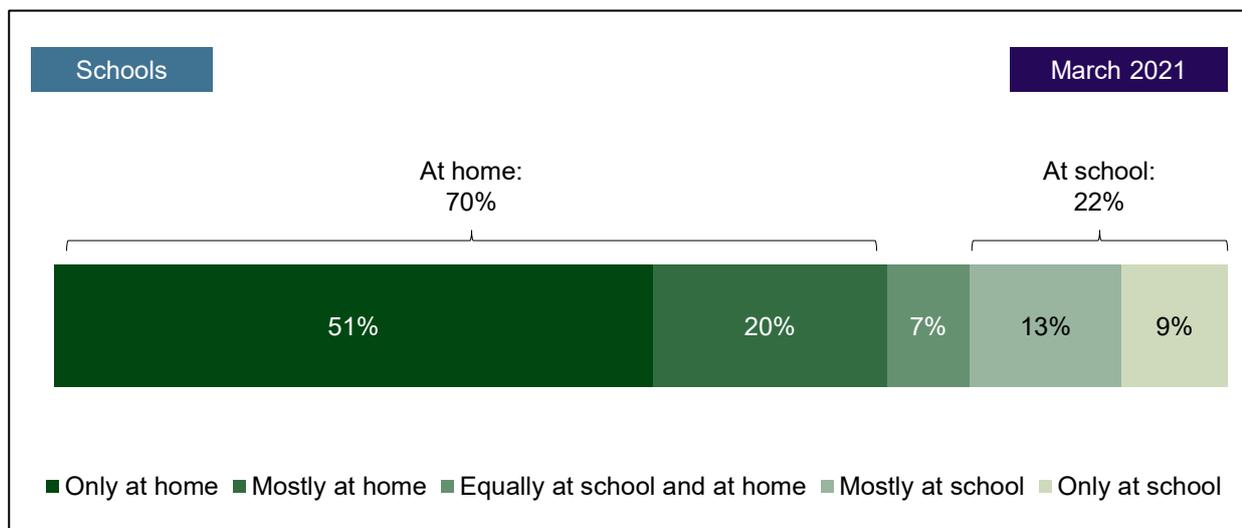
In March 2021, secondary schools and teachers were asked questions about rapid asymptomatic COVID-19 testing at school. This section of the report covers:

- How COVID-19 rapid asymptomatic testing is currently administered to pupils;
- Who oversees the administration of tests in schools;
- The challenges faced by schools when implementing COVID-19 testing; and

Administration of rapid testing

As part of the return to face-to-face education, schools were asked to facilitate three COVID-19 tests for each pupil at an on-site Asymptomatic Testing Site before transitioning to twice-weekly testing at home. At the time of the March 2021 survey, most (70%) secondary schools reported that COVID-19 tests were being administered at home, either only (51%) or mostly (20%). One-in-five (22%) schools were administering tests in school, either only (9%) or mostly (13%).

Figure 19. How COVID-19 testing is currently administered to pupils



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. F1. Secondary leaders asked this question (n=248).

Secondary schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to report that COVID-19 testing was being administered only at home (56%, compared with 31% of schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils).

Organisation of the administration of rapid testing

Secondary schools reported two main approaches for organizing the administration of COVID-19 tests in school. Over half (55%) reported that the administration of tests was overseen by a designated member of staff, and two-in-five (43%) reported it was overseen by a group of designated staff who shared responsibility. A small minority (1%) of schools reported administration of tests fell to whichever members of staff were available.

These findings are in line with findings in early February survey, suggesting schools' approach to administering COVID-19 tests remained consistent.

Challenges faced by schools implementing testing

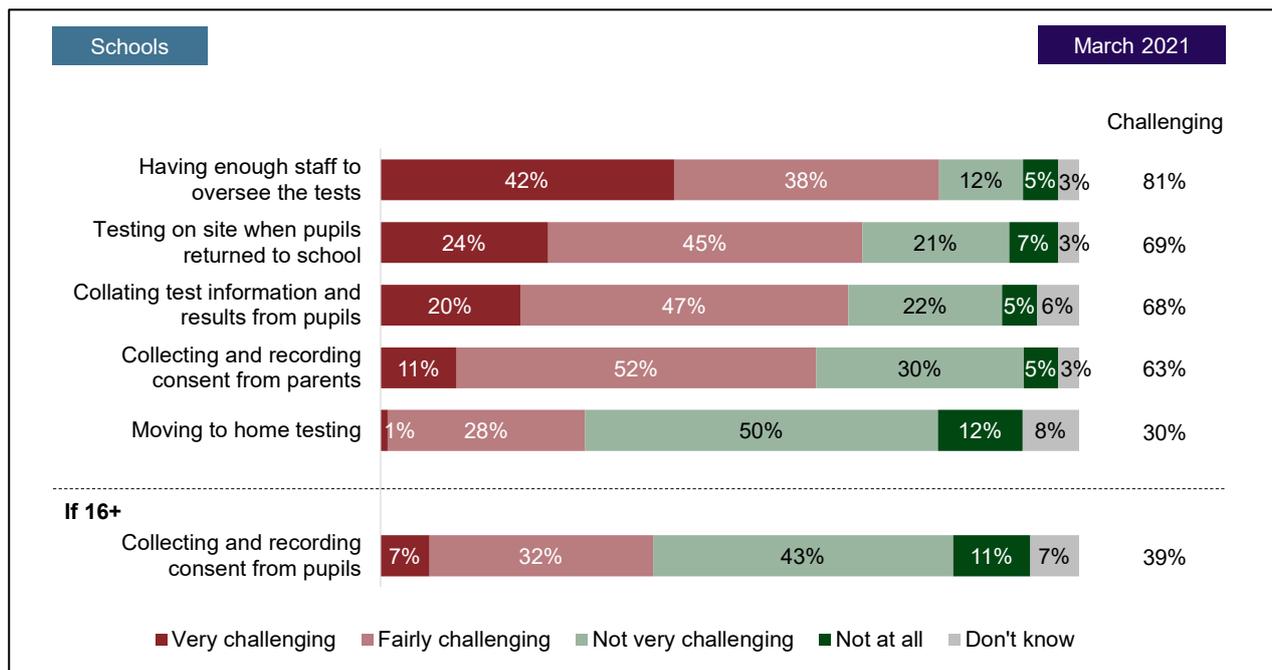
Secondary schools were asked how challenging, if at all, they had found the following when implementing COVID-19 testing at the school:

- Collecting and recording consent from parents;
- Collecting and recording consent from pupils (for schools with pupils over the age of 16);
- Having enough staff to oversee the tests;
- Testing on site when pupils returned to school;
- Collating test information and results from pupils; and
- Moving to home testing.

Having enough staff to oversee the tests represented the biggest challenge: the vast majority (81%) of secondary schools reported that this had been either very (42%) or fairly (38%) challenging. Almost seven-in-ten schools also reported that testing on site when pupils returned to school (69%) and collating test information and results from pupils (68%) had been challenging.

On the other hand, less than one third (30%) of schools had found moving to home testing challenging (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Challenges faced by secondary schools when implementing COVID-19 testing



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. F2: Secondary leaders asked this question (n=248).

In early February 2021, secondary schools were asked to share expectations about how challenging the following would be when implementing COVID-19 testing after schools fully reopened:

- Collecting and recording consent from parents;
- Collecting and recording consent from pupils (for schools with pupils over the age of 16);
- Having enough staff to oversee the tests; and
- Ensuring pupils conduct their tests properly.

In line with trends from the March survey, schools expected having enough staff to oversee the tests would represent the biggest challenge: 91% of secondary schools reported that this would be either very (58%) or fairly (32%) challenging. However, slightly fewer schools found this aspect of administering rapid testing challenging when all students returned to face-to-face education (81% reported this, down from 91% in early February).

COVID-19 infection control measures

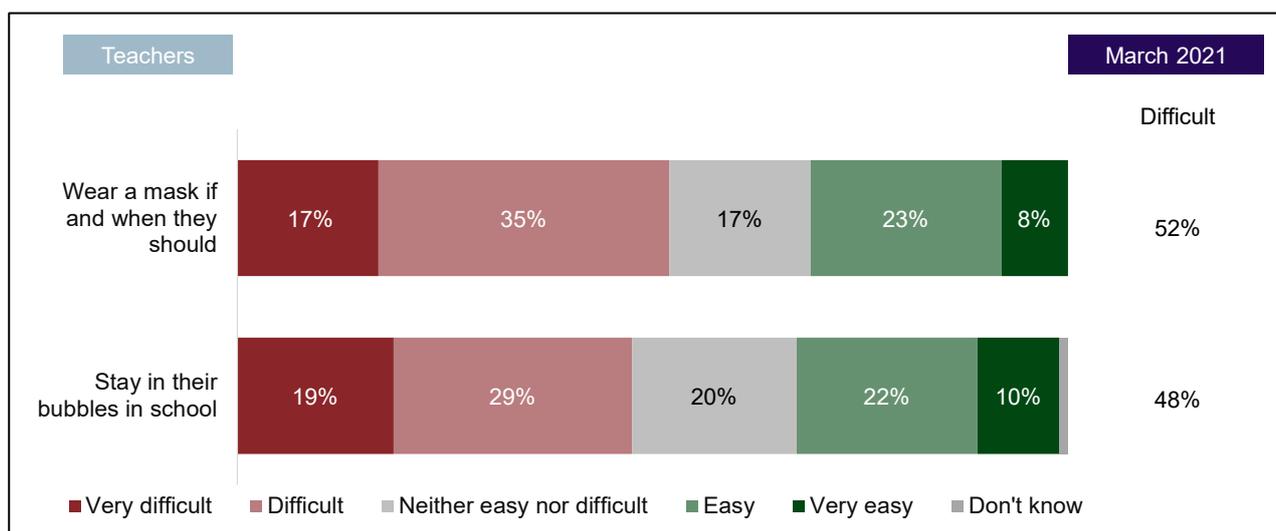
In the March 2021 survey, secondary teachers were asked how easy or difficult they found it to ensure that pupils:

- stayed in their bubbles in school; and
- wore a mask.

Secondary teachers were more likely to consider these measures difficult to manage than easy – for instance, 52% reported they found it difficult to ensure pupils wore a mask if and when they should, compared with 32% that reported they found this easy.

The results suggest that teachers found it similarly difficult to manage both infection control measures (around half of teachers found it difficult to manage mask wearing and considered it difficult to manage keeping pupils in their bubbles – see Figure 21).

Figure 21. How difficult secondary teachers have found it to ensure pupils do the following



Source: School Snapshot Panel, March 2021 survey. F4. Secondary teachers asked this question (n=504).

Secondary teachers from schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to say they found it very difficult to ensure that pupils wore a mask when they should (32% vs. 5% of secondary teachers from schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils).

Teachers were also significantly more likely to say they found this difficult if they were from schools with Ofsted rating of 'requires improvement' (63%, compared with 38% of teachers from outstanding-rated schools).



Department
for Education

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Reference: DFE-RR118

ISBN: 978-1-83870-300-4

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