



Department  
for Education

# COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel

November to February findings

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IFF Research Ltd



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## Executive Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned the COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP) to collect robust and quick turnaround research in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PPP aims to help DfE make evidence-based policy decisions, monitor the impact of the COVID-19 / post-COVID-19 situation, and see how views and experiences of parents and pupils change over time. The research has been structured into two broad phases:

- The recruitment wave invited pupils in years 6-13 and parents of pupils in reception to year 10 in the 2019/20 academic year to take part in a 15-minute online survey and join the PPP. Panel members were sampled from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and contacted by letter, inviting them to take part in an online survey (push-to-web approach).
- Subsequent waves involved inviting panel members to take part in regular 5-minute surveys. There have been seven subsequent surveys waves between September 2020 and February 2021.

The August to October findings report discussed the findings from the recruitment wave and first three subsequent waves.<sup>1</sup>

This November to February findings report discusses the next three waves. The headline findings for these waves are discussed below.

## School attendance

### Attendance levels: November and December 2020

In December 2020, when attendance was mandatory, 96% of parents said their child had attended school in the last two weeks (covering 2<sup>nd</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020 ).<sup>2</sup> Just under three-quarters (74%) of parents reported their child had attended every day in, broadly in line with late November (76%) following the decrease from the late October wave (84%).<sup>3</sup> Parents in December were less likely than those in November to report that their child had not attended school at all (4% vs 7%) in the last two weeks. A further 1% said their child had not attended at all this term.

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<sup>1</sup> See Parent and Pupil Panel: August to October findings

<sup>2</sup> Fieldwork was from 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020

<sup>3</sup> At points in this report comparisons will be made to the waves conducted August-October 2020. For full analysis of the findings of August-October PPP surveys please see the Parent and Pupil Panel: August to October findings

## Reasons for non-attendance: November and December 2020

In December 2020, over a third (35%) of pupils reported not attending school every weekday in the last two weeks, and over a quarter of parents (26%) reported this of their child. Among this group, 73% of parents and 71% of pupils reported that this was because of COVID-19 related reasons. This was identical to the November wave (73% of parents and 71% of pupils). Of the 7% of pupils that had not attended at all in the previous two weeks, around two-fifths (41%) said this was because the school was closed to them / their child, and a further two-fifths (41%) said it was because they either had COVID-19 symptoms or possible contact with COVID-19 and were self-isolating.

## Attendance levels: February 2021

In February 2021, parents and pupils were asked about physical attendance in the previous two weeks (which covered 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021) during a time when schools were closed to the majority of pupils as part of the national lockdown.<sup>4</sup> Over nine-in-ten secondary pupils (92%) did not attend school at all in the preceding two weeks, while four-fifths (79%) of all parents said this about their child.

Pupils in year 11-13 were more likely than pupils in year 7-10 to have not attended at all (95% vs. 91%), continuing the trend seen in previous waves despite the different overall attendance figures.

## Perception of eligibility to attend in February 2021

In February 2021, parents and pupils were asked about the eligibility requirements around physically attending school which have been in place during the most recent national lockdown. Around half of parents thought their child was eligible to physically attend school (49%) and roughly the same proportion thought their child was not eligible (48%). Similarly, half of pupils (50%) thought that they were not eligible to physically attend school, though quite a large proportion were unsure (12%).

Parents were asked a follow up question about why their child was eligible to physically attend school. The most common reason parents gave was that they or their child's other parent was a critical/key worker (88%).<sup>5</sup> Around one-in-twenty said their child had been identified as otherwise vulnerable (6%), though this was higher among parents whose child was eligible for free school meals (FSM) (19%) or where their child was considered to have a Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) (14%).<sup>6</sup> A further 5% were

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<sup>4</sup> This followed a period when schools had been open to the majority of pupils during the autumn term 2020

<sup>5</sup> See Glossary for full definition.

<sup>6</sup> See Glossary for full definitions.

eligible because they had an education, health and care (EHC) plan.<sup>7</sup> One-in-fifty (2%) said their child was classified as a child in need (CIN).<sup>8</sup>

## **Reasons for non-attendance: February 2021**

All pupils, and parents of pupils, who said they attended 'some' or 'most' days in the past two weeks in February 2021 (4% of secondary pupils; 9% of parents) were asked why they (or their child) had attended some but not all days, regardless of eligibility. The base size for pupils in this group was small, so findings should be treated only as indicative.

The most common reason given by parents of pupils and pupils who attended some but not all days was that they only attended when their parents were working (45% pupils, 57% parents). The next most common reason was that the school could only offer a place on some days (24% pupils, 20% parents).

Among parents of pupils that thought they were eligible to attend school but had not attended at all (79% of parents) in the previous two weeks, the most common reason given for non-attendance was that they had not requested a place (73%), followed by being offered a place but not taking it (16%). Pupils gave similar reasons to parents for not attending school despite being eligible.

## **Experience of attending school**

### **Concern about spreading or catching COVID-19 whilst attending school**

When asked in December 2020, there was a decrease in the number of pupils who said they were worried about spreading or catching COVID-19 (either at school or college or whilst travelling there) (48% vs 51% in late September/early October), although this was an increase compared to late October (44%). As with previous waves FSM-eligible pupils (57% vs. 47% non-FSM eligible pupils) and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) pupils (56% vs. 45% among White pupils) were more likely to be worried about catching/spreading COVID-19 in December 2020.<sup>9</sup> Parents were also asked about concerns around catching and spreading COVID-19. Just under two-in-five (38%) parents were concerned that their child could catch or spread COVID-19 by taking part in music activities, including singing, at school or outside of school.

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<sup>7</sup> See Glossary for full definition.

<sup>8</sup> See Glossary for full definition.

<sup>9</sup> See Glossary for full definitions.

## Concerns regarding catching up on learning

Though they were less worried than in late October 2020, two in five secondary pupils were still very or fairly worried about catching up on learning in December 2020 (40%). Pupils in exams years (year 11 and 13) were far more likely to report in December 2020 that they were worried about catching up on learning (62% and 70%) compared to the average of all secondary pupils (40%) which was a continuation of a pattern seen in previous waves. In December 2020, fewer pupils reported receiving at least some support to catch up on missed learning (77% vs 82% in late October).

Year 13 pupils continued to be the most likely to feel their school/college had not supported them at all to catch up on learning they may have missed (15% vs. the 11% average across all secondary pupils that had attended school in the term).

## Experience and understanding COVID-19 rules

Similarly to late October 2020, most secondary pupils that had attended school in the autumn term (78%) reported in December 2020 that they were informed about new rules or advice in relation to the importance and benefits of attending school / college. The vast majority of these thought this guidance was clear (64% of all secondary pupils). Pupils who had attended school every day in the last two weeks prior to the survey were more likely to report having been informed of new rules on attendance (81%) compared to those who had attended most weekdays (73%) or some (68%).

Nine-in-ten (90%) pupils in December 2020 who had attended school in the autumn term reported being informed of new rules or advice regarding when not to attend school/college in circumstances relating to COVID-19, an increase on the 87% reporting this in October 2020. Most thought this advice was clear (74% of all pupils had received clear information on this compared with 16% receiving guidance they did not feel was clear). Overall, 6% of pupils reported not being informed about new rules or advice in relation to attendance during COVID-19 and a further 4% were not sure if guidance had been given.

Over three-quarters (77%) of pupils in November 2020 reported at least some disruptive behaviour in class. This was a statistically significant increase from the 73% that said this in late October.

In late November 2020, most parents and pupils felt their school was about right in how strict they were in enforcing rules on students' behaviour (80% and 69% respectively, not significantly different to late October). For both groups the remainder were more likely to think their school was not strict enough than that they were too strict.

In late September/early October, late October and December 2020 waves, pupils who had attended school at all in the autumn term were asked if they had been asked to



follow four COVID-19 specific rules: wash hands, wear mask, keeping physically distanced from other pupils, and stay in smaller groups.

The percentage of pupils asked to wear a mask in school had increased steadily by around 10 percentage points each wave, from 74% in late September/October, to 85% in late October and 98% in December 2020. The proportion reporting being asked to keep physically distanced from other pupils was also higher in December (73%) than in late September/October (67%) and late October (69%). However, fewer reported being asked to wash their hands regularly in the last two waves (each 80%) than in late September/October (85%).

In December 2020, most pupils who were asked to wear a mask, wash their hands regularly or stay in smaller groups (88%, 88% and 72% respectively) found this easy. Pupils found keeping physically distanced from other pupils harder: of the 73% asked to do this, more than half (55%) found this difficult to do. Two behaviours have become easier for pupils to do since late October 2020: wearing a mask (88% up from 85% in late October), and staying in smaller groups (72% up from 68%).

In December, just under four-in-five (79%) pupils who found it difficult to follow the rules said this was because it was not always possible to do so (e.g. not enough space, actions of others), a similar finding to late October.

Pupils had varying levels of confidence regarding whether other pupils in their school / college followed the measures asked of them in relation to COVID-19, when asked in December 2020. Three-quarters reported that other pupils at their school wore a face covering (76%), but less than three-in-ten (29%) reported that pupils kept physically distance from others where possible.

## Travel

In November 2020, pupils were asked how often they were wearing masks whilst traveling. Just over seven-in-ten (71%) pupils reported that they wore a mask or face covering at least sometimes while travelling to school or college, with just under two-in-five (38%) doing so every time. Over three-in-four (77%) pupils always wore a mask or face covering when going to the shops and two-in-three (66%) always did so when going on public transport. Four-in-five (81%) pupils wore a mask or face covering at least sometimes when in crowded places outside but just 35% always did so. Similarly around half said they had worn a mask or face covering at least sometimes when meeting people not in their household indoors (51%) and when walking along a quiet street with few other people nearby (49%) but were unlikely to always wear a mask in either instance (17% and 9% respectively).

BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to always wear a mask or face covering when: in crowded spaces outside (51% vs. 30%); walking along a quiet street with few other people nearby (19% vs. 5%); and when meeting people not in their household indoors (22% vs 15%) but were less likely to do so when going to the shops (71% vs 80%).

## Remote education

### Late November 2020: time when not at school

In late November 2020, pupils were asked how they spent their time on days when they were not in school. Four-in-five (80%) pupils not attending school full time (excluding those ill or home-schooled) spent some of the time they would have been in school learning or studying. This was a significant increase from the 64% who said this in late October. Over half (54%) spent some of this time relaxing, a fifth (20%) spent some of this time with friends or family, and around one in eight (12%) were reading for fun. While this measure provides an overview of how pupils spent their time on days when they were not in school, it does not tell us the amount of time pupils spent doing each activity.

### February 2021: remote education

In February 2021, parents and pupils were again asked about their experiences of remote education in the last two weeks (prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> February).<sup>10</sup>

Parents and pupils were asked about how many hours their child / they spent studying on days when not in school. The average number of hours of studying at home per day reported by pupils not attending school full-time was 5.3 hours in February 2021<sup>11</sup>. This was significantly higher than the 4.1 hours reported in December 2020. The average number of hours their child spent studying, reported by parents, had also increased in this period (from 3.5 hours in December to 4.6 in February).

The majority of pupils (61%) who had not attended school every day had been offered more than four hours of remote education, when not physically in school in the past two weeks. Just under half (46%) of parents of such children said the same. Only 1% of pupils and 2% of parents said that their school had not offered them *any* remote lessons. On average, pupils reported that they were offered 5.1 hours of lessons per day when not in school, while parents reported an average of 4.5 hours offered to their children.

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<sup>10</sup> The reported two weeks that parents and pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February.

<sup>11</sup> In January 2021, the Department [updated its remote education guidance](#) for schools. This stated that schools should provide remote education as a minimum, per day, of: KS1: 3 hours, on average across the cohort, with less for younger children; KS2: 4 hours; KS3 and KS4: 5 hours

Parents and pupils were also asked about what types of remote education their (or their child's) school had offered when they were not attending physically attending. The most common type of remote learning offered, as reported by pupils, were lessons over video call (89% of all secondary pupils offered any remote learning), followed by online worksheets (79%), recorded video lessons (50%) and recommended reading of online resources (41%). Parents reported that the most common type of remote learning offered to their child was online-worksheets (86%), followed by lessons over video call (69%), recommended reading of online resources (47%) and recorded video lessons (46%).

## **Late November 2020: Work completed and marked**

In late November 2020 parents and pupils were asked about what work their child / they had to complete and submit, and how much was marked.

Just over half (54%) of parents of pupils who had to submit work said that their child completed all of the work they were asked to submit. This was similar to the proportion of pupils that reported that they completed all the work they were asked to submit (52%).

Two-thirds of pupils (66%) and parents (64%) in late November 2020 felt that the work that they (or their child) had been asked to submit was of about the right level of challenge. Pupils were more likely to think the work was too challenging (10%) than not challenging enough (3%), whereas the reverse was true for parents (12% vs. 5%). These findings were not significantly different to those of late October 2020.

## **February 2021: Work completed and marked**

In the February 2021 wave parents and pupils who were offered remote education by their schools were asked if they were required to submit any of their work. Almost all pupils (97%) and parents (95%) said they / their child had been asked to submit at least some work to their teachers. Primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to say their child had to submit all of their work (63% vs. 50%). Around nine-in-ten pupils (91%) and parents of pupils (89%) that had submitted work thought at least some of it was marked.

In February 2021, parents of pupils that were offered remote lessons were asked about the level of support that they provided for their child. Around three-quarters (74%) of parents provided at least some support for their child, with primary parents more likely than secondary parents to say this (88% vs. 58%).

## **Remote learning by subject**

In late November 2020, pupils were asked how easy or difficult they found learning different subjects online. For those pupils to whom the question was applicable, over half

found most of the subjects easy to learn online, apart from Science (45%; this was the subject most often described as difficult to learn online (28%)).

In February 2021, pupils that were offered some remote education in the past two weeks were asked about whether their school provided remote lessons or set work in each subject. For most subjects, at least 90% of pupils said that their school provided remote lessons. The subjects least likely to have work set were Music (10%), Design and Technology (9%) and Computing (8%).

## **Experiences of remote education**

In February 2021, parents were asked about potential barriers to learning that may have made remote education at home difficult for their child. Half of parents of pupils who had done at least some remote education in past two weeks said that their child had not experienced any of the barriers suggested (51%).<sup>12</sup> This was less than the 56% of parents who reported this in December 2020.

The most common barrier identified by parents was their child being unable to print work (15%, though fewer mentioned this than in December 2020 (24%)), followed by lacking a quiet place to study (13%). In February 2021, a number of barriers were raised spontaneously by parents: 6% reported their child did not have access to a device for remote education that they can personally use, 6% reported that their child struggled with motivation, attention, concentration or distraction issues, and 4% spontaneously mentioned they were struggling to find time to help due to work.

When pupils were asked about potential barriers to learning that made remote education at home difficult, nearly half (48%) reported not facing any difficulties with home education, a large improvement from the 25% who reported not facing any difficulties in October 2020.

## **Remote education and personal difficulties**

Parents of pupils offered at least some remote education in the last two weeks were asked if their child had been experiencing any of a number of personal difficulties, such as motivation, mental health and lacking digital skills. In February 2021, 60% felt their child had faced at least one of the difficulties discussed, up from 53% in December 2020.

More than half of parents whose child had been offered remote education in the past two weeks reported their child had struggled with motivation (54%), while around one-in-six

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<sup>12</sup> The reported two weeks that parents and pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February.

(18%) said their child had struggled with anxiety or mental health issues and 7% said their child lacked digital skills for online learning.

Two-thirds of pupils offered remote education in the last two weeks reported that they struggled with motivation (66%), and around three-in-ten said they struggled with anxiety/other mental health issues. Three-in-ten (29%) pupils had not experienced any difficulties listed. Pupil anxiety and mental health issues are discussed in detail in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Chapter.

## **Access to technology**

In February 2021, almost all pupils surveyed (98%) reported that they had access to a laptop, tablet, or computer that they could use for at least 3 hours a day, compared to only 88% of pupils when asked in August. As seen previously, there were some pupils who were less likely to have access including BAME pupils (95% vs 98% of White pupils) and FSM pupils (93% vs 98% of non-FSM pupils).

In December 2020, one-in-ten parents (10%) reported that their child had been given a device such as a laptop, and one-in-ten (10%) also reported that their child had been given help to access the internet. Almost 9 out of 10 (87%) parents of pupils that were given a device said that it was useful to support their child's education. When asked what their device had been used for, parents most commonly reported that it was used for doing homework (72%), followed by classwork (57%), followed by submitting homework (50%).

## **Literacy and Reading at home**

In December 2020 parents of primary pupils were asked whether they had supported their child's reading at home since the start of September. Almost nine-in-ten (88%) primary parents said they had supported their child's reading, with little variation between sub-groups. Over nine-in-ten parents (91%) who had supported their child's reading were confident about doing so, however female parents were more likely than male parents to say that they were not confident about supporting their child's reading (5% vs. 1%).

Primary parents were asked if their confidence in supporting their child with reading had changed between March 2020 and now (December 2020). Around two-thirds (65%) of parents that supported their child's reading felt that their confidence had not changed, and they were still confident. Around a fifth (22%) felt more confident, and one-in-twenty (5%) felt less confident.

## Impact of COVID-19

In November 2020, parents were asked about the difficulties they had faced during the pandemic. The most commonly experienced difficulty was a decline in mental or physical health (28%), followed closely by major cut in household income (21%). Almost half (47%) reported experiencing at least one of the seven events (shown in Figure 55) presented to them because of COVID-19.

Although less likely to have experienced a major cut in household income (17% vs. 22%), parents of FSM pupils were more likely than parents of non-FSM pupils to have been unable to access sufficient food (15% vs. 2%) and been unable to pay bills (12% vs. 4%). They were also more likely to have experienced a decline in mental or physical health (36% vs. 26%).

When asked in December 2020, over one-in-five (22%) year 1-6 parents were worried about their child's progress in reading, with one-in-twenty (5%) very worried.

## Experience of school: December 2020

In December 2020, pupils were asked about whether they had been able to keep up with class and homework in the autumn term (academic year 2020/21). Three-quarters agreed they had been able to keep up in class (74%), with seven-in-ten agreeing they have been able to keep up with their homework (70%). One-in-ten disagreed that they have been able to keep up in class, with 14% feeling the same about keeping up with homework. Whether pupils felt they had been able to keep up in class or with their homework varied across groups. For example, younger pupils (years 7-10) were more likely than older pupils (years 11-13) to say that they were able to keep up in class and with homework (78% vs. 68%).

In December 2020 pupils were also asked, in the context of COVID-19: "Thinking about your experiences at school this term, do you think you are able to do the following things more or less than before the pandemic, or has there been no change?" (as shown in Figure 58). Half reported being able to do the things they enjoy (at school) less (48%), whilst one-in-four said they have not been able to spend as much time with their friends this term (41%). A fifth felt they were less able to get help or support for / talk to a teacher or other adult at school about a problem this term (20% respectively).

## GCSE Subject choices

In December 2020, pupils in years 7 – 10 were asked about whether they were planning to study certain GCSE subjects (Arts, Foreign Language, Design and Technology, Humanities or Computer Science). Humanities subjects were the most popular, three-in-



five (59%) pupils reported planning to take a Humanities subject (e.g., geography or history). The least popular subjects were Computer Science and Design and Technology, in which a quarter (25%) of pupils reported they were planning to them, respectively.

Of the 33% of year 7-10 pupils who plan to take an Art GCSE, the main reason given for planning to study it was because they enjoy it (84%) whereas of the 34% who don't plan to take this subject, the main reason was that they did not enjoy the subject (54%). Of the 25% of year 7-10 pupils who plan to take a GCSE in Computer Science, the main reason given for planning to study it was because they enjoy it (77%). Half (51%) of year 10 and 11 pupils did not plan to continue to study Maths, but a fifth (21%) did not know whether they would or not. Pupils in year 10 were twice as likely as year 11 pupils to report not knowing yet (29% vs. 12%).

## Secondary school choices

In late November 2020, parents were asked some of the key information that they might consider when making choices about secondary schools for their child. Of the two-thirds of secondary school parents (67%) that had been through the secondary school application process, three-quarters (75%) had considered school exam data when applying, compared to 14% who had considered the school's remote learning offer. This was followed by subjects / qualifications offered by the school (70%) and pupils' destinations once they leave school (55%). Only 14% had considered the school's remote learning offer.

Over half of year 5 parents (57%) had started looking into secondary schools for their child in late November 2020. Of these parents, two-thirds (65%) were aware of the subjects and qualifications offered by the secondary school(s) they were considering. This compares to just over a third (36%) who were aware of the school's remote learning offer.

## Higher Technical Qualifications

When asked in late November 2020, a third (34%) of year 12 and 13 pupils had heard of higher technical qualifications (HTQs), and of these pupils almost half (47%) were considering taking one. The most appealing feature of HTQs amongst these pupils were that they tended to be tied to a particular career path or job, with 76% of all year 12 and 13 pupils saying this was very or somewhat appealing. Pupils in year 12 were more likely (than those in year 13) to be unsure about whether or not they might take a higher technical qualification (30% vs. 12%). FSM pupils were more likely than non-FSM pupils to have heard of higher technical qualifications (42% vs. 33%).

## Physical activity

Questions about physical activity were included in both November 2020 and December 2020, with both pupils and parents being asked about pupils' physical activity in the last seven days. In December 2020, three in five (58%) secondary pupils reported exercising three days in the last seven day, and a similar proportion (60%) of all parents reported their child was active for three days in the last seven. There was no significant change between November and December in terms of both parents and pupils reporting being active for three or more days in the last seven.

Younger pupils were more likely to report taking part in physical exercise on more than three of the last seven days compared to older pupils (60% of year 7-10 vs. 52% of year 11-13).

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

### Pupil wellbeing

Parents' (perceived) happiness scores for pupils decreased from December 2020 to February 2021, and feelings of anxiousness increased. Perceived happiness scores had previously been increasing between August and late October 2020 (a mean average of 7.9 in August to 8.4 in late October 2020), however they began to decrease in late November (8), and in February 2021, parents reported the lowest happiness mean scores for pupils compared to all previous waves (7.4). Anxiousness mean scores for pupils were higher in February 2021 for all parents and primary parents compared to all previous waves (2.7 and 2.6).

Mirroring parents' views of pupils' wellbeing, pupil self-reported scores significantly declined between August and February 2021; for pupil happiness 7.4 reduced to 6.4, life satisfaction 7.1 to 6.2 and worthwhileness 7.2 to 6.3, whilst self-reported levels of anxiousness have increased over this time period from 2.5 to 3.4.

Pupils in February 2021 were less likely to give positive scores (7-10) for their own happiness, satisfaction and worthwhileness and more likely to given higher scores for anxiousness than in December 2020. At least a fifth of pupils (21%, 26% and 24%) gave a low score (0-4) for happiness, satisfaction, and worthwhileness.

In February 2021 pupils who gave a high (6-10) anxiousness score (29%) were asked a follow up question about what in the last two weeks<sup>13</sup> has made them feel anxious. Keeping up with schoolwork was the most common reason making pupils feel anxious

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<sup>13</sup> The reported two weeks that pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February.



(71%), followed by uncertainty about the future (64%) and not being able to see or visit friends and family (61%). Those in years 11-13 were much more likely to be anxious about exams than those in years 7-10 (67% vs. 29%). Three-in-ten pupils (30%) were worried about catching or spreading COVID-19, and this proportion was found across year groups.

In February 2021 a fifth of secondary school pupils reported they often felt lonely (20%), which is the highest proportion reported since August 2020. Only a third said they hardly ever or never felt lonely (34%) compared to a half in August 2020 (52%).

In December 2020, pupils were asked about how supported they felt by their school and whether being back at school had impacted their mental health. Fewer pupils (who had attended during the term) felt that their school/college had supported them to at least some extent on mental health and wellbeing compared to in late October (68% vs 73%). Around three-in-five (58%) pupils felt that being back at school or college had had a positive impact on their mood and mental health.

## **Pupils' feelings towards mental health support**

In both February 2021 and December 2020, pupils were asked about their feelings about support that was available regarding their mental health. In December, over half (55%) agreed that they knew enough about how to look after their mental health, but only 37% agreed they felt comfortable asking for help with their mental health. In comparison 17% disagreed that there is support available at school and it is likely to help, and 23% felt teachers and other staff don't have time to help pupils with their mental health. Older pupils (years 11-13) were more likely than younger pupils (years 7-10) to disagree with all of the statements shown.

In February 2021, all secondary pupils were asked which types of mental health and wellbeing support schools were providing pupils not physically attending school. Pupils were more likely to say that lessons and activities to help with wellbeing had been provided (59%) than access to school staff to help with wellbeing (28%).

In December 2020, pupils were asked whether they had sought help for a personal problem or a mental health concern at school (both ever and specifically in the autumn term 2020 / 21). Overall, 17% said they had ever sought help for a personal problem, and 11% had sought help for a problem since the start of September 2020. The likelihood of having sought support for a mental health concern varied across pupils. Older pupils were more likely to have (ever) sought help compared to younger pupils (21% vs 15%), female pupils more likely than male pupils (24% vs 11%), and SEND pupils compared to non-SEND pupils (23% vs 17%).

## **Pupils' experience of bullying**

In November 2020, pupils were asked about whether or not they had been a victim of bullying in autumn term 2020. Around one-in-ten (11%) pupils reported they had been a victim of bullying this term. A third of these (35%) said this was because of the way they looked.

## **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)**

The law requires schools to provide some relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) to all secondary age pupils in the academic year 2020/21, and to provide some relationships and health education to all primary age pupils. For many schools, development of a fully comprehensive relationships education/relationships and sex education policy and RSHE curriculum will be an iterative process, which will need to continue into next year. Some schools may choose to focus this year's RSHE teaching on the immediate needs of their pupils, introducing a more comprehensive RSHE programme in September 2021.

In late November 2020, parents were asked about their child's RSHE, whilst pupils were asked about receiving important information from their school or college on developing and maintaining positive relationships with other people, and their physical and mental health.

One-in-three (33%) parents said that their child's school or college had shared information with them about how they will teach RSHE this academic year. More than nine-in-ten (91%) parents whose child had shared information reported that this was clear, with just under half (47%) who felt this explanation was very clear.

Over half of all secondary pupils said they agreed that their school or college has taught them important information about developing and maintaining positive relationships (55%), a further 22% disagreed and 23% neither agreed nor disagreed (1% said prefer not to say). A higher percentage of pupils overall (63%) agreed that their school or college teaches them important information about physical and mental health, with only 17% disagreeing (19% neither agreed nor disagreed). Younger pupils (year 7-10 pupils) were more likely to agree that had received both kinds of information compared to older pupils (11-13 pupils) (developing and maintaining positive relationships: 63% vs 41%; physical and mental health: 70% vs 51%).

## **Childcare**

In February 2021, one-in-ten (11%) parents reported having used wraparound childcare in the autumn term of 2020. Of parents of pupils who were eligible for school attendance

in January 2021, just 5% had used wraparound childcare so far in the spring term 2021. The main reason childcare was not used by these parents was that the childcare they wanted to use was closed (38%).

In February 2021, three-quarters (76%) of employed parents reported their working hours/pattern were not affected by the availability of wraparound childcare. Of the parents whose working hours / pattern was impacted, 36% of parents reported finishing work later than previously and 29% reported working fewer hours than previously.

Four-in-five (82%) of parents reported not using any forms of childcare (excluding wraparound childcare) in February 2021. In late November 2020, 23% of parents had used some form of childcare in the November lockdown, most commonly school run before or after school clubs (12%).

## **Mass testing**

When asked in December 2020, the majority (86%) of parents had heard of mass testing, and two-thirds (64%) of parents were supportive of their child being part of it. Helping to reduce/control the spread of COVID-19 was the main reason given by parents when asked why they were supportive of their child being part of mass testing (42%).

In February 2021, a quarter (25%) of parents reported they had been asked if they consented to their child being tested for COVID-19 in school. Four-in-five (80%) parents had either already given consent or would give consent (for their child to be tested for COVID-19 in school) if they were asked; 12% did not or would not consent. Similarly to in the December 2020 wave, helping to reduce and control the spread of COVID-19 was the main reason (88%) given by parents for consenting (or being prepared to give consent). The most common reason given by non-consenting parents was concern about the test being uncomfortable for their child (53%).

All secondary pupils were asked if they had any concerns about being tested for COVID-19 in school, 30% had no concerns. The most common concern was that the test might be uncomfortable (40%), followed by being nervous about the test (26%). Older pupils (year 11-13) were slightly more concerned about the reliability of the test than younger pupils (year 7-10) (36% vs. 29%), whilst younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to report being nervous about the test (28% vs. 21%) or being concerned about the number of times they would need to take the test (43% vs. 34%).

## **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

In February 2021, 15% of parents considered their child to have SEND (the same proportion to December and late November 2020, but a significantly higher number

compared to August 2020: 11%). The most common types of support currently being received by their child were phone calls from a SEND coordinator (29%). However, a quarter (26%) of parents needed this support but were unable to access this. In line with findings in late November and December, the most common reason for not being able to access support was the lack of availability of support staff – reported by 58% of parents.

## **Support package awareness**

In late November 2020, parents were asked about their awareness of the Government's support package for school. Three-in-five parents (61%) were not aware of the Government's £1 billion support package for schools (including a £650 million 'catch up premium'); 31% said they were aware of it (7% were not sure).

## Introduction

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting school closures, the Department for Education (DfE) wanted to conduct robust, quick turnaround research to assess the on-going views and experiences of parents and pupils from the start of the 2020/21 academic year. The research aimed to help DfE make evidence-based policy decisions, monitor the impact of the COVID-19 / post-COVID-19 situation, and see how views and experiences of parents and pupils change over time. The research has been structured into two broad phases:

## Recruitment Wave

In August 2020, pupils who were in year 6 - 13 and parents of pupils who were in reception to year 10 in the 2019/20 academic year were invited to take part in a 15-minute online survey via invitation letters sent to their home address. Both parents and pupils were sampled (by year group) from the National Pupil Database, and by completing the survey became part of the COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP). The PPP comprised of 7,191 parents (of primary and secondary pupils) and 5,327 secondary pupils who took part in the first 'COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel' survey.<sup>14</sup>

## Subsequent Waves

Between the recruitment wave and the first subsequent wave all pupils moved up a year group. Pupils that had moved into years 7-13 and parents of pupils who had moved into reception to year 11 in the 2020/21 academic year were invited to take part in up to six subsequent short online surveys (each lasting around five minutes) during the 2020/21 academic year, between September 2020 and February 2021.

The August to October findings report, published in October 2021, presented the findings for the first four PPP waves with these parents and pupils. This report presents the findings for the subsequent three waves (conducted in late November 2020, mid December 2020 and early February 2021). Comparisons to previous waves are made where relevant.

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<sup>14</sup> For more demographic information on panellists see the August – October findings report.

**Table 1. Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP) waves to date<sup>15</sup>**

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Fieldwork period</b>	<b>Fieldwork reference</b>
Recruitment Wave	7,191 parents and 5,327 secondary pupils	13 August – 1 September 2020	August 2020
Wave 1	4,005 parents	16-20 September 2020	September 2020
Wave 2	3,491 parents and 1,780 secondary pupils	30 September – 4 October 2020	September/October 2020
Wave 3	731 school leavers	4-9 November 2020	School leavers - November 2020
Wave 4	3,542 parents and 1,661 secondary pupils	30 October – 1 November 2020	Late October 2020
<b>Wave 5</b>	<b>3,388 parents and 1,612 secondary pupils</b>	<b>25-30 November 2020</b>	<b>Late November 2020</b>
<b>Wave 6</b>	<b>3,237 parents and 1,555 secondary pupils</b>	<b>16-21 December 2020</b>	<b>December 2020</b>
<b>Wave 7</b>	<b>3,082 parents and 1,537 secondary pupils</b>	<b>3-5 February 2021</b>	<b>February 2021</b>

This report discusses the findings of the Wave 5, 6 and 7 results. It presents the key, headline findings from each question (or series of questions on a related topic) before focussing on any significant subgroup differences.

For each question subgroup differences by pupil year level, sex, ethnic group, eligibility for free school meals (FSMs), and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) status were explored and statistically significant differences (at the 95% level of confidence) have been highlighted in the text, whereas differences that are not statistically significant are not discussed.<sup>16 17</sup> Occasionally, other relevant subgroup

<sup>15</sup> This report covers Waves 5, 6 and 7

<sup>16</sup> Eligibility for FSMs is used a proxy for socioeconomic status, with those pupils eligible for FSMs considered to be living in greater socioeconomic deprivation than those pupils who were not eligible for FSMs.

<sup>17</sup> See Glossary for definitions.

differences are explored for specific questions (such as key worker / employment status for childcare needs).

Where tracker questions have been asked across two or more waves of the survey, additional analysis has been carried out to test for statistically significant changes in responses between the survey waves and significant changes over time have been highlighted in the text.

## Methodology

This report covers three Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP) waves (waves 5, 6 and 7), conducted in late November 2020, December 2020 and February 2021. Most chapters focus on the most recent wave (wave 7) for which fieldwork was carried out between 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Key demographics for respondents at wave 7 are shown in Table 2. Only a subset of the original panel took part in each subsequent wave of the survey; however, at each wave, results were weighted to be representative of the full panel.

More information about the methodology of the panel, including participant characteristics can be found in the Methodology chapter of the August to October findings report.

**Table 2. Unweighted demographic profile of wave 7 respondents<sup>18</sup>**

	Number of parents	% of all parents	Number of pupils	% of all pupils
All	3,082	100%	1,537	100%
Primary	1,541	50%	0	-
Secondary	1,541	50%	1,537	100%
PUPIL: FSM	498	16%	296	19%
PUPIL: SEND	488	16%	215	14%
PUPIL: CIN	37	1%	16	1%
Ethnicity: White	2,567	83%	1,169	76%
Ethnicity: Asian	193	6%	173	11%
Ethnicity: Black	55	2%	59	4%
Ethnicity: Mixed	65	2%	85	6%
Ethnicity: Other	50	2%	35	2%
Gender (of pupil): Male	1,572	51%	629	41%
Gender (of pupil): Female	1,510	49%	908	59%
Region: East Midlands	291	9%	150	10%
Region: East of England	396	13%	171	11%
Region: London	280	9%	199	13%
Region: North East	155	5%	76	5%
Region: North West	402	13%	190	12%
Region: South East	542	18%	241	16%

<sup>18</sup> Note percentages do not always sum to 100% due to some respondents not providing demographic data, or demographic data not being held on the NPD.



	<b>Number of parents</b>	<b>% of all parents</b>	<b>Number of pupils</b>	<b>% of all pupils</b>
Region: South West	370	12%	179	12%
Region: West Midlands	341	11%	182	12%
Region: Yorkshire and Humber	305	10%	149	10%

Source: Pupil information (year group, FSM, SEND, CIN, Ethnicity, Gender, Region) sourced from information held on the National Pupil Database. Parental ethnicity and gender sourced from survey responses on the recruitment wave survey.

It is worth noting that the secondary parents and secondary pupil groups refer to pupils in slightly different year groups. The secondary parents group reflects the views of parents with pupils in years 7-11 in the 2020/21 academic year, while the secondary pupils group includes the views of pupils in years 7-13 in the 2020/21 academic year. The inclusion of more senior pupils (years 12-13) in the pupil group may help to explain some of the disparities between secondary pupils and secondary parents in this report.

Pupils were sampled from those in years 6 – 13 in the 2019/20 academic year. Pupils moved up a year level between the recruitment wave in August 2020, during the 2019/20 academic year, and the first follow up pupil survey conducted in September/October 2020, in the first term of the 2020/21 academic year. Throughout the report we refer to pupils by the year group that they were in during the academic year of the wave in discussion. For example, a year 6 pupil that was recruited in the August 2020 wave is referred to as a year 6 pupil in the August 2020 wave, but a year 7 pupil from the September/October 2020 wave onwards. Similarly, a year 13 pupil in August 2020 is referred to as a 'school leaver' in the 2020/21 academic year. A breakdown of pupils by school year is shown in Table 3 below.

Year 11 pupils in August 2020 moved into year 12 in the 2020/21 academic year; it is estimated that around half of those who moved from year 11 to year 12 left school, with many of them moving to FE and sixth form colleges. As such, findings for year 12 likely represent all year 12 students, not just those in school sixth forms. Year 12 pupils in August 2020 who moved into year 13 in the 2020/21 academic year are only representative of those in school sixth forms.

**Table 3. Breakdown of wave 7 pupil respondents by year group**

<b>Year Group 2019/20</b>	<b>Year Group 2020/21</b>	<b>Number invited to take part in wave 7</b>	<b>Response rate<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Number who took part in wave 7</b>
Year 6	Year 7	325	46%	150
Year 7	Year 8	376	41%	156
Year 8	Year 9	367	42%	154
Year 9	Year 10	656	41%	271
Year 10	Year 11	697	39%	269
Year 11	Year 12	667	40%	268
Year 12	Year 13	669	40%	269
Year 13	'School Leavers'	6,912	N/A	N/A

<sup>19</sup> Response rates were capped using quotas per year group and so the response rate may under-estimate the number of parents and pupils who would have completed the survey.

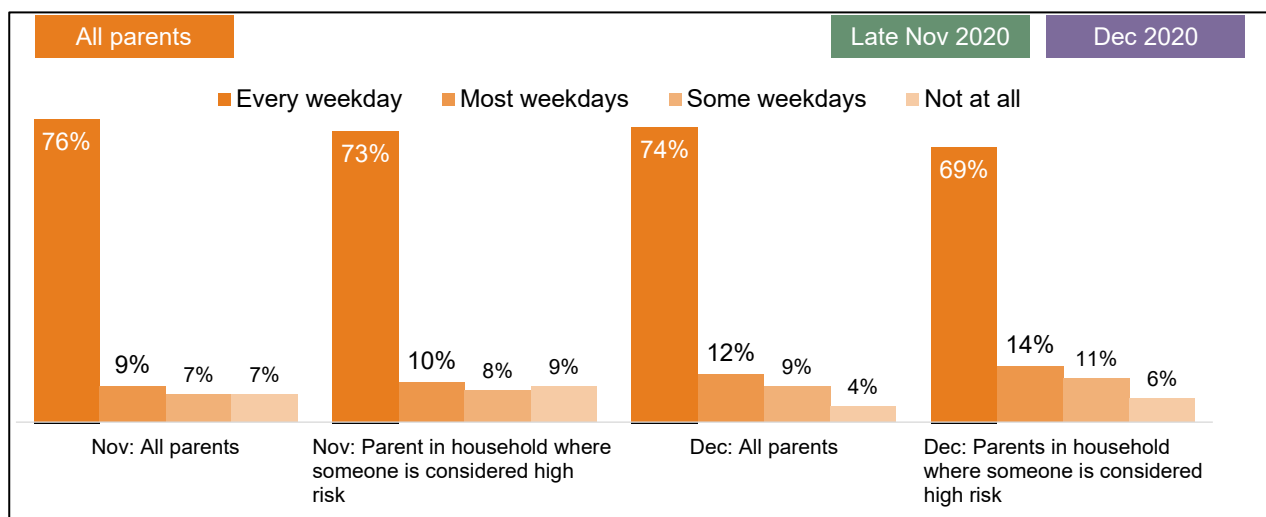
## School attendance

This section of the report covers attendance in November and December 2020 when attendance was mandatory and goes on to explore perceived eligibility to attend and attendance during the third lockdown. Successive waves of the survey have included questions on school attendance to provide insights on the influences on absence during the pandemic and demographic information on which families have been most affected by absence. This has informed Departmental strategy to improve attendance in 2020/21. It then covers experiences of attending school including concerns about COVID-19 and mental health.

### Attendance levels: November and December 2020

In December 2020, when attendance was mandatory, 96% of parents said their child had attended school in the last two weeks (covering 2<sup>nd</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020).<sup>20</sup> As shown in Figure 1 just under three-quarters (74%) of parents reported their child had attended every day in, broadly in line with late November (76%) following the decrease from the late October wave (84%).<sup>21</sup> Parents in December were less likely than those in November to report that their child had not attended school at all (4% vs 7%). A further 1% said their child had not attended at all this term.

**Figure 1. School attendance over the last two weeks reported by parents**



Source: PPP Dec Wave 6 /Late Nov Wave 5: L16A: "How often, if at all, has [PUPILNAME] physically attended school or college in the past two weeks?" All parents (n=3,237 / n=3,388)  
Parents in household where someone is considered high risk (n=606/ 654)

<sup>20</sup> Fieldwork was from 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020

<sup>21</sup> Fieldwork was from 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020

Consistent with both the late November and late October findings, primary parents remained more likely than secondary parents to say their child had physically attended school every day in the last two weeks (80% vs. 67%).

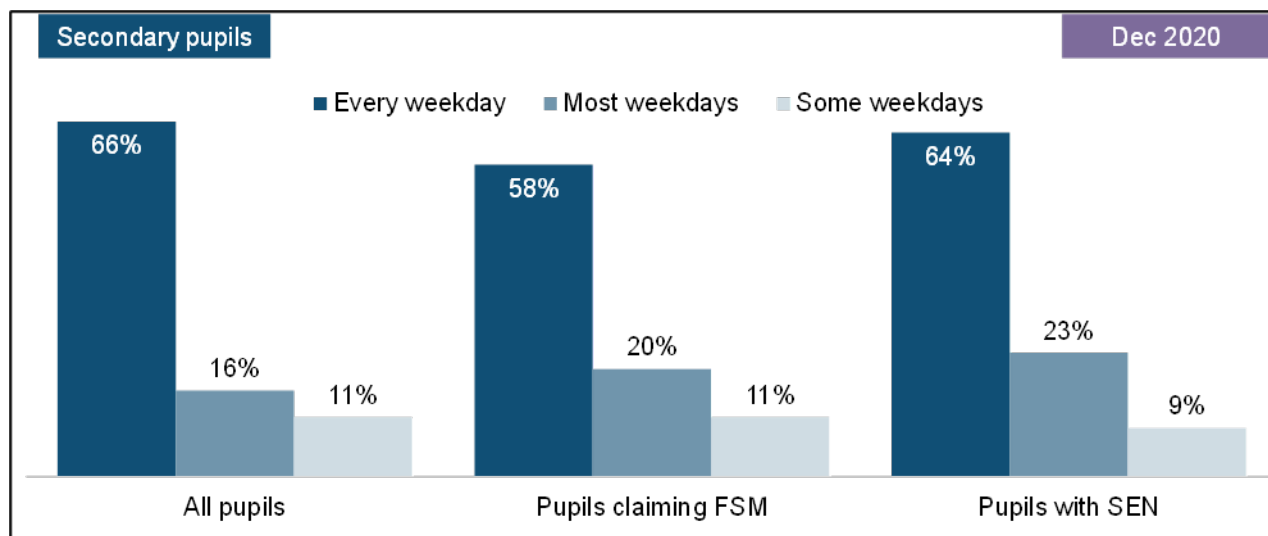
Parents of children in high-risk households remained less likely to say their child had attended school every day (69% vs. 74% overall).

In December 2020, parents and pupils were also asked if they, or anyone in their household, was extremely clinically vulnerable. One-in-ten (10%) parents and one-in-seven (14%) pupils said there was someone vulnerable in their household. Parents of pupils with someone clinically vulnerable in their house were more likely to report that their child had not attended school at all in the autumn term (3% vs. 1% of parents of pupils with no vulnerable household members). They were also less likely to say their child attended every day in the previous two weeks (68% vs. 75%). There were no significant differences in attendance reported by pupils with a clinically vulnerable household member.

Those in London and the South East were the least likely to say their child had attended school physically in the last two weeks (65% and 68% respectively). Those in Yorkshire and the Humber were among the most likely to say their child had attended school every day in December, having been among the least likely to say so in November (81% in December vs. 69% in November).

In December 2020, the vast majority of pupils (93%) said they had physically attended school or college in the last two weeks, consistent with November (92%). Around two-thirds (66%) had attended every day, down from around seven in ten (71%) in November.

**Figure 2. School attendance over the last two weeks reported by pupils**



Source: PPP Dec Wave 6: L16B: “How often, if at all, have you physically attended school or college in the past two weeks?” All pupils (n=1,555), Pupils eligible for FSM (n=303) and Pupils with SEND (n=204)

The following differences emerged among pupils on reported attendance:

- Pupils in year 7-10 were more likely to have attended every day (69% vs. 59% of year 11-13).
- Male pupils were more likely to have attended every day (69%) than female pupils (62%), while female pupils were more likely to have attended on only some weekdays (9% vs. 13%).
- Consistent with parents, pupils in London and the South East were less likely to have attended every day (57% and 59%).
- FSM pupils were less likely to have attended every day (58% vs. 67% non-FSM). Parents of FSM pupils reported broadly similar attendance to those of non-FSM pupils.

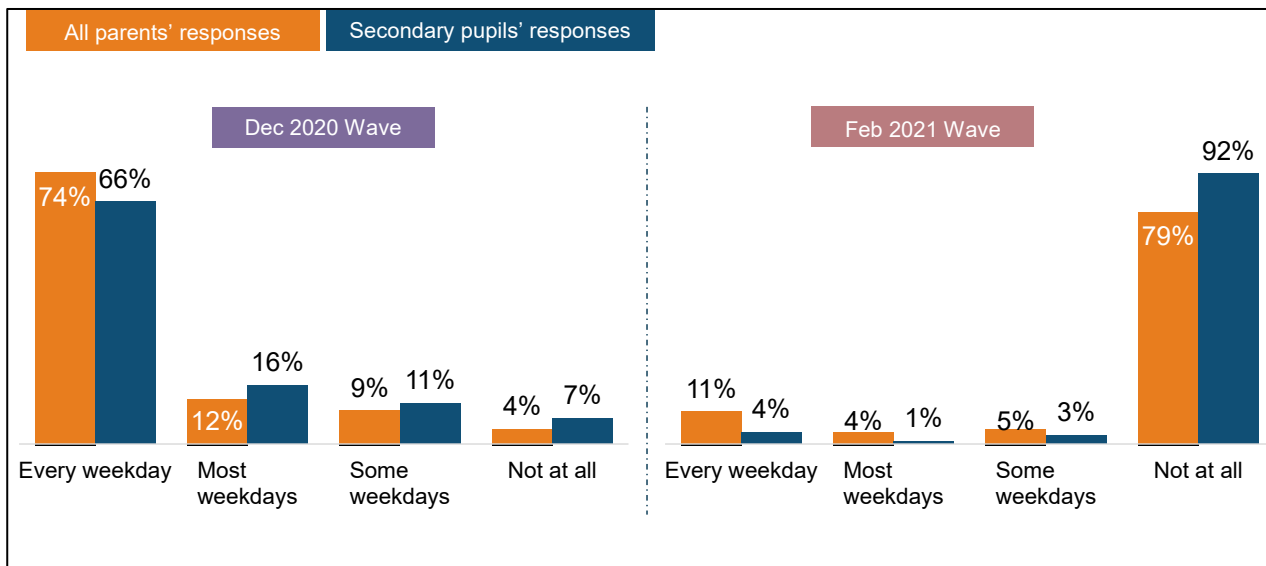
## Attendance levels: February 2021

Parents and pupils were asked about physical attendance in the previous two weeks (which covered 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021) during a time when schools were closed to the majority of pupils as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown, having been open to the majority of pupils for the autumn term 2020.

As would be expected, as shown in Figure 3, attendance reduced dramatically between December 2020 and February 2021. In February 2021, over nine-in-ten secondary pupils (92%) did not attend school at all in the preceding two weeks, while four-fifths (79%) of

parents said this about their child, compared to 7% of pupils and 4% of parents who said this in December 2020.

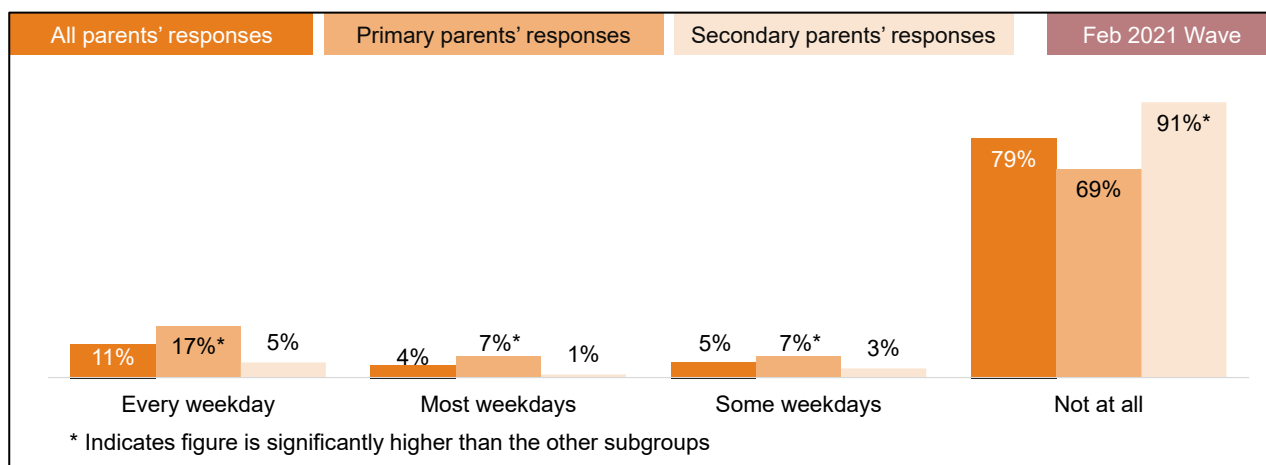
**Figure 3. Attendance reported by parents and pupils for December 2020 and February 2021**



Source: PPP Dec Wave 6 /Feb Wave 7: L16A/L16B; “How often, if at all, has [PUPILNAME]/have you physically attended school or college in the past two weeks?” All parents (n=3,237)/(n=3,082)  
All pupils (n=1,555)/(n=1,537)

As shown in Figure 4, parents of primary pupils were more likely to say their child had attended school every day than secondary parents (17% vs. 5%), which was consistent with previous waves. Secondary parents were also more likely than primary parents to say their child had not attended school at all (91% vs. 69%).

**Figure 4. Pupils' attendance in the last two weeks (February 2021) reported by primary and secondary parents**



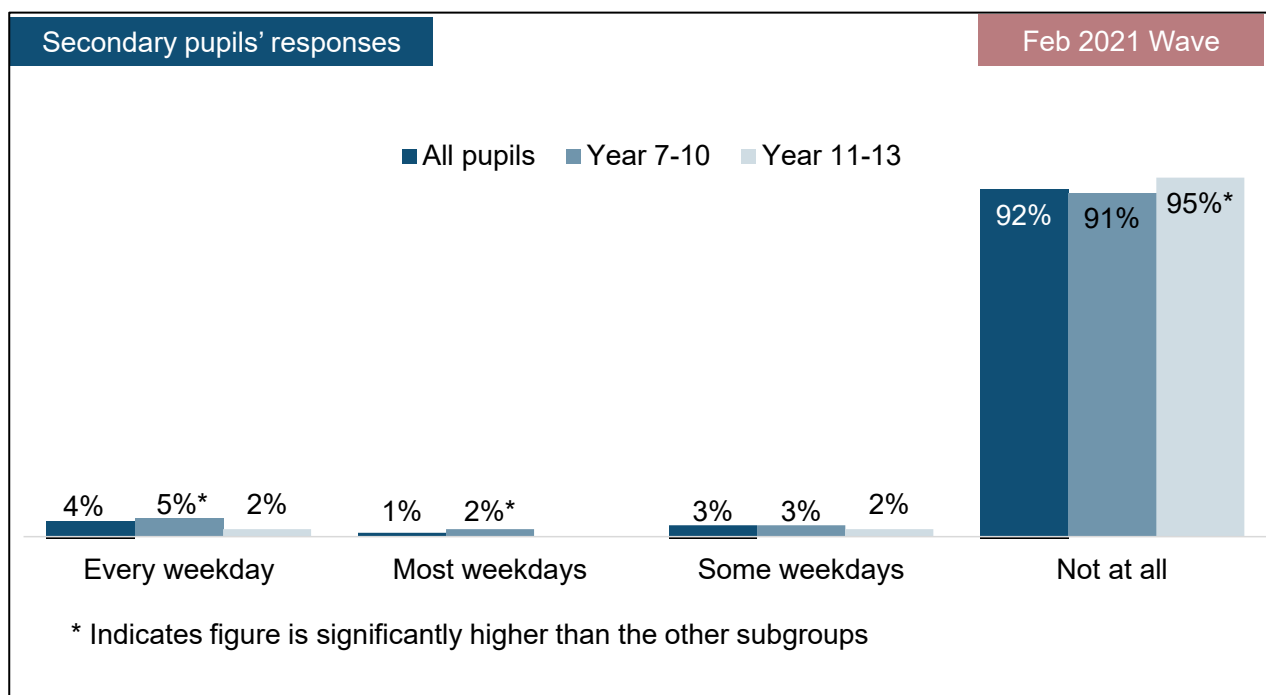
Source: PPP Feb Wave 7: L16A; "How often, if at all, has [PUPILNAME] physically attended school or college in the past two weeks?" All parents (n=3,082) Primary (n=1,541) Secondary (n=1,541)

Parents in the following groups were also more likely to say their child had not attended school at all in the last two weeks:

- Parents of male compared to female pupils (23% vs. 19%)
- Parents of pupils considered to have SEND compared to those without (29% vs. 20%)
- Parent of pupils with an EHCP compared to those without (36% vs. 21%)
- Parents with no one considered high risk in their household compared to those with someone high risk (23% vs. 16%).

Pupils were also asked about their attendance in the last two weeks. As shown in Figure 5, pupils in year 11-13 were more likely than pupils in year 7-10 to have not attended at all (95% vs. 91%), continuing the trend seen in previous waves despite the different overall attendance figures.

**Figure 5. Physical attendance in the last two weeks (February 2021) reported by pupils**



Source: PPP Feb 2021 Wave 7. L16B; “How often, if at all, have you physically attended school or college in the past two weeks?” All pupils (n= 1,537) Year 7-10 (n=731) Year 11-13 (n=806)

Pupils in the following groups were more likely to have attended at all in the last two weeks:

- Pupils eligible for FSM compared to non-FSM (11% vs. 7%)
- Pupils with SEND compared to those without (17% vs. 6%)
- Pupils supported by a social worker compared to those without (35% vs. 7%).

## Perception of Eligibility to attend in February 2021

In February 2021, parents and pupils were asked about the eligibility requirements<sup>22</sup> around physically attending school which have been in place during the third national

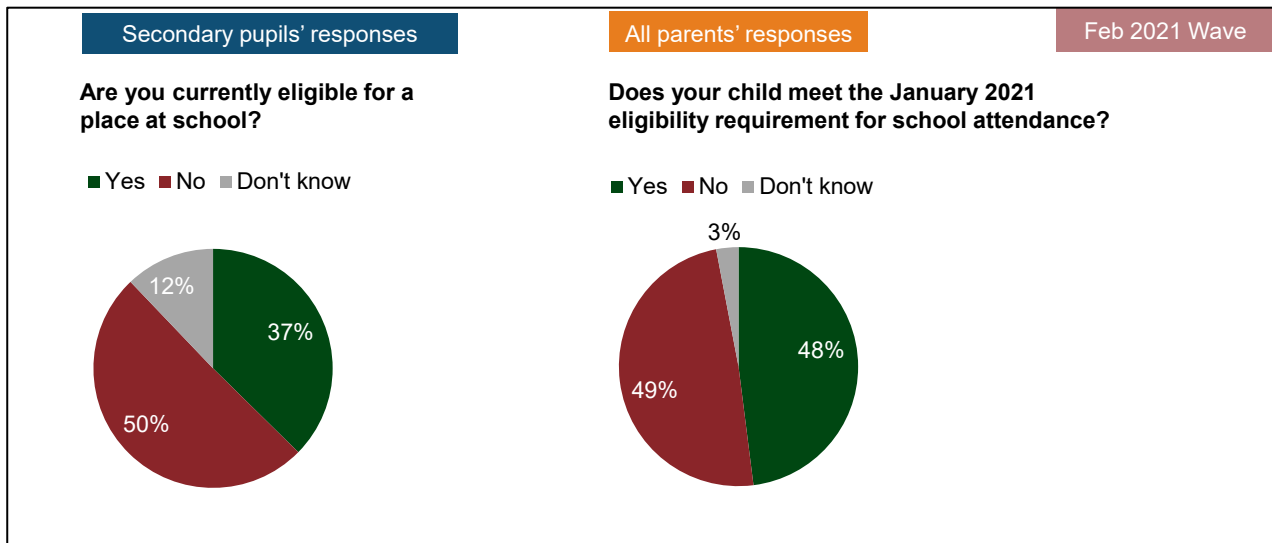
<sup>22</sup> From 5 January 2021, schools were asked to provide on-site education for children of critical workers and pupils who have a social worker, an education, health and care plan or who have been deemed to be otherwise vulnerable by local authorities or education providers. Full guidance on eligibility for physical attendance can be accessed: [Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/children-of-critical-workers-and-vulnerable-children-who-can-access-schools-or-educational-settings)



lockdown. Parents and pupils were asked slightly differently to aid understanding on the part of younger pupils.<sup>23</sup>

As show Figure 6 around half of parents thought their child was eligible to physically attend school (49%) and roughly the same proportion thought their child was not eligible (48%). Similarly, half of pupils (50%) thought that they were not eligible to physically attend school, though quite a large proportion were unsure (12%).

**Figure 6. Parents and pupils on eligibility to physically attend school in the spring term**



Secondary pupils in the following groups were more likely to say they were eligible for a place at school:

- Non-FSM (40% vs. 27% among those eligible for FSM)
- Pupils with SEND (46% vs. 36% among non-SEND)
- Pupils supported by a social worker (57% vs. 37% among other secondary pupils)<sup>24</sup>
- Pupils in rural areas (48% vs. 35% in urban areas).

<sup>23</sup> The following explanatory text was included for pupils: “Circumstances that make pupils eligible for a place at school might include: your parent is a key/critical worker, you have a social worker, or you have an Education, Health and Care Plan.”

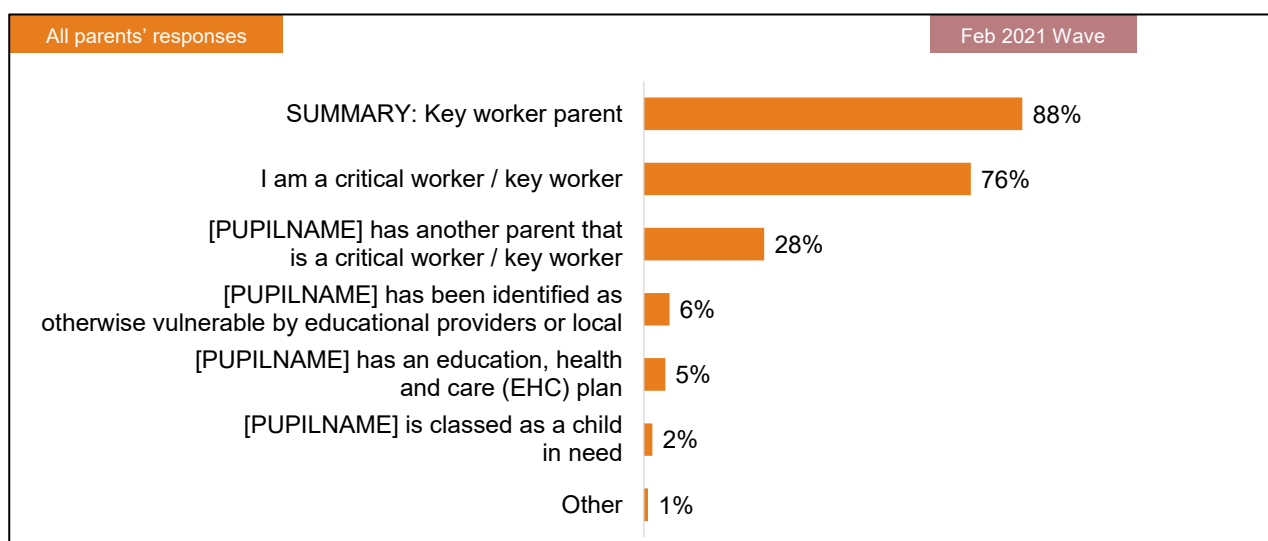
<sup>24</sup> Despite pupils with social workers being eligible to attend, not all pupils with social workers reported that they were eligible.

Parents in the following groups were more likely to say their child met the eligibility requirements:

- Primary parents (51% vs. 44% among secondary parents)
- Parents in rural areas (54% vs. 47% among those in urban)
- Parents of White pupils (51% vs. 40% among parents of BAME pupils)
- Parents who were key workers (83% vs. 28% among non-key workers).

Parents were asked a follow up question about why their child was eligible to physically attend school. As shown in Figure 7, the most common reason parents gave for their child meeting the eligibility requirements to physically attend school was that they or their child’s other parent was a key / critical worker (88%). Around one-in-twenty said their child had been identified as otherwise vulnerable (6%), though this was higher among parents whose child was eligible for FSM (19%) or where the child was considered to have SEND (14%). A further 5% were eligible because they had an education, health and care (EHC) plan. One-in-fifty (2%) said their child was classified as a child in need.

**Figure 7. Why parents thought their child met the eligibility requirements for attendance**



Source: PPP Feb 2021 Wave: L73 “Why does [PUPILNAME] meet these eligibility requirements?” All parents of pupils believing their child eligible to attend school (n=1,498)

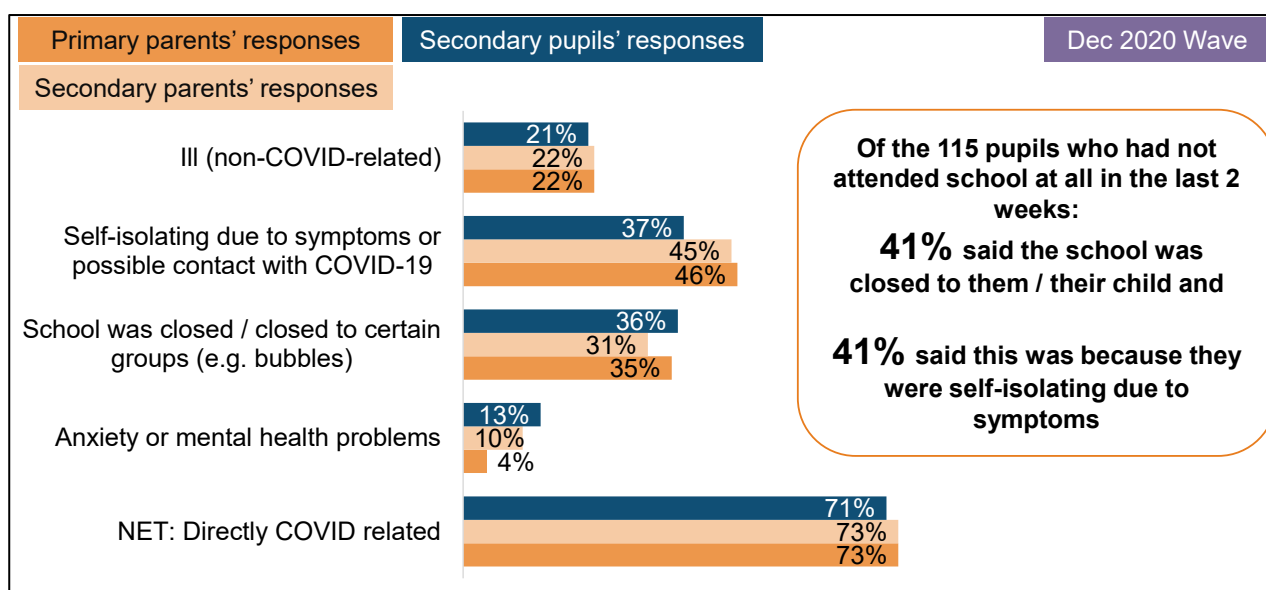
## Reasons for non-attendance: November and December 2020

In December 2020, over a third (35%) of pupils were not attending school every week day, and over a quarter of parents (26%) reported this of their child. As shown in Figure

8, among this group, 73% of parents and 71% of pupils reported that this was because of COVID-19 related reasons. This was identical to the November wave (73% of parents and 71% of pupils).

Of the 7% of pupils that had not attended at all, around two-fifths (41%, 3% of all pupils) said this was because the school was closed, and a further two-fifths (41%, 3% of all pupils) because they either had COVID-19 symptoms or possible contact with COVID-19 and were self-isolating. One-in-seven said this was because they or their parents did not feel it was safe to be going to school (14%, 1% of all pupils), or someone in their household was high risk (14%, 1% of all pupils).

**Figure 8. Reasons for not attending every day in December 2020**



Source: PPP Dec 2020 Wave 6 L28/L29; 440 Secondary, 272 Primary parents of pupils who physically attended school 'some' or 'most' days in the last 2 weeks. 467 Pupils who physically attended school 'some' or 'most' days in the last 2 weeks. NET: Directly COVID-19 related includes: Self-isolating due to symptoms or possible contract with COVID-19, School was closed / closed to certain groups (e.g. bubbles), pupil considered high risk, someone else in household considered high risk, quarantining after travel, difficulty travelling to school

Of the 4% of parents of pupils that had not attended at all in the two weeks before 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> December, half (49%, 2% of all parents) said this was due to their school being closed to certain groups, and two-fifths (39%, 2% of all parents) because they were self-isolating.

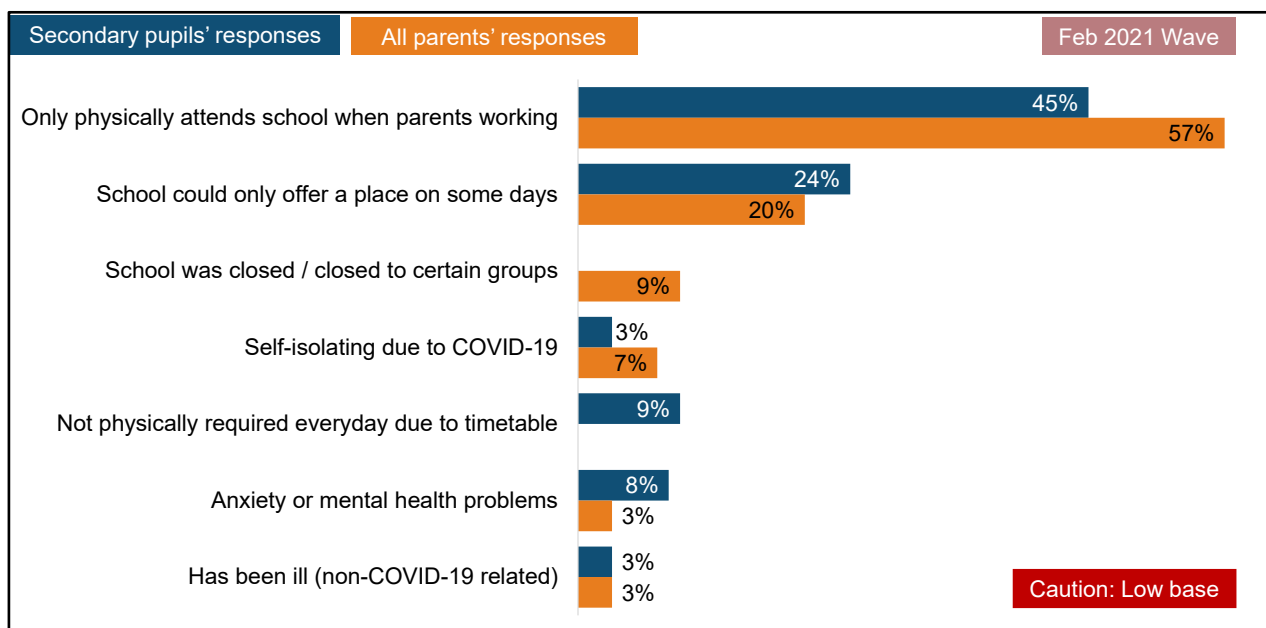
The following differences emerged from the reasons given for pupil non-attendance in December 2020:

- Parents in urban areas were more likely to report non-attendance because the school was closed to their child, or closed to certain year groups (35% vs. 22% of rural parents)
- Parents of pupils considered to have SEND were more likely to report non-attendance because of non-Covid-19 illness (33% vs. 19% of non-SEND parents) and because of anxiety or mental health problems (20% vs. 4% of non-SEND parents)
- Year 7-10 pupils were more likely to have not attended because they were self-isolating due to symptoms or possible contact with COVID-19 (45% vs. 26% of year 11-13 pupils)
- Pupils in year 11-13 were more likely to report non-attendance because their school was closed to them / closed to certain year groups (47% vs. 26% of year 7-10)
- FSM pupils were less likely to report non-attendance because they had been self-isolating (27% vs. 39% of non-FSM) and because their school had been closed to them / closed to certain year groups (25% vs. 38% of non-FSM).

## Reasons for non-attendance: February 2021

As shown in Figure 9, the most common reason among parents and pupils who did not attend every day was that they only attended when their parents were working (45% pupils, 57% parents). The next most common reason was that the school could only offer a place on some days (24% pupils, 20% parents). Around one-in ten of this group of parents (9%) said their child had not attended every day because the school was closed to certain groups, while the same proportion of pupils said they had not attended every day as their timetable did not require it (9%).

**Figure 9. Reasons parents and pupils had not attended every day in the past two weeks (February 2021)**



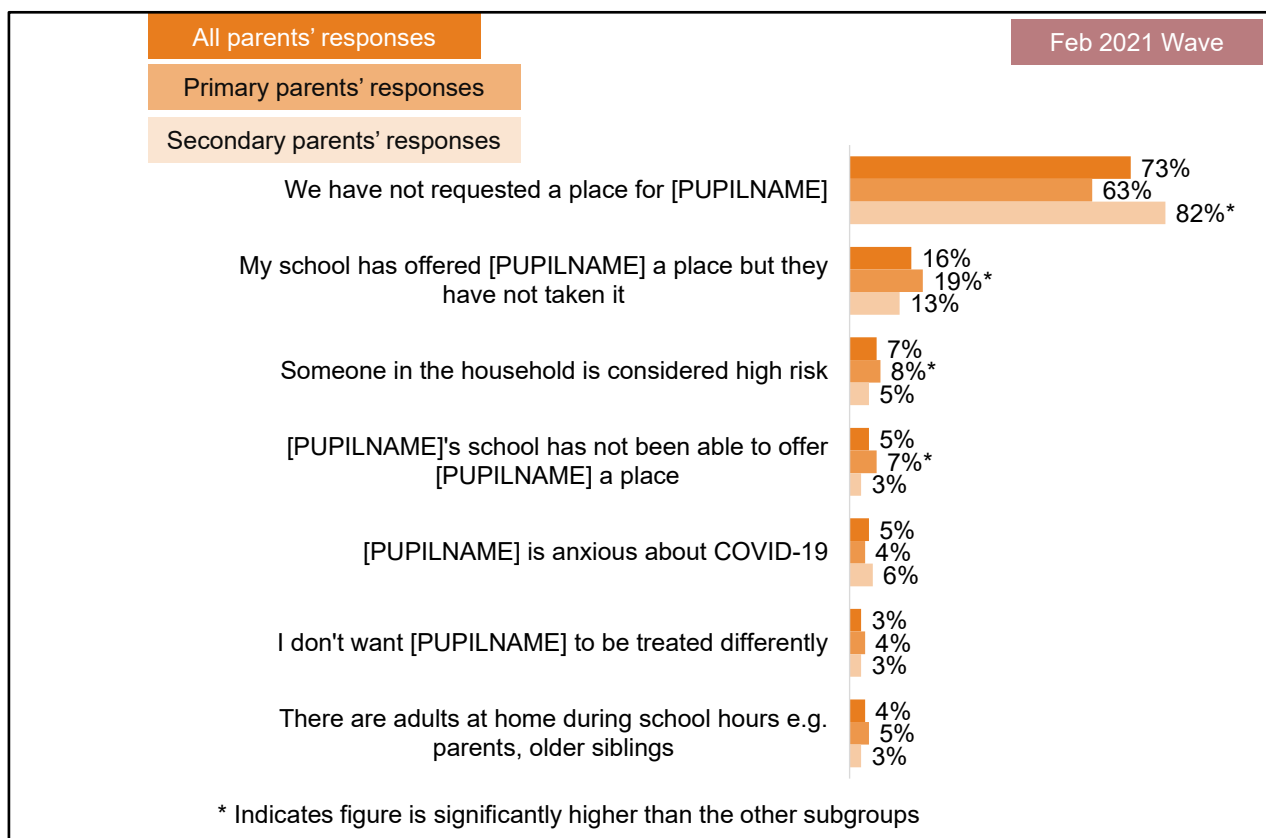
Source: PPP Feb 2021 Wave 6 L28/L29; “Why has [PUPILNAME]/have you not physically attended school every day?” Parents of pupils who physically attended school ‘some’ or ‘most’ days in the last 2 weeks (n=276). Pupils who physically attended school ‘some’ or ‘most’ days in the last 2 weeks (n=54) Responses <3% overall not charted.

Primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to say that their child had attended some but not every day because they only attended school when the parents were working (61% vs. 39%). Secondary parents were more likely than primary to say that their child’s anxiety or mental health was the reason (9% vs. 2%).

Pupils and parents of pupils who had not attended school at all in the past two weeks (92% of secondary pupils; 79% of parents) were also asked why they (or their child) had not attended school. This was asked separately for those who said they were eligible for a place at school and those who said they were not.

As shown in Figure 10, among parents of pupils that were eligible to attend school but had not attended at all in the previous two weeks, the most common reason was that they had not requested a place (73%), followed by being offered a place but not taking it (16%). Other less common reasons were that someone in the household was high risk (7%), the school being unable to offer their child a place (5%) and that their child was anxious about COVID-19 (5%).

**Figure 10. Reasons pupil had not attended at all in the past two weeks despite thinking they were eligible (January 2021), reported by parents**



Source: PPP Jan 2020 Wave 7: L17: “Why has your child not physically attended school during the past two weeks?” Parents of pupils who were eligible to attend but have not attended school at all in the last 2 weeks (n=931) Primary (n=341), Secondary (n=590) Responses < 3% overall not charted.

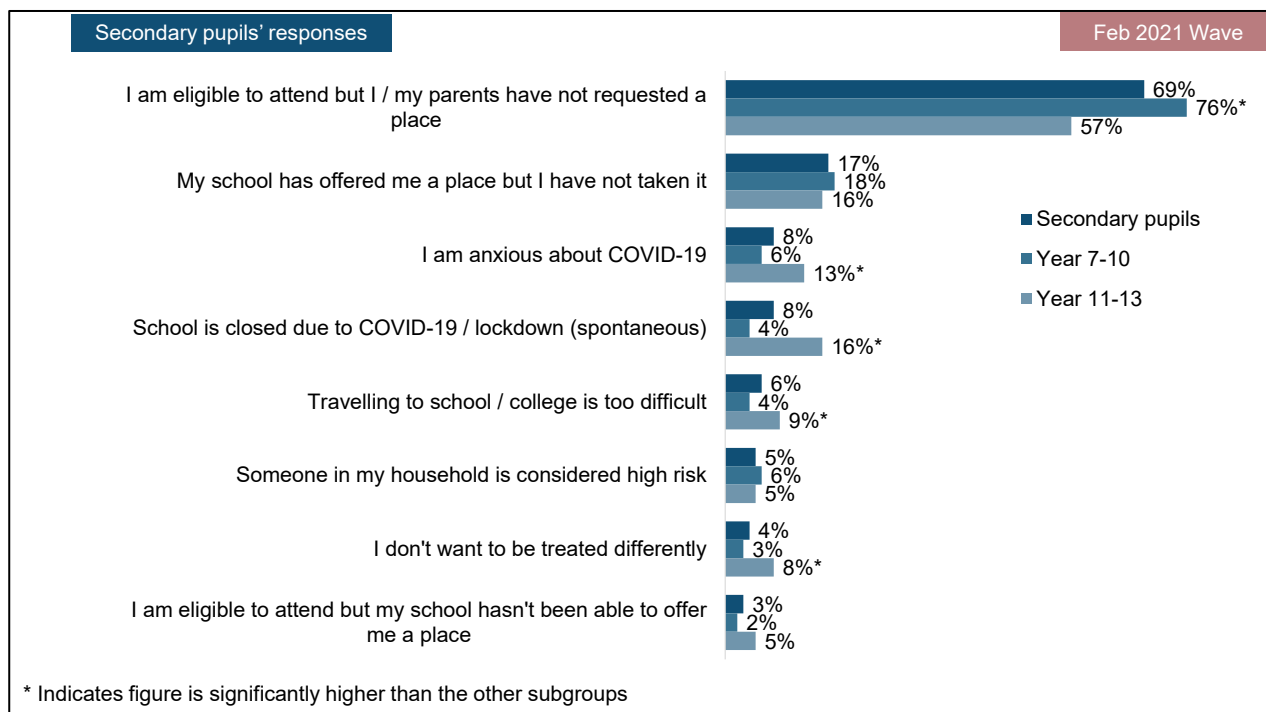
Secondary parents were more likely than primary parents to say their child had not attended at all despite being eligible because they had not requested a place for their child (82% vs. 63%). On the other hand, primary parents were more likely to say non-attendance was because they had not taken a place that the school had offered (19% vs. 13%), or that the school was unable to offer their child a place (7% vs. 3%).

Parents of pupils eligible for FSM, were more likely to say their pupil hadn’t taken a place offered to them (despite being eligible), compared to parents of non-FSM eligible pupils (28% vs. 14%). Parents of pupils with SEND were also more likely than those without SEND to say the reason was not having taken a place at school despite being offered it (25% vs. 14%), and that to say their child was anxious about COVID-19 (10% vs. 4%).

As shown in Figure 11, pupils gave similar reasons to parents for not attending school despite being eligible. Again, the most common reason was that they had not requested

a place (69%), followed by not taking a place that had been offered (17%). Other reasons included anxiousness about COVID-19 (8%), and difficulty travelling to school (6%).<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 11. Reasons pupil had not attended at all in the past two weeks despite thinking they were eligible to attend (January 2021) reported by pupils**



Source: PPP Jan 2020 Wave 7 L27A “Why have you not physically attended school at all in the last two weeks?” Pupils who were eligible to attend but have not attended in the past two weeks (n=467) Year7-10 (n=233) Year 11-13 (n=234). Responses < 3% overall not charted.

Pupils in years 11-13 were more likely than those in years 7-10 to say they had not attended at all despite being eligible because:

- They were anxious about COVID-19 (13% vs. 6%)
- Travel to school was too difficult (9% vs. 4%)
- They did not want to be treated differently (8% vs. 3%)
- Their school had been unable to offer them a place (5% vs. 2%).

Not taking a place that had been offered was more likely to be given as a reason for not attending school at all, in the previous two weeks, by pupils eligible for FSM than those not eligible for FSM (29% vs. 16%), as was the case for pupils with SEND compared to

<sup>25</sup> A small proportion (8%) said they did not attend because the school was closed. This can be interpreted similarly to “my school hasn’t been able to offer me a place”.

those without SEND (26% vs. 15%). Those with SEND were also more likely than those without SEND to say the reason was anxiousness about COVID-19 (15% vs. 7%).

Pupils and parents of pupils that said they were not eligible for a place and had not attended school at all in the previous two weeks were asked if there were any reasons for this, other than not being eligible. Most of these pupils and parents said there was no other reason for their non-attendance (86% of pupils; 89% of parents). Reasons that were mentioned included being unsure about their eligibility (6% of pupils; 3% of parents), being anxious about COVID-19 (3% of pupils; 2% of parents) or because someone in their household was considered high risk (3% of pupils; 2% of parents).



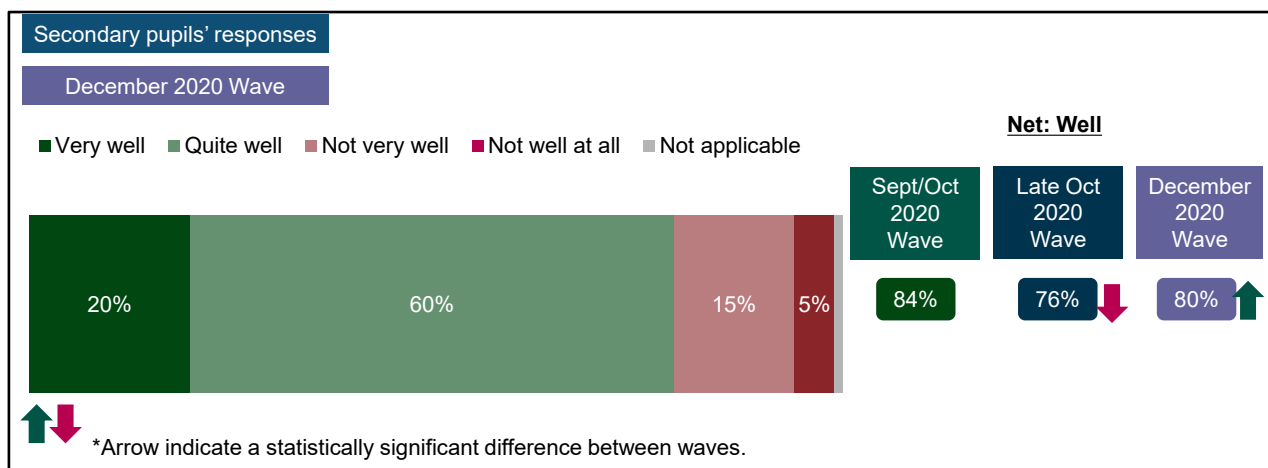
## Experience of attending school

This chapter examines pupils' experiences of attending school as reported in the December 2020 wave. It covers their worries about concentrating in class and catching/spreading COVID-19 in school, their concerns about catching up on learning and their views on support for catching up. The chapter concludes with reporting on pupils' and parents' views on how well supported they felt by their school to have good mental health, and how being back at schools has impacted their mental health.

### Concentration in class

Pupils were more likely to report being able to concentrate well in lessons in December 2020 (80%) than in late October 2020 (76%) though this is still lower than in the September/October wave (84%).

**Figure 12. Extent to which pupils reported being able to concentrate in class**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, Late October Wave 4 and late Sept/early Oct wave 2, L40: "How well, if at all, are you managing to concentrate in lessons in the classroom?" Secondary pupils who attended school this term (n= 1,540 / 1,652 / 1,733)

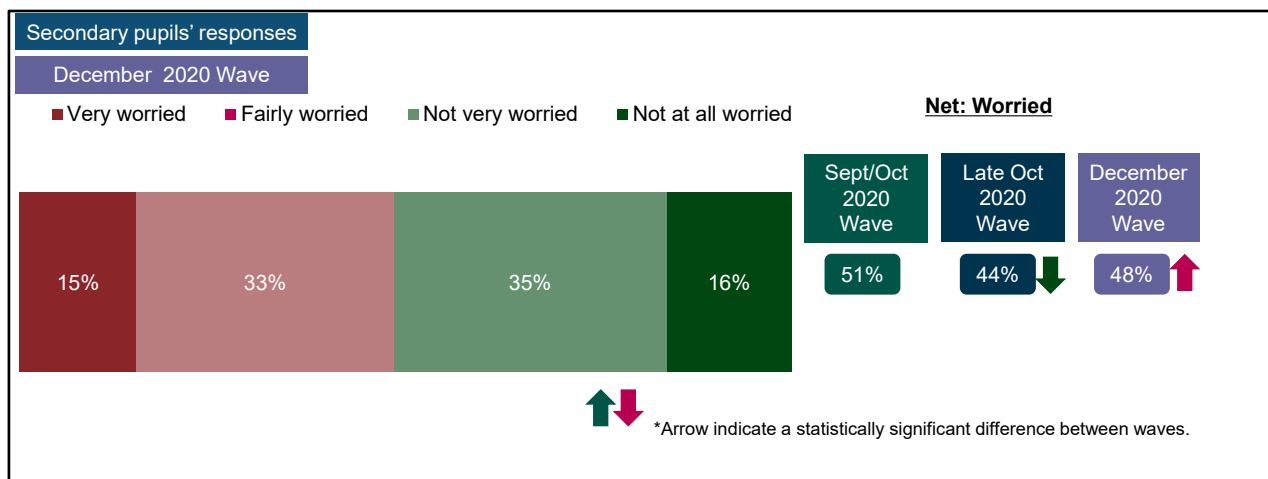
The following groups of pupils were more likely to report not being able to concentrate very well in December 2020:

- Female pupils (23% vs. 16% among male pupils)
- Year 11-13 pupils (23% vs. 17% among year 7-10 pupils)
- FSM pupils (25% vs. 18% among non-FSM pupils)
- Pupils without SEND (25% vs. 18% among pupils with SEND).

## Concern about spreading or catching COVID-19 whilst attending school

In December 2020, almost half (48%) of pupils said they were very (15%) or fairly (33%) worried about spreading or catching COVID-19 either at school or college or whilst travelling there. Whilst pupils were less worried than in late October (51%), they were more worried than in late November (44%).

**Figure 13. Extent of worry about catching or spreading COVID-19**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, Late October Wave 4 and late Sept/early Oct Wave 2, L38\_B: "How worried, if at all, are you about catching or spreading COVID-19?" Secondary pupils (n= 1,555 / 1,612 / 1,661)

As in previous waves, the following groups were more likely to be worried about catching/spreading COVID-19 in December 2020:

- Year 13 pupils (62% compared to 48% among all secondary pupils)
- FSM pupils (57% vs. 47% among non-FSM pupils)
- BAME pupils (56% vs. 45% among White pupils).

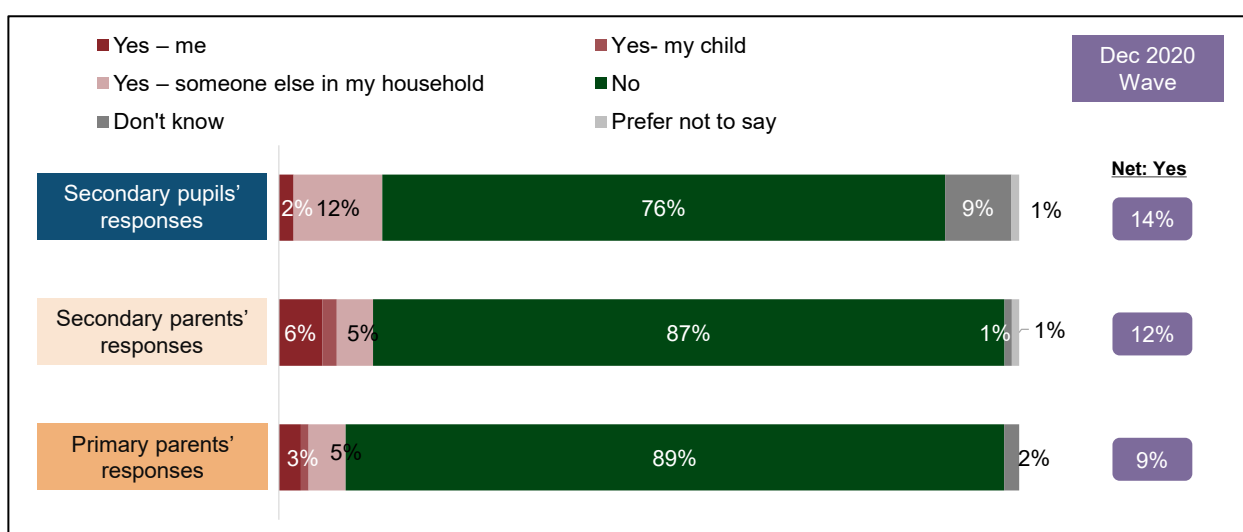
Parents were also asked about concerns around catching and spreading COVID-19. Just under two-in-five (38%) parents were concerned that their child could catch or spread COVID-19 by taking part in music activities, including singing, at school or outside of school. The following groups of parents were more likely to be concerned that their child could catch or spread COVID-19 by taking part in music activities:

- Parents in London (51% vs. 38% of parents overall)
- Unemployed parents (53% vs. 35% of employed parents)
- BAME parents (62% vs. 31% of White parents)

- Parents of FSM pupils (50% vs. 36% non-FSM parents)
- Parents with anyone considered high risk of COVID-19 in their household (51% vs. 34% of those without).

One-in-ten parents (10%) reported having at least one person considered clinically extremely vulnerable in their household, while 14% of pupils did so. Secondary parents were more likely than primary parents to report having someone considered clinically vulnerable in their house (12% vs. 9%), likely reflecting the increased likelihood that they considered themselves to be vulnerable (6% vs. 3%).

**Figure 14. Percentage of parents and pupils that considered someone in their household to be clinically extremely vulnerable in the context of COVID-19**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, A21: "Is anyone in your household currently considered clinically extremely vulnerable in the context of COVID-19?" Secondary pupils (n= 1,555) Secondary parents (n= 1,619) Primary parents (n=1,618)

The following groups were more likely to report having someone considered clinically extremely vulnerable in the context of COVID-19 in their household:

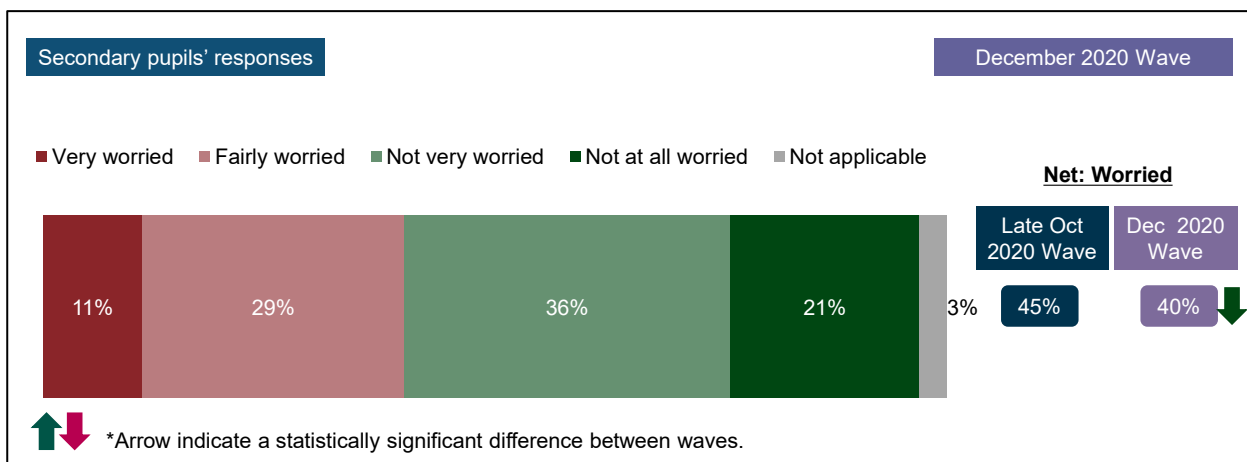
- BAME parents (15% vs. 9% of White parents). However, BAME pupils were not more likely to report having someone clinically vulnerable in their household.
- Parents on lower incomes (18% of those with a household income under £15,000 vs. 3% among those where the household income was £100,000 or more)
- Parents in single parent households (21% vs. 9% of non-single parent households)
- Older pupils (18% of year 11-13 vs. 12% of year 7-10)
- FSM pupils (25% vs. 12% of non-FSM pupils).

Of the 50 pupils that reported they were clinically extremely vulnerable, nine (18%) had been advised by a doctor or clinician not to attend school that month, while 37 (74%) had not; (four, 8%, did not know). Of the 44 parents who reported that their child was clinically extremely vulnerable, four (9%) said a doctor or clinician had advised that their child should not attend school this month and 38 (86%) had not (two, 5%, said they did not know).<sup>26</sup>

## Concerns regarding catching up on learning

Two in five secondary pupils were very or fairly worried about catching up on learning in December 2020 (40%), though they were less worried than they were in late October (45%). Only a fifth (21%) were not all worried about catching up on learning.

**Figure 15. Extent of pupils worry about catching up on learning**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, Late October Wave L39B\_1 “How worried if at all are you about catching up on your learning?” Secondary pupils (n= 1,555 / 1,661)

Pupils in exams years (year 11 and 13) were far more likely to report in December 2020, being worried about catching up on learning (62% and 70%) compared to the average of all secondary pupils (40%). This is a continuation of a pattern seen in previous waves.

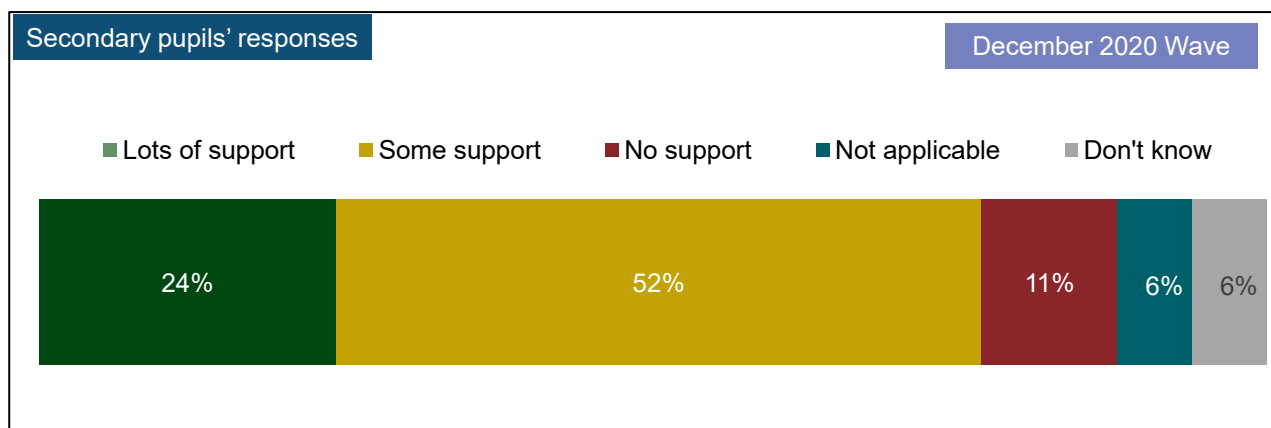
Pupils eligible for FSM were more worried than non-FSM pupils about catching up on their learning (48% vs. 38%), again matching the pattern of previous waves.

<sup>26</sup> Figures included in this paragraph are unweighted and not charted due to the low base size.

## Support for pupils catching up on learning

Around three-quarters (77%) of secondary pupils (who had attended during the term) reported receiving at least some support to catch up on missed learning. This is a decrease on the 82% of pupils who reported this in late October 2020.

**Figure 16. Pupil views on level of school support around catch-up learning**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, L36\_1: "How much support would you say your school or college has provided to ensure that you can catch up on learning?" All pupils who attended school this term (n=1540)

As in previous waves, in December 2020 year 13 pupils continued to be the most likely to feel their school/college had not supported them at all to catch up on learning they may have missed (15% vs. the 11% average across all secondary pupils that had attended school in the term). Year 12 pupils were the most likely to report their school/college had provided them with lots of support (30% vs. the 24% average).

Pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to feel they had catch-up support from their school (71% vs. 78% non-FSM pupils), following the same pattern as in late October 2020.

## Understanding and experience of school rules

Given that the majority of pupils had experienced an extended break out of school during the first lockdown, it was important to understand how well pupils had settled back into school behaviour norms on their return. In addition to managing regular pupil behaviour, schools also had to enforce COVID-19 specific rules. Gathering information from pupils and parents on how schools were handling behaviour, attendance and adherence to COVID-19 rules was vital to understand if there are specific issues that require further support and guidance.

## School strictness

In late November 2020, most parents and pupils felt their school was about right in how strict they were in enforcing rules on students' behaviour (80% and 69% respectively, not significantly different to late October). For both groups the remainder were more likely to think their school was not strict enough (14% for pupils and 9% for parents) than that they were too strict (12% for pupils and 5% for parents). Year 7-10 pupils were more likely than pupils in year 11-13 to say their school was too strict (13% vs. 9%).

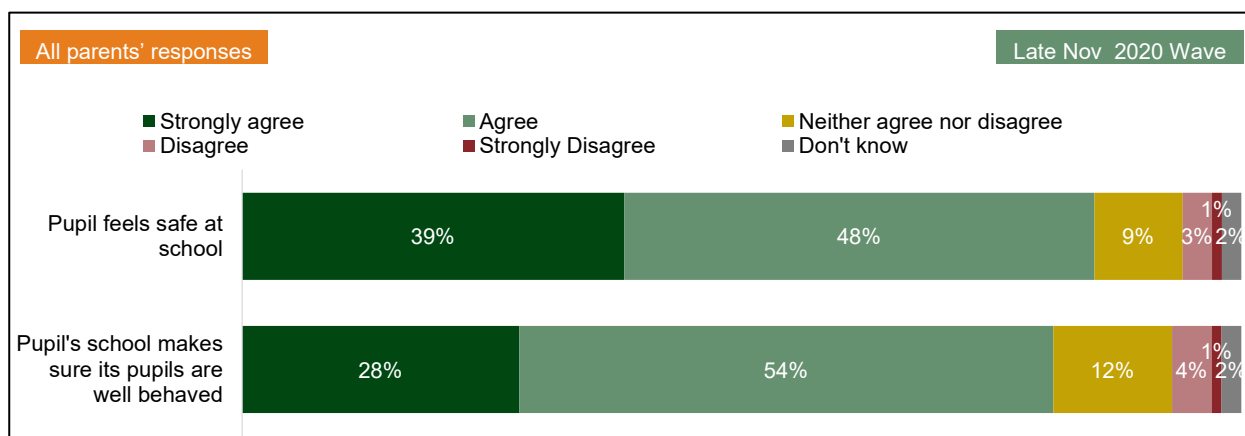
Over three-quarters (77%) of pupils in November reported at least some disruptive behaviour in class. This was a significant increase from the 73% that said this in late October.

Parents of the following groups were less likely to say that their child's school enforced the rules at about the right level of strictness:

- BAME pupils (76% vs. 81% among parents of White pupils), who were more likely to say schools were too strict (8% vs 4% of White pupils)
- Pupils with SEND (75% vs. 81% among parents of pupils without SEND)
- FSM eligible pupils (73% vs. 81% compared to parents of non-FSM pupils)
- Secondary pupils (76% vs. 82% compared to parents of primary pupils).

As shown in Figure 17, almost 9 in 10 (86%) parents of pupils that were not home-schooled agreed that their child felt safe at school (compared to 3% who disagreed), while 4 in 5 parents (81%) agreed that their child's school makes sure its pupils are well behaved (versus 5% who disagreed).

**Figure 17. Parents' views on how safe pupils feel and how well they behave at school**



Source: PPP Late November Wave 5 L70: "In general, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements..." Parents of children not permanently home schooled (n=3,380)

Parents of pupils in the following groups were more likely to disagree their child felt safe at school: pupils with SEND (8%), pupils eligible for FSM (7%) and secondary pupils (5%); among parents of pupils that did not fall into these categories the respective figures were 3%, 3% and 2% respectively.

Similarly parents of pupils in the following groups were more likely to disagree their child's school made sure its pupils were well behaved: pupils with SEND (8%), pupils eligible for FSM (7%), secondary pupils (7%) and White pupils (6%).

Almost two-thirds (63%) of pupils that had attended school in the autumn term 2020 felt that other pupils' behaviour was good all or most of the time, while only 5% reported that behaviour was good almost never or never.

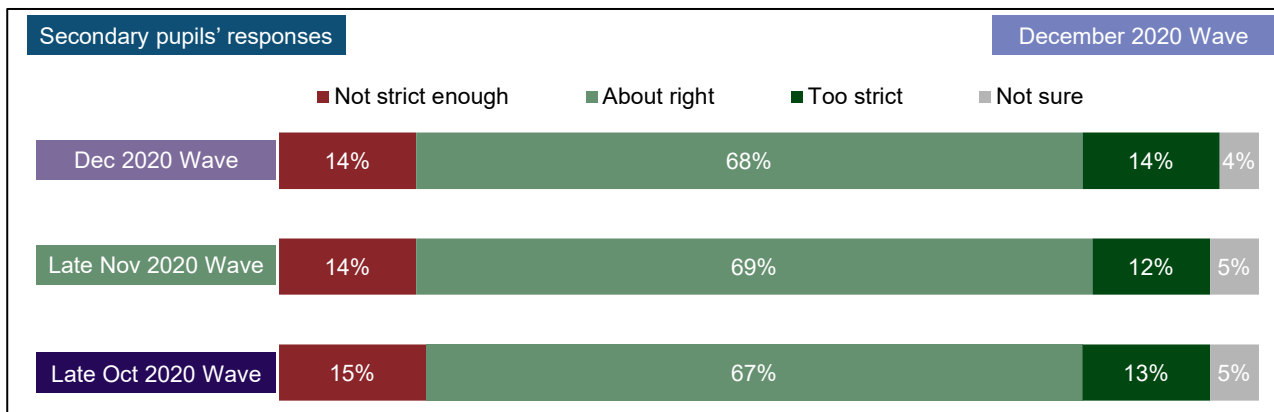
Pupils in the following groups were less likely to say that the behaviour of other pupils was good at least some of the time:

- Pupils with SEND compared to those without SEND (92% vs. 96%)
- Pupils eligible for FSM compared to non-FSM pupils (93% vs. 96%)
- Year 11 pupils compared to year 7-10 pupils (91% vs. 96%).

In December 2020, around two-thirds (68%) of secondary pupils who had attended school in the autumn term felt their school was about right in how they enforced rules on student's behaviour. The remainder were as likely to report the school being too strict as

their not being strict enough (both 14%). Results in December 2020 were very similar to those in late November 2020 and late October 2020.

**Figure 18. How pupils perceive their school’s enforcement of rules on student behaviour**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, Late November Wave 5, Late October Wave 4 L62: “Thinking about how strict your school is at enforcing rules about student’s behaviour, would you say your school is...” All pupils except those being home schooled (n=1,504 / 1,609 / 1,658)

Year 11 pupils (21%) were the most likely to feel their school was not strict enough, with year 12 pupils (11%) the least likely to think this. Year 7-10 pupils were the most likely to report their school was too strict (16%); These year group patterns are consistent with when this question was last asked in late October 2020.

Pupils who reported being worried about catching/spreading COVID in school/college were twice as likely to report their school was not strict enough at enforcing general rules (non-COVID-19 specific) as pupils who were not worried about catching COVID-19 in school (19% vs. 10%). Similarly pupils reporting high levels of anxiousness (6-10) were twice as likely as those reporting low levels of anxiousness to feel that schools were not strict enough in how they were enforcing the rules (20% vs. 11%).

## New COVID-19 rules

### The importance of attendance

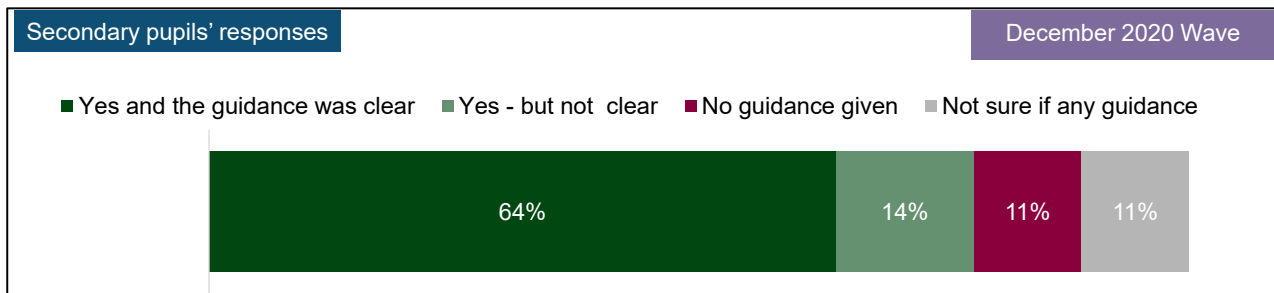
Most secondary pupils that had attended school in the autumn term (78%) said they were informed about new rules or advice in relation to the importance and benefits of attending school / college. The vast majority of these thought this guidance was clear (64% of all secondary pupils), though 14% of all secondary pupils had been informed but did not think that the new rules were clear.



Around 1 in 9 pupils (11%) had not been informed about new rules or advice in relation to the importance of attending, and the same proportion were not sure if guidance had been given.

There was no significant difference between these findings and those in late October 2020.

**Figure 19. Pupils awareness of new rules or advice in relation to attendance**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, H23\_1: “Has your school or college informed you about any new rules or advice in relation to: The importance and benefits of attending school / college?” All pupils who attended school this term (n=1,540)

Year 12 pupils were more likely than average to report being informed of any news rules/advice regarding the importance of attendance (84% vs. 78% across all year groups). Pupils in exam years were more likely than other pupils to report receiving no guidance on this (year 13: 20%, year 11: 16% vs. the 11% average).

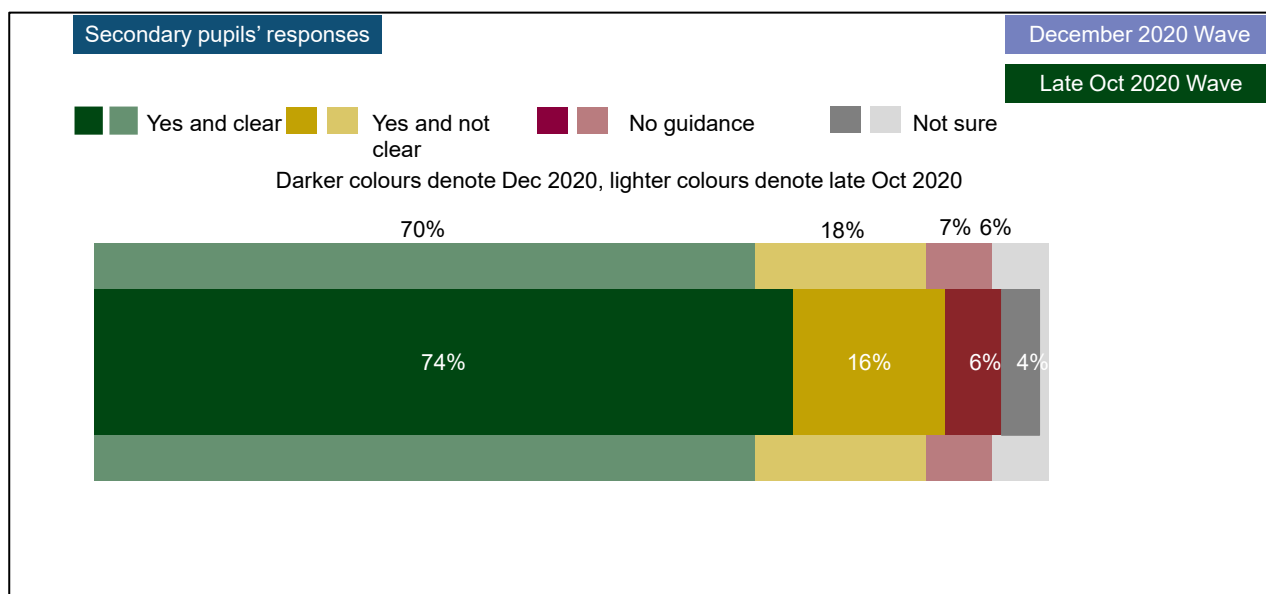
Pupils who had attended school every day in the last two weeks prior to the survey (81%) were more likely to report having been informed of new rules on the importance and benefits of attending school / college compared to those who had attended most weekdays (73%) or some (68%).

### When to attend in circumstances relating to COVID-19

Nine-in-ten (90%) pupils in December 2020 who had attended school in the autumn term reported being informed of new rules or advice regarding when not to attend school/college in circumstances relating to COVID-19, an increase on the 87% reporting this in October 2020. Most thought this advice was clear (74% of all pupils had received clear information on this compared with 16% receiving guidance they did not feel was clear).

Overall, 6% of pupils had not been informed about new rules or advice in relation to attendance during COVID-19 and a further 4% were not sure if guidance had been given.

**Figure 20. Pupils awareness of any new rules or advice in relation to attendance in circumstances in relation to COVID-19**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, H23\_2: "Has your school or college informed you about any new rules or advice in relation to: When I should not attend school / college in circumstances relating to COVID-19?" All pupils who attended school this term (n=1,540)

As found with advice around the importance on attendance, year 12 pupils were more likely than average to say they had been informed about when not to attend schools in circumstance related to COVID-19 (94% vs. the average of 90% across all year groups).

Exam year pupils were more likely than average to report being informed but not clear on the new advice or guidance about when not to attend relating to COVID, (year 11: 25%, year 13: 24% compared against the average of 16% across all secondary pupils).

### COVID-19 specific rules

Pupils who had attended school at all in the autumn term were asked if they had been asked to follow four COVID-19 specific rules: wash hands, wear mask, keeping physically distanced from other pupils, and stay in smaller groups.

As shown in Figure 21, the majority of pupils had been asked to do each of the four behaviours. They were mostly likely to have be asked to wear a mask (98%), and least likely to be asked to physically distance from other pupils where possible (73%).

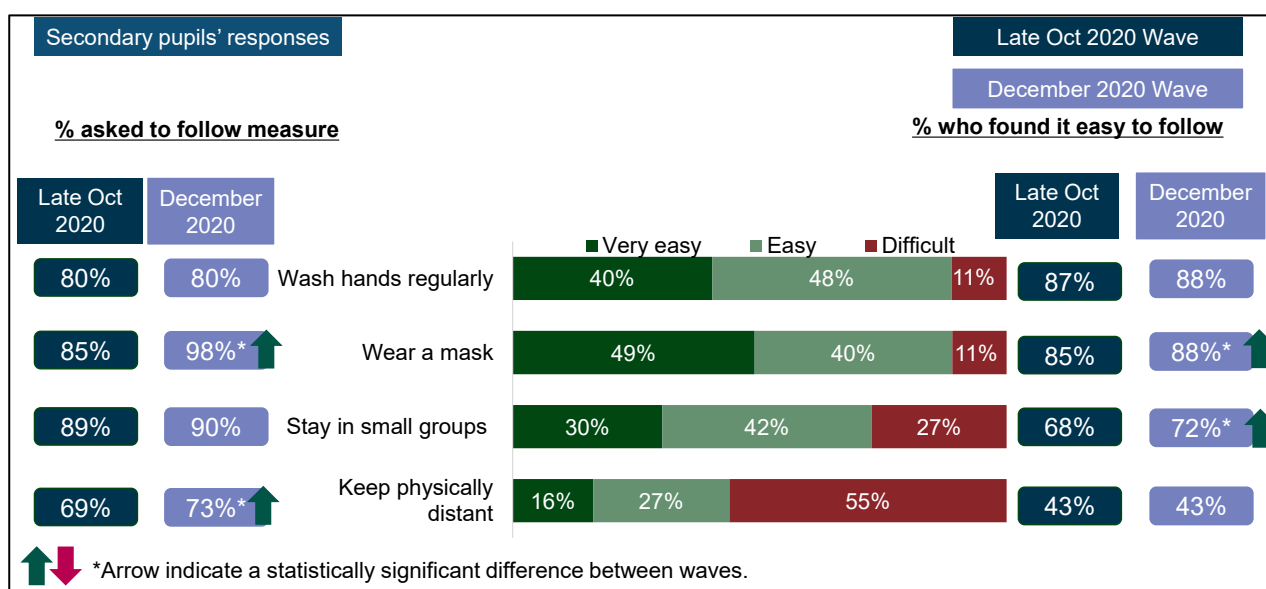
The percentage of pupils asked to wear a mask in school has increased steadily by around 10 percentage points each wave, from 74% in late September/October, to 85% in late October and 98% in December 2020. The proportion reporting being asked to keep

physically distanced from other pupils was also higher in December 2020 (73%) than in late September/October (67%) and late October (69%). However, fewer reported being asked to wash their hands regularly in the last two waves (each 80%) than in late September/October (85%).

Most pupils who were asked to wear a mask, wash their hands regularly or stay in smaller groups (88%, 88% and 72% respectively) found this easy. Pupils found keeping physically distanced from other pupils harder: of the 73% asked to do this, more than half (55%) found this difficult to do.

Two behaviours have become easier for pupils to do since late October 2020: wearing a mask (88% up from 85% in late October), and staying in smaller groups (72% up from 68%).

**Figure 21. Knowledge of and ease of following measures among secondary pupils**



Source: PPP December Wave 6 and Late October Wave 4, L43: "In your school or college have you been asked to: Wash your hands frequently / Wear a mask (either in class or communal school / college areas) / Stay in smaller groups (e.g. year group bubbles) / Keep physically distant from other pupils where possible". L45: "How easy or difficult are you finding it to follow these measures: Wash your hands frequently / Wear a mask (either in class or communal school / college areas) / Stay in smaller groups (e.g. year group bubbles) / Keep physically distant from other pupils where possible". All pupils who attended school this term (n=1,540 / n=1,652)

There were some differences in these findings by sub-group, as follows:

- As in late October, in December 2020 BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to find it difficult to wear a mask (15% vs. 9%), as were FSM pupils (17% vs. 9% of non-FSM pupils)

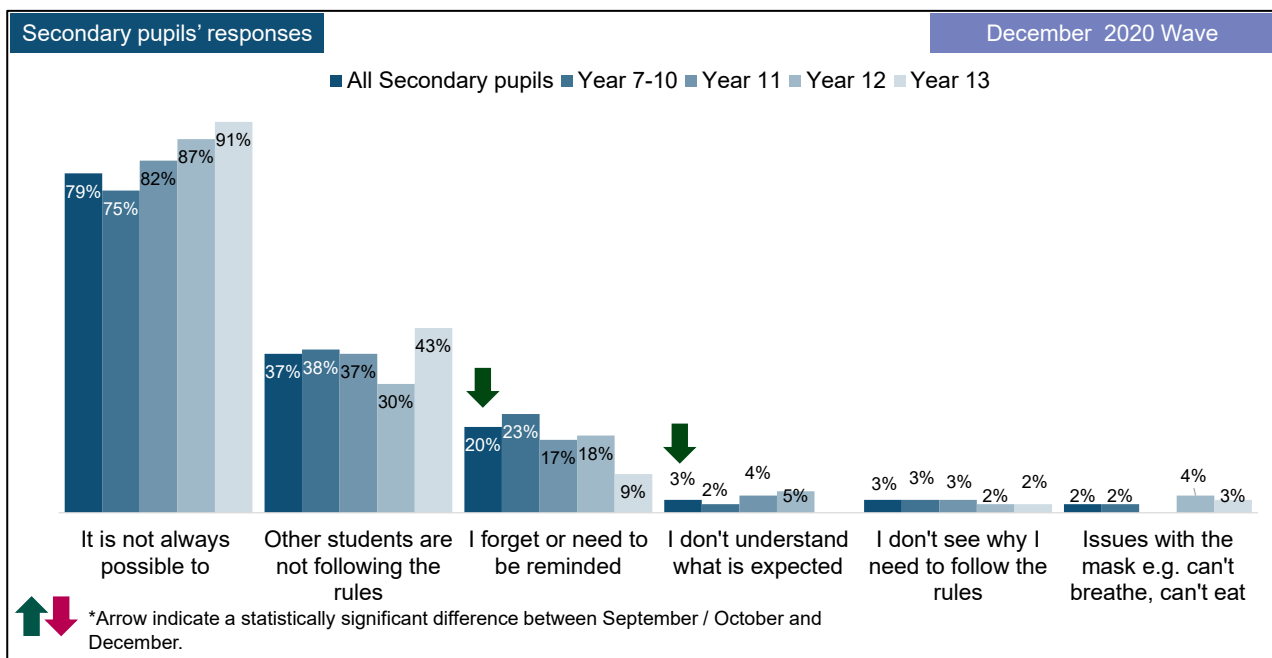
- BAME pupils were more likely to report that washing their hands frequently was very easy compared to White pupils (51% vs. 37%).
- Pupils in year 12 and 13 were more likely than average to report finding it difficult to stay in smaller groups (33% and 35% respectively, compared to the 27% average).
- Year 13 pupils were more likely than average to report it difficult to keep physical distant from other pupils (72% vs. the 55% average, and 52% specifically among pupils in years 7-10).

### Difficulties following COVID-19 rules

Pupils who were finding at least one measure difficult to follow were asked why. Just under four-in-five (79%) pupils who found it difficult to follow the rules said this was because it was not always possible to do so (e.g. not enough space, actions of others). There has been no change since late October with this.

Pupils often also found it difficult to follow the rules because other students were not following the rules (37%) or because they forgot / need to be reminded (20%). Pupils were less likely to find COVID-19 rules difficult due to not remembering in December compared to in September/October (20% vs. 24%), or due to not knowing what was expected of them (3% vs. 6%).

**Figure 22. Why pupils find it difficult to follow rules and guidance**



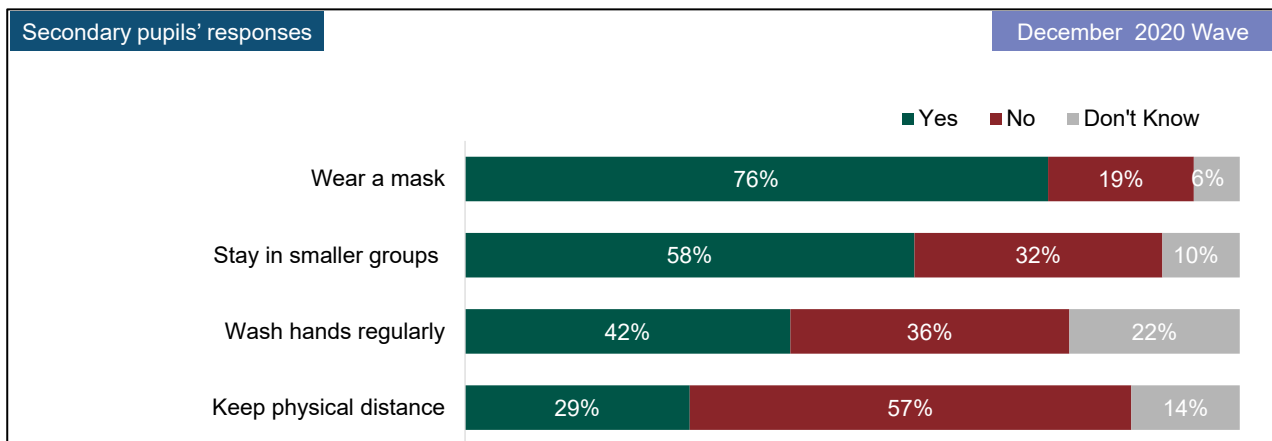
Source: PPP December Wave 6, L46: "Why are you finding this difficult?" Base: All pupils finding any measure difficult to follow (n=861)

Year 13 pupils (91%) were more likely than younger pupils in years 7-10 (75%) to say the reason they found it difficult to follow a rule was that it was not always possible but were less likely to say it was because they forget or needed to be reminded of the rules (9%, compared to an average of 20% across all years). Year group differences were mainly consistent with those found in the September / October wave and late October waves.

### Perception of other pupils' behaviour towards COVID-19 specific rules

Pupils had varying levels of confidence regarding whether other pupils in their school / college followed the measures asked of them in relation to COVID-19. Three-quarters reported that other pupils at their school wore a mask (76%), but less than three-in-ten (29%) reported that pupils kept physical distance from others where possible. A minority also thought other pupils regularly wash their hands (42%, though quite a high proportion, 22%, were unsure).

**Figure 23. Pupils perceptions of what other pupils do in relation to COVID-19 measures**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, L43\_2: "In your school or college, do you think that other pupils generally...?": Wash their hands frequently / Wear a mask (either in class or communal school / college areas) / Stay in smaller groups (e.g. year group bubbles) / Keep physically distant from other pupils where possible" All pupils attending school this term (n=1,540)

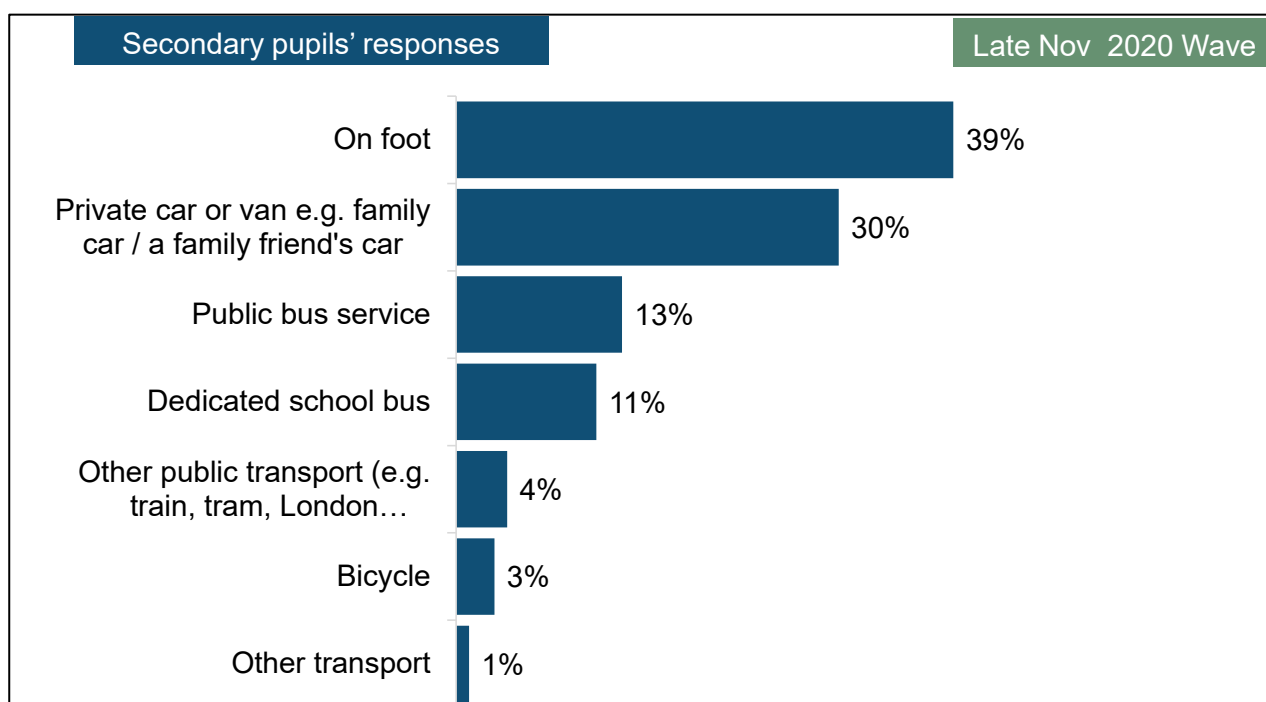
Year 13 pupils, and pupils who reported being worried about catching COVID-19 in school were consistently less likely to be confident that other pupils in the school followed each measure. For example, 71% of pupils who were worried about catching COVID-19 in school thought that other pupils in their school generally wore masks, compared to an average of 76% across all pupils.

## Travel and wearing face coverings

People aged 11 and over have been required to wear face coverings on public transport since summer 2020. They are not legally mandated on dedicated transport to school and college, but there is still an expectation that they will be worn. We believe most local authorities have expected children to wear them and, in December, we updated our guidance to say they must be worn on public health grounds. To inform future thinking, we wanted to know more about the wearing of face coverings by pupils when travelling to school and in other situations.

In November 2020, pupils were asked about what mode of transport they were using to get to school as well as whether and how often they were wearing face coverings whilst traveling and in other situations. As shown in Figure 24, pupils attending secondary school most commonly travelled to school on foot (39%) or by private car or van (30%) but nearly a quarter used public buses or dedicated school buses.

**Figure 24. Main ways that pupils travel into school / college**



Source: PPP Late November Wave 5, H9: “What is the main way that you currently travel into school or college?” Base: All pupils attending school this term (n=1,599)

Younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to travel on foot (43% among year 7-10s vs. 31% among year 11-13s) but less likely to travel in by public bus (9% of year 7-10s vs. 20% among year 11-13s).

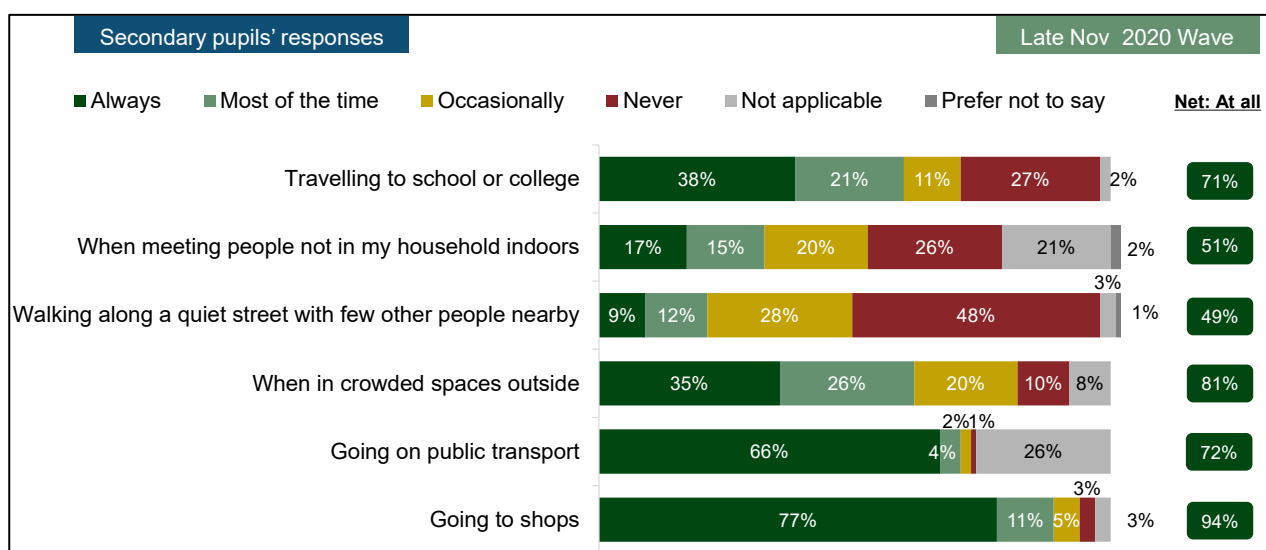
Female pupils (16%) were more likely than male (10%) to travel in by public bus.

Urban pupils were more likely than rural to travel in on foot (41% vs. 26%) and public bus service (14% vs. 9%) but less likely to travel in by dedicated school bus (6% vs. 32%).

## Wearing face coverings whilst travelling

Figure 25 shows how often secondary school pupils wore a face covering or mask in different circumstances. Just over seven-in-ten (71%) pupils wore a face covering or mask at least some of the time while travelling to school or college, with just under two-in-five (38%) doing so always. When not travelling to school, over three-in-four (77%) pupils always wore a mask or face covering when going to the shops and two-in-three (66%) always did so when going on public transport (both situations where wearing a face covering was usually a requirement). Four-in-five (81%) pupils wore a face covering at least some of the time when in crowded places outside but just 35% did so always. Around half said they had worn a face covering at least some of the time when meeting people not in their household indoors (51%) and when walking along a quiet street with few other people nearby (49%) but always wearing a face covering in either instance (17% and 9% respectively) was unlikely.

**Figure 25. Occasions when pupils wear a face covering**



Source: PPP Late November Wave 5, H10 / H11: “Thinking about how you mainly travel to school or college, how often if at all do you wear a mask or face covering? / How often do you wear a mask or face covering on any of the following occasions?” Base: All pupils attending school this term (n=1,599), All pupils who have attended school this term, excluding those exempt from wearing masks (1,566)

The following pupils were more likely to say that they wore a face covering while travelling to school or college:

- Older pupils (76% of year 11-13s vs. 68% of year 7-10s) and also more likely to

say that they did so always when travelling in (45% of year 11-13s vs. 35% of year 7-10s)

- Female pupils (42% vs. 35% of male pupils)
- FSM pupils (80% vs. 69% of non-FSM pupils) and also more likely to say that they did so always when travelling in (46% vs. 37% of non-FSM pupils)
- BAME pupils (86% vs. 66% of White pupils) and also that they did so always when travelling in (50% vs. 35% of White pupils).

BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to always wear a face covering when: in crowded spaces outside (51% vs. 30%); walking along a quiet street with few other people nearby (19% vs. 5%); and when meeting people not in their household indoors (22% vs. 15%), but were less likely to do so when going to the shops (71% vs. 80%).



## Remote education

Parents and pupils have been asked about their experiences of remote education in each wave since September 2020. The results reported in this chapter include findings from the late November 2020 wave, the December 2020 wave and the February 2021 wave.

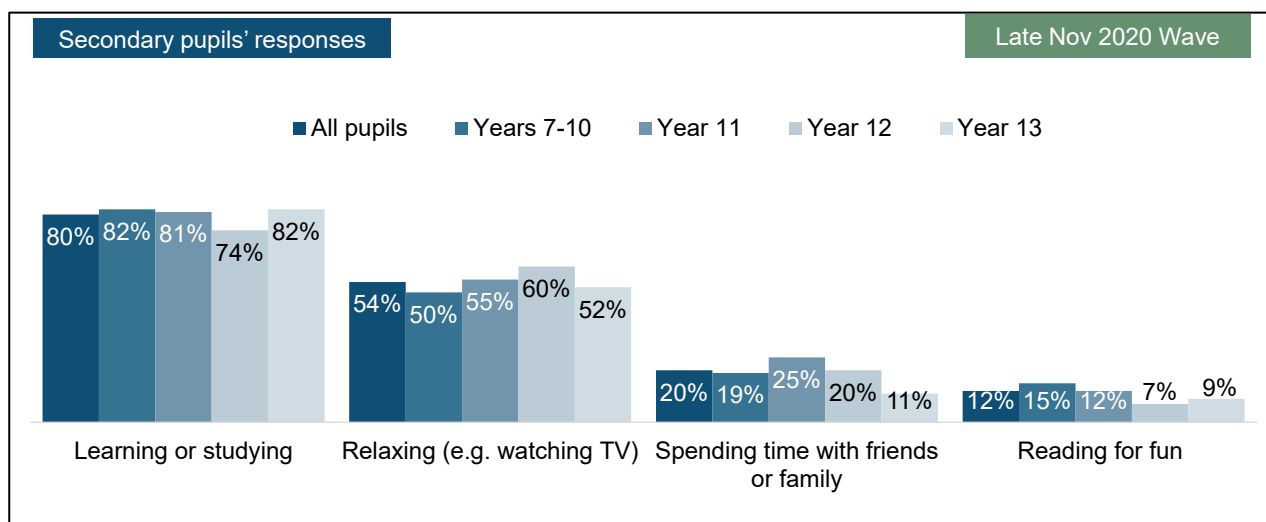
Ensuring that all pupils unable to attend school on-site are able to access high quality remote education has been a priority for the Department throughout the pandemic. The questions included in this survey have allowed us to understand the extent and nature of remote education being delivered to pupils, as well as identify barriers experienced by pupils learning from home. This insight has informed the package of support provided to schools, accessed via the Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk, as well as [advice for parents and carers](#) to support their children while learning from home.

## Remote education in the past two weeks

### Late November 2020: time when not at school

In late November 2020, pupils were asked how they spent their time on days when they were not in school. Four-in-five (80%) pupils not attending school full time (excluding those ill or home-schooled) spent some of the time they would have been in school learning or studying. This was a significant increase from the 64% who said this in late October. Over half (54%) spent some of this time relaxing, a fifth (20%) spent time with friends or family, and around one in eight (12%) were reading for fun.

**Figure 26. How pupils spent their time on the days when they did not physically attend school**



Source: PPP Late November Wave 5, L30: “On the days when you have not physically attended school, how have you typically spent your time? (multiple choice)” Base: Pupils not attending school full-time but excluding home schooled, ill or other (n=474), Year 7-10 (n=162), Year 11 (n=87), Year 12 (n=134), Year 13 (n=91)

A number of groups were less likely to say they had spent the time studying:

- Male pupils (73% vs. 85% among female pupils)
- Pupils eligible for FSM (67% vs. 82% non-FSM pupils).
- Pupils with SEND (68% vs. 82% among those without SEND).

## February 2021: remote education

In February 2021, parents and pupils were again asked about their experiences of remote education in the last two weeks (prior to February 3<sup>rd</sup>).<sup>27</sup>

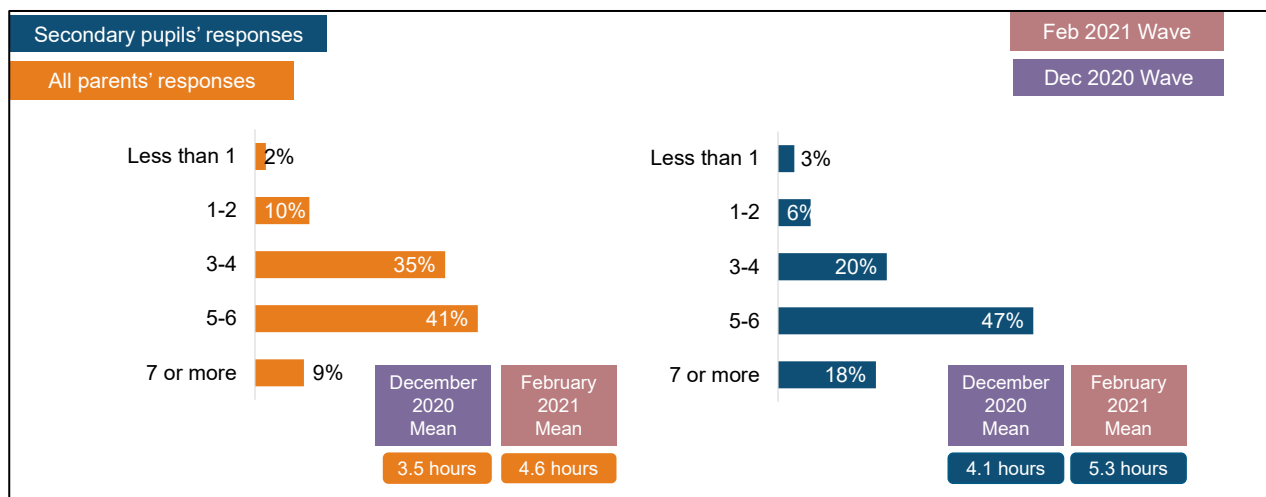
Parents and pupils were asked about how many hours their child / they spent studying on days when not in school. As shown in Figure 27, the average number of hours of studying at home per day reported by pupils not attending school full-time (excluding those home schooled, ill or ‘other’) was 5.3 hours in February 2021.<sup>28</sup> This was significantly higher than the 4.1 hours reported in December 2020. The average number

<sup>27</sup> The reported two weeks that parents and pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February.

<sup>28</sup> During fieldwork, routing was changed such that those who gave a reason for non-attendance other than those listed (Other) were also asked the remote learning section.

of hours their child spent studying, reported by parents, had also increased in this period (from 3.5 hours in December to 4.6 in February).

**Figure 27: Hours spent studying per day when not in school, reported by parents and pupils**



Source: PPP December Wave 6 and February Wave 7 L33/L31: “On the days when you/your child were not physically attending school, how many hours per day did you/they typically spend learning or studying?” Parents whose child has not attended every day excluding illness/home-school/’other’. W6 (n=685) / W7 (n=2,647) Pupils not attending school full-time but excluding home schooled, ill or other W6 (n=478) W7 (n=1,419). Note: means calculated excluding those who said Don’t know. Routing changed to these questions during fieldwork - see footnote.

The following groups were less likely to report that they, or their child, spent more than four hours studying at home per day<sup>29</sup>:

- Parents of male pupils compared to female pupils (47% vs. 53%)
- Parents of FSM pupils compared to non-FSM (41% vs. 52%)
- Pupils eligible for FSM compared to non-FSM (55% vs. 68%)
- Pupils with SEND compared to those without (55% vs. 67%).

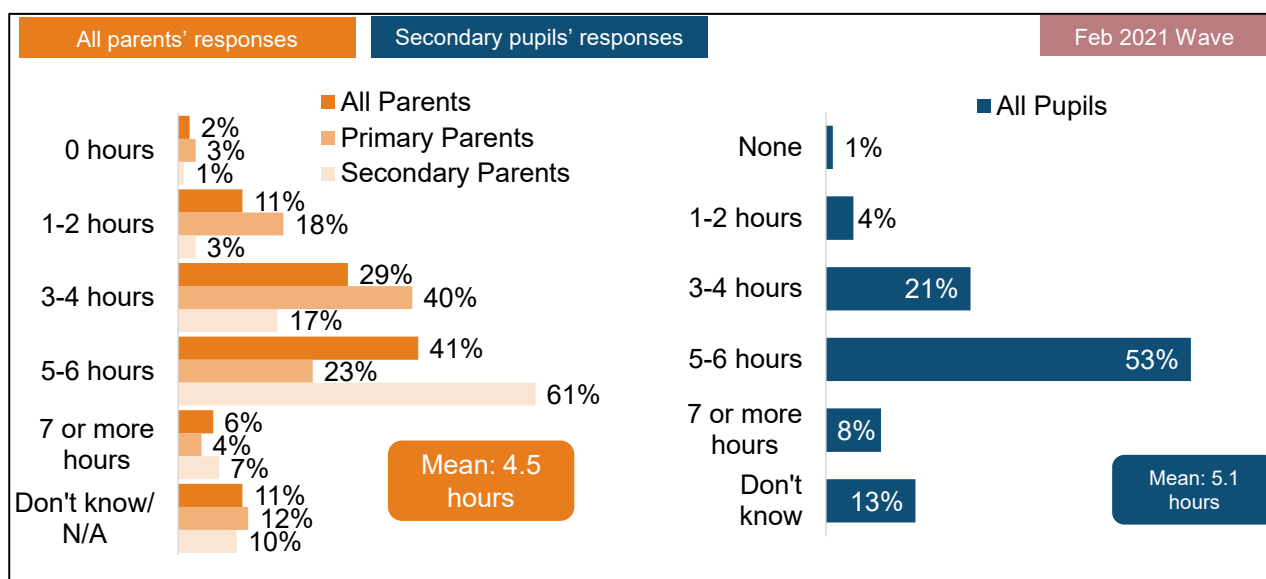
The majority of pupils (61%) who had not attended school every day (except those that were ill, home-schooled, or ‘other’)<sup>30</sup> had been offered more than four hours of remote lessons or other ways of catching up per day, when not physically in school in the past two weeks. Just under half (46%) of parents of such children said the same. As shown in

<sup>29</sup> In January 2021, the Department for Education published [updated remote education guidance](#) for schools. This stated that schools should provide remote education as a minimum, per day, of: KS1: 3 hours, on average across the cohort, with less for younger children; KS2: 4 hours; KS3 and KS4: 5 hours  
<sup>30</sup> During fieldwork, routing was changed such that those who gave a reason for non-attendance other than those listed (Other) were also asked the remote learning section.

Figure 28, only 1% of pupils and 2% of parents said that their school had not offered them *any* remote lessons.

On average, pupils reported that they were offered 5.1 hours of lessons per day when not in school, while parents reported an average of 4.5 hours offered to their children. Parents of primary pupils reported a lower average number of hours of remote education offered than secondary parents (3.8 vs. 5.2 hours). The average number of hours reported by year 7-10 and year 11-13 was not significantly different.

**Figure 28. Number of hours of remote education offered by school per day, reported by parents and pupils**



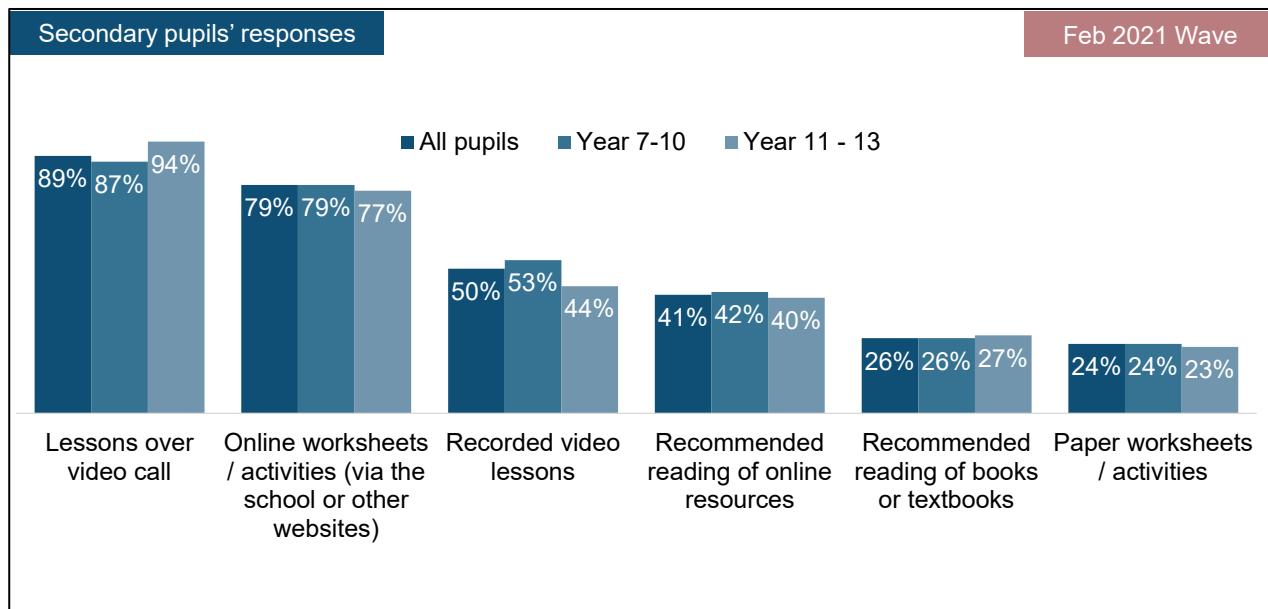
Source: PPP December Wave 6 and February Wave 7 RL1: “How many hours worth of remote education does your school provide to learn remotely on days that you are not physically attending school?” Parents whose child has not attended every day excluding illness/home-school/other’. W6 (n=685) / W7 (n=2647) Pupils not attending school full-time but excluding home schooled, ill or other W6 (n=478) W7 (n=1,419). Note: means calculated excluding those who said Don’t know.

Parents and pupils were also asked about what types of remote education their (or their child’s) school had offered when they were not attending physically attending.

As shown in Figure 29, the most common type of remote education offered to pupils was lessons over video call (89% of all secondary pupils offered any remote education), followed by online worksheets (79%), recorded video lessons (50%) and recommended reading of online resources (41%). The way that these questions were asked had changed compared to December, so comparisons should be treated with caution, however, there has been a reported increase in lessons over video call (64% in

December vs. 89% in February) and recorded video lessons (28% in December vs. 50% in February) among those offered remote lessons.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 29: Types of remote lessons pupils were offered in the past two weeks, reported by pupils**



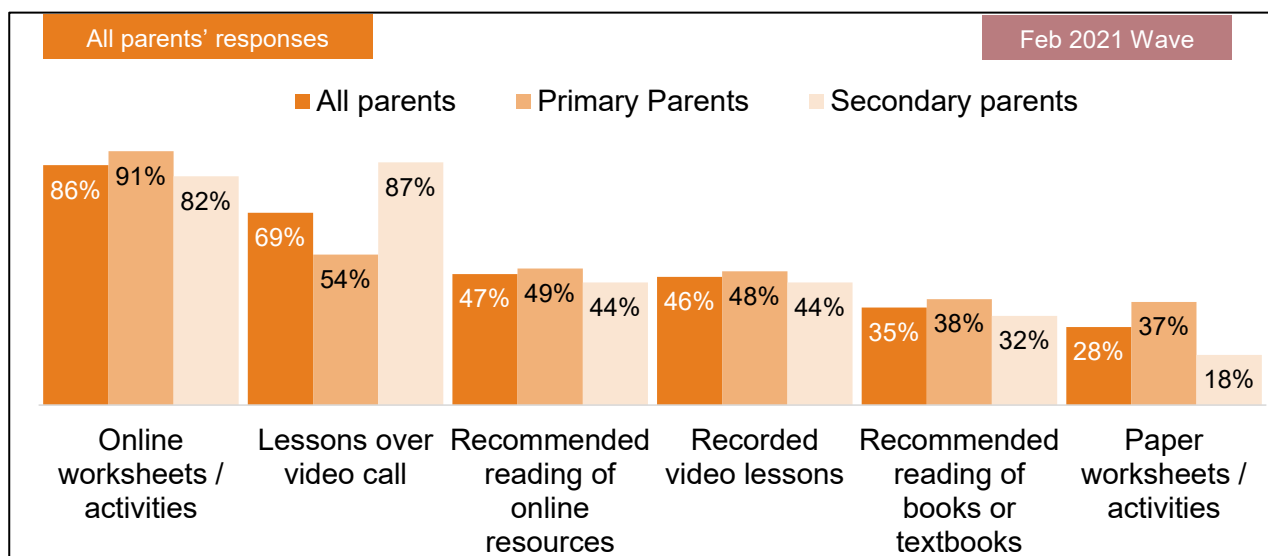
Source: PPP Feb Wave 7 L49: “Thinking about the last two weeks of this term (January 2021), what type of remote lessons or other ways of learning has your school offered when you are not physically attending school?” Pupils that were offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=1,405) Year 7-10 (n=663) Year 11-13 (n=724)

As in previous waves, pupils in year 11-13 were more likely than those in years 7-10 to say they had lessons over video call (94% vs. 87%), while the opposite was true of recorded video lessons (44% vs. 53%).

As shown in Figure 30, parents reported that the most common type of remote education offered to their child was online-worksheets (86%), followed by lessons over video call (69%), recommended reading of online resources (47%) and recorded video lessons (46%). As in previous waves, parents of secondary pupils were far more likely to say their child received lessons over video call than primary parents (87% vs. 54%), but less likely to say their child received all other types of lesson.

<sup>31</sup> This base was routed differently in February compared to December. In December, pupils were asked “did your school or college offer you any remote lessons..”? compared to in February when the question was “How many hours’ worth of remote education does your school provide...”?

**Figure 30: Types of remote lessons pupils were offered in the last two weeks, reported by parents**



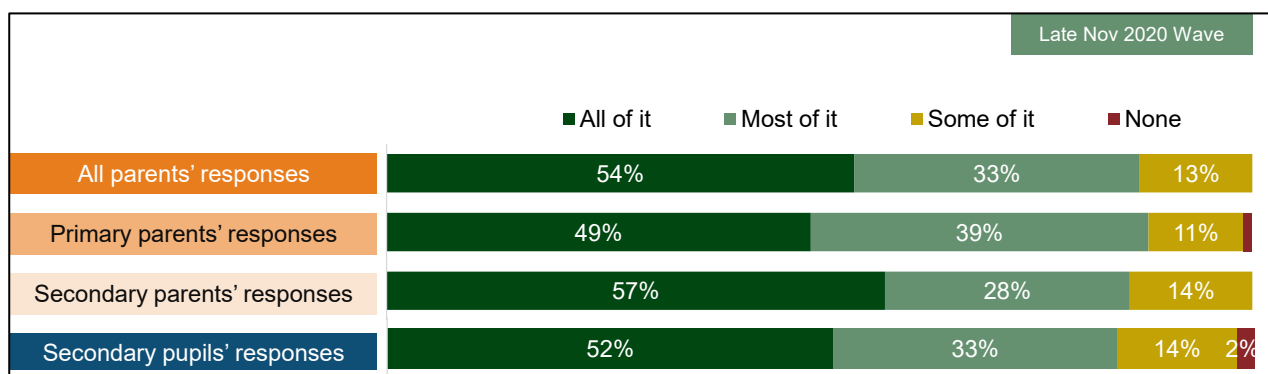
Source: PPP Feb Wave 7 L34B: "Thinking about the last two weeks, what type of remote lessons or other ways of learning has [PUPILNAME]'s school offered when [PUPILNAME] is not physically attending school?" Parents of pupils offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=2,600) Primary parents (n=1,196) Secondary parents (n=1,404)

### Late November 2020: Work completed and marked

In late November 2020 parents and pupils were asked about what work their child / they had to complete and submit, and how much was marked.

Just over half (54%) of parents of pupils who had to submit work said that their child completed all of the work they were asked to submit. This was similar to the proportion of pupils that reported that they completed all the work they were asked to submit (52%).

**Figure 31. Amount of the work that had been set that parents and pupils thought pupils had completed**



Source: PPP Late November Wave 5 L57A / L52 : “How much of this work do you think your child/have you typically completed?”. Base: Parents that look at work child has been set and they need to submit (n=443), Pupils that were asked to submit work (n=326).

The following groups were less likely to say that they submitted all of their work:

- Pupils in years 11-13 (46% vs. 58% of pupils in years 7-10)
- Pupils with SEND (25% vs. 56% among those without SEND); the findings were similar among parent of pupils with SEND (27% said their child submitted all of their work vs. 59% among parents of pupils without SEND).

Two-thirds of pupils (66%) and parents (64%) in late November 2020 felt that the work that they (or their child) had been asked to submit was of about the right level of challenge. Pupils were more likely to think the work too challenging (10%) than not challenging enough (3%), whereas the reverse was true for parents (12% vs. 5%). These findings were not significantly different to those of late October 2020.

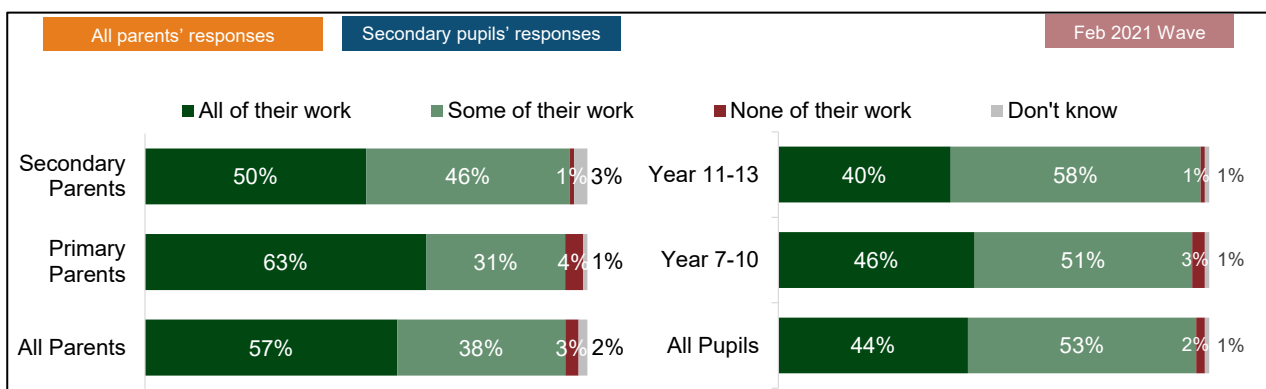
There were some differences among sub-groups:

- Pupils in years 7-10 were more likely than pupils in years 11-13 to say that work was not challenging enough (6% vs. 0%), as were parents of non-FSM pupils (14% vs. 4% among parents of pupils eligible for FSM)
- Pupils with SEND and their parents were more likely to say the work was too challenging (22% and 14% respectively) than pupils without SEND and their parents (9% and 4% respectively).

## **February 2021: Work completed and marked**

In the February 2021 wave parents and pupils who were offered remote education by their schools were asked if they were required to submit any of their work. As shown in Figure 32, almost all pupils (97%) and parents (95%) said they / their child had been asked to submit at least some work to their teachers. Primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to say their child had to submit all of their work (63% vs. 50%).

**Figure 32: How much of their work pupils were asked to submit, reported by parent and pupils**

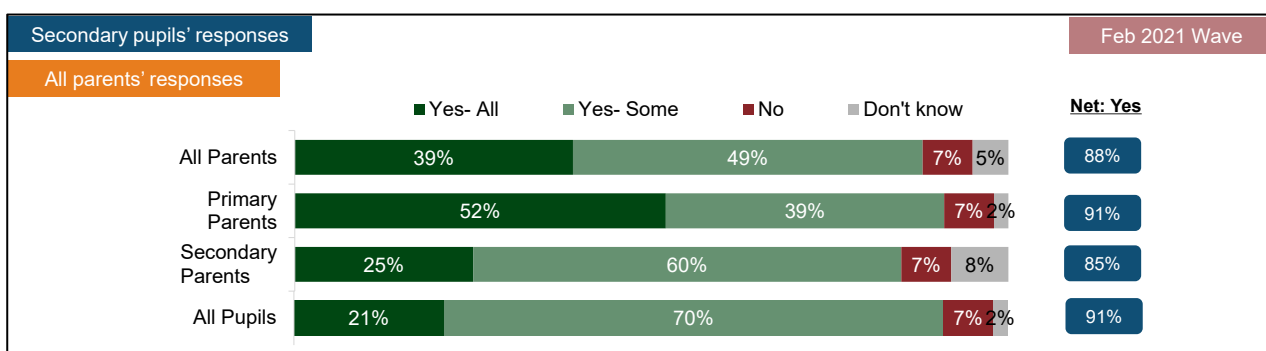


Source: PPP February Wave 7: L51/L58 “Thinking about the last two weeks, whilst you have been learning from home during school hours, have you/ has [PUPIL NAME] been asked to submit or return any work to your/their teachers?” Parents of pupils offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=2,600). Primary parents (n=1196) Secondary parents (n=1404) Pupils that were offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=1,405) Year 7-10 (n=663) Year 11-13 (n=724)

Pupils in years 11-13 were less likely than those in years 7-10 to say that they had to submit all of their work (40% vs. 46%). Pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to say that they had to submit any of their work than non-FSM pupils (92% vs. 98%).

Parents and pupils were also asked whether their teachers marked work or provided feedback. As shown in Figure 33, around nine-in-ten pupils (91%) and parents of pupils (89%) that had submitted work thought at least some of it was marked.

**Figure 33: How much of their submitted work was marked, reported by parents and pupils**



Source PPP Feb Wave 7: L54/L60 “Has your teacher or someone at your school marked and / or provided feedback on the quality of this work?” Pupils asked to submit some or all work (n=1,370) Parents of children who have submitted at least some remote learning work in the last two weeks (n=2,488) Primary parents (n=1,134), Secondary parents (n=1,354)



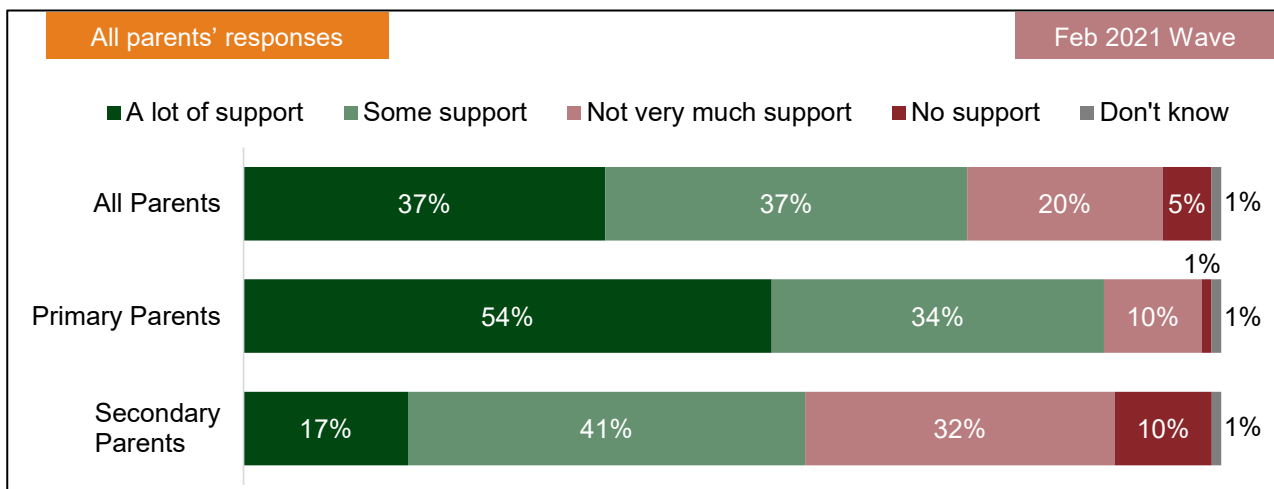
Primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to say that any of their child’s work was marked (91% vs. 85%, though the difference is due to more secondary parents not knowing – the same proportion (7%) said none of the work had been marked). Parents of pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to say that any of their child’s work was marked (81% vs. 90%). This reflected both that they were more likely to say it had not been marked (11% vs. 6%) and that they did not know if it had been marked (8% vs. 4%).

Pupils in the following groups were less likely to say any of their work had been marked:

- Pupils in years 7-10 compared to those in year 11-13 (90% vs. 93%)
- Pupils in urban compared to rural areas (90% vs. 94%)
- Pupils eligible for FSM compared to non-FSM (86% vs. 92%).

In February 2021, parents of pupils that were offered remote lessons were asked about the level of support that they provided for their child. As show in Figure 34, around three-quarters (74%) of parents provided at least some support for their child, with primary parents more likely than secondary parents to say this (88% vs. 58%).

**Figure 34: How much support parents provided with pupils remote studies**



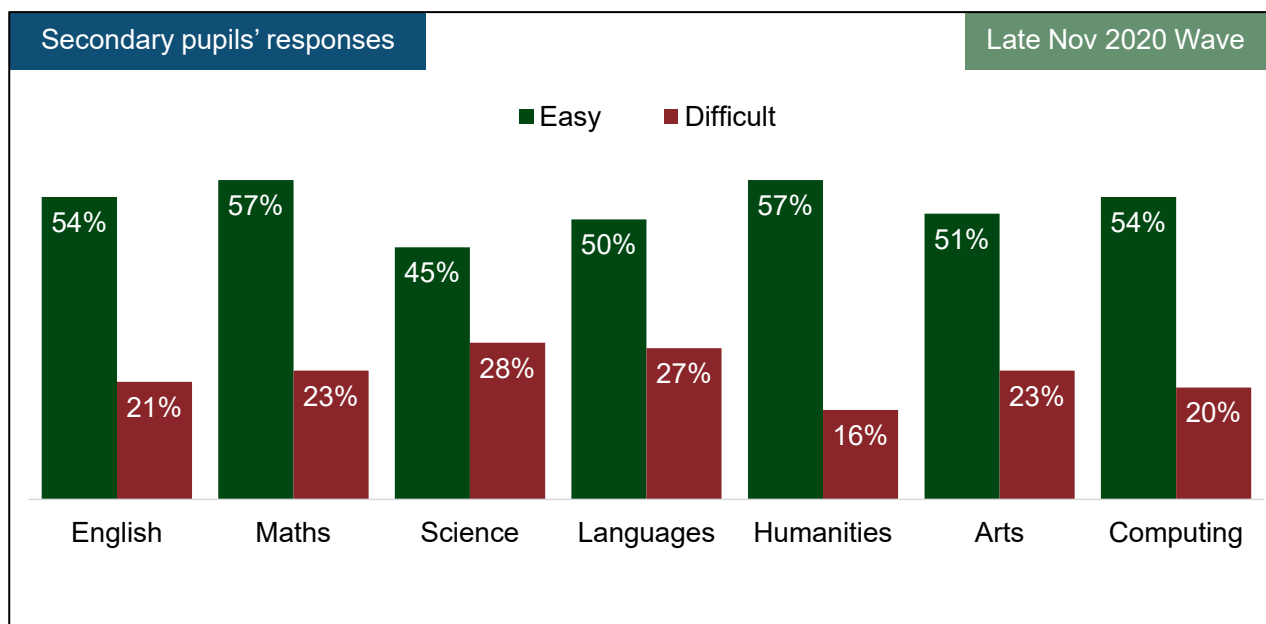
Source PPP Feb Wave 7, L34-C “Thinking about the last two weeks, how much support, if any, do you provide to [PUPILNAME] with their remote studies?” Parents of pupils offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=2,600). Primary parents (n=1,196) Secondary parents (n=1,404)

Parents of pupils eligible for FSM were less likely than parents of pupils not eligible for FSM to have provided at least some support to their child (81% vs. 73%).

## Remote education by subject

In late November 2020, pupils were asked how easy or difficult they found learning different subjects online. For those pupils to whom the question was applicable, over half found each of the subjects easy to learn online, other than Science (45%; this was the subject most often described as difficult to learn online (28%)).

**Figure 35. How easy or difficult pupils find it to learn subjects online**



Years 11-13 were more likely than years 7-10 to say each subject was difficult to learn online (e.g. Science 39% vs. 24%, English 27% vs. 18%).

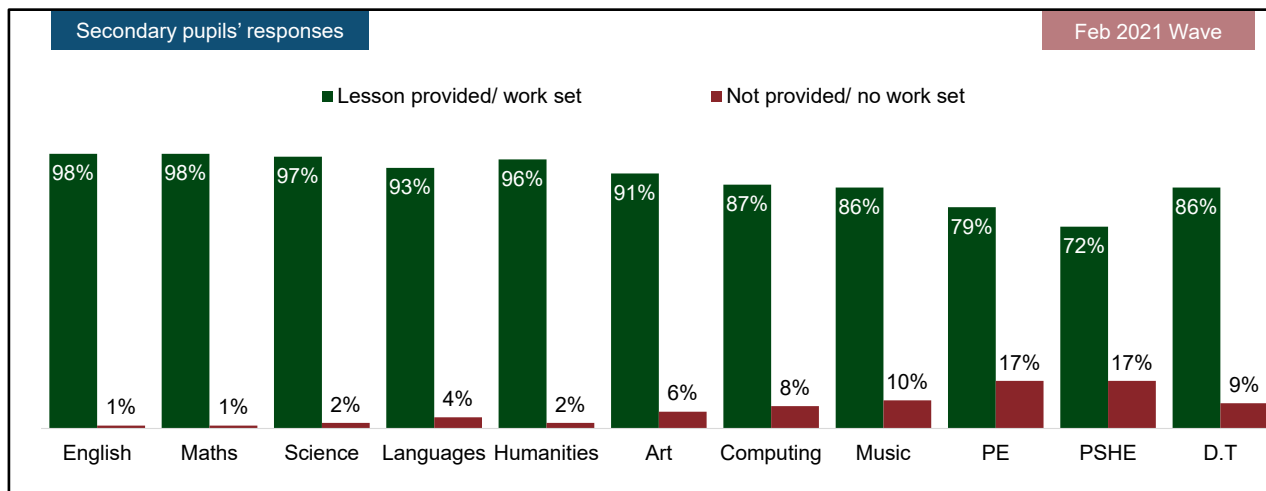
BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to say English (25% vs. 19%) and Computing (27% vs. 19%) were difficult to learn online.

Pupils with SEND were more likely than pupils without SEND to say the following subjects were difficult to learn online: Maths (31% vs. 22%), Science (37% vs. 27%) and Humanities (24% vs. 15%).

In February 2021, pupils that were offered some remote education in the past two weeks were asked about whether their school provided remote lessons or set work in each subject. As shown in Figure 36, for most subjects, at least 90% of pupils said that their school provided remote lessons. The subjects for which work was least likely to be set for

were PSHE (17%) and PE (17%), followed by Music (10%), D.T. (9%) and Computing (8%).

**Figure 36: Whether their school provided lessons or set work in each subject**



Source PPP February Wave: L50: “Thinking about the last two weeks, for those lessons you were unable to physically attend, did your school provide remote lessons or set work in...” Pupils for which learning online in this subject was applicable: English (n=1,026), Science(n=1,097), Maths (n=1,068), Humanities (n=1,015), Languages (n=788), Art (n=547), Computing (n=571), Music (n=467), PE (n=859), Languages (n=753), PSHE (n=726), D.T. (n=530).

## Experiences of remote education

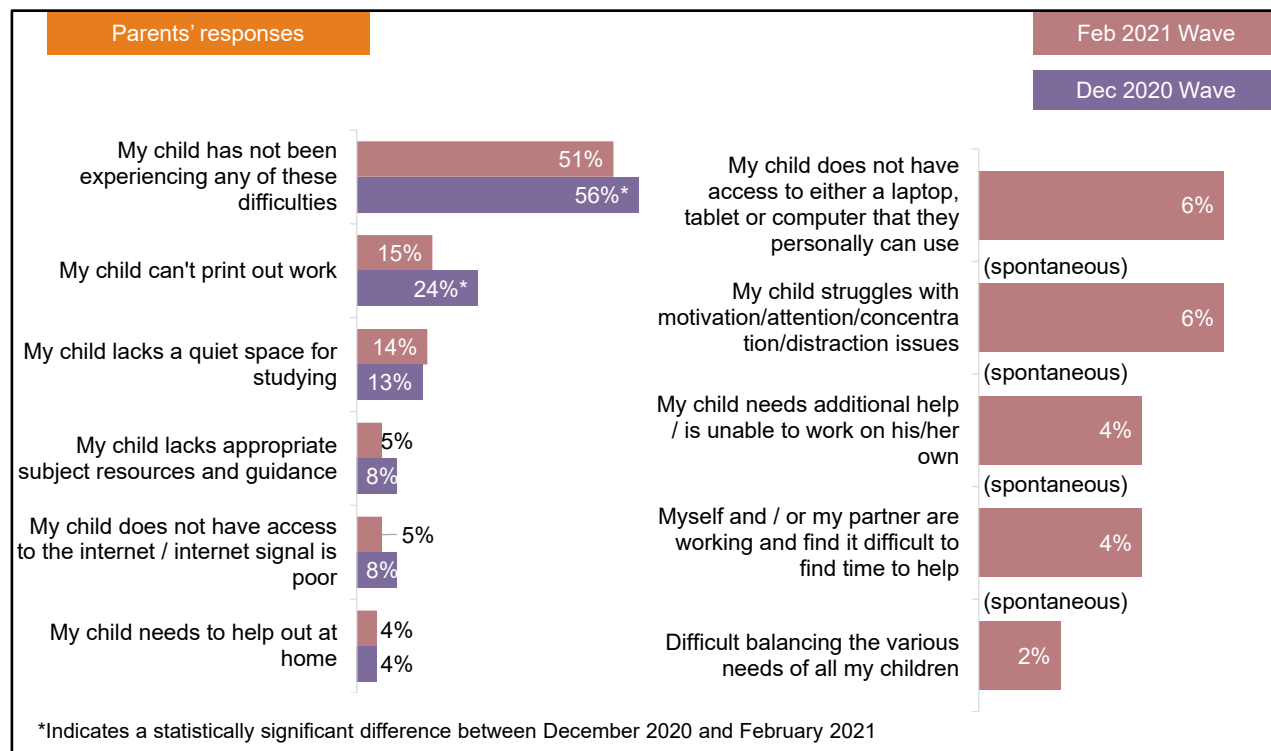
In February 2021, parents were asked about potential barriers to learning that may have made remote education at home difficult for their child. Half of parents of pupils who had done at least some remote education in past two weeks said that their child had not experienced any of the difficulties listed in Figure 37 (51%).<sup>32</sup> This was less than the 56% of parents who reported this in December 2020, although school attendance was also very different in these two periods.

The most common barrier identified by parents was their child being unable to print work (15%, though fewer mentioned this than in December 2020 (24%)), followed by lacking a quiet place to study (13%). In February 2021, a number of difficulties were raised spontaneously by parents: 6% reported their child did not had access to a device for remote education that they can personally use, 6% reported that their child struggled with

<sup>32</sup> The reported two weeks that parents and pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February.

motivation, attention, concentration or distraction issues, and 4% spontaneously mentioned they were struggling to find time to help due to work.

**Figure 37. Parents' views on barriers to remote education for their child**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 P3: "Which of the following barriers, if any, have made it difficult for [PUPILNAME] to learn at home?" Parents of pupils offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure. (n=2,600). Wave 6 Parents of pupils offered remote lessons in the autumn term (n=1,369)

Primary parents were twice as likely to spontaneously report their child not having access to either a laptop, tablet or computer that they personally can use, compared to secondary parents (8% vs. 4%), as well as lacking a quiet space to study (18% vs. 10%).

BAME parents were three times more likely than white parents to report their child not having access to a laptop, tablet or computer that they personally can use as a barrier to remote learning (12% vs. 4%). They were also more likely to report lacking appropriate study resources and guidance (10% vs. 4%).

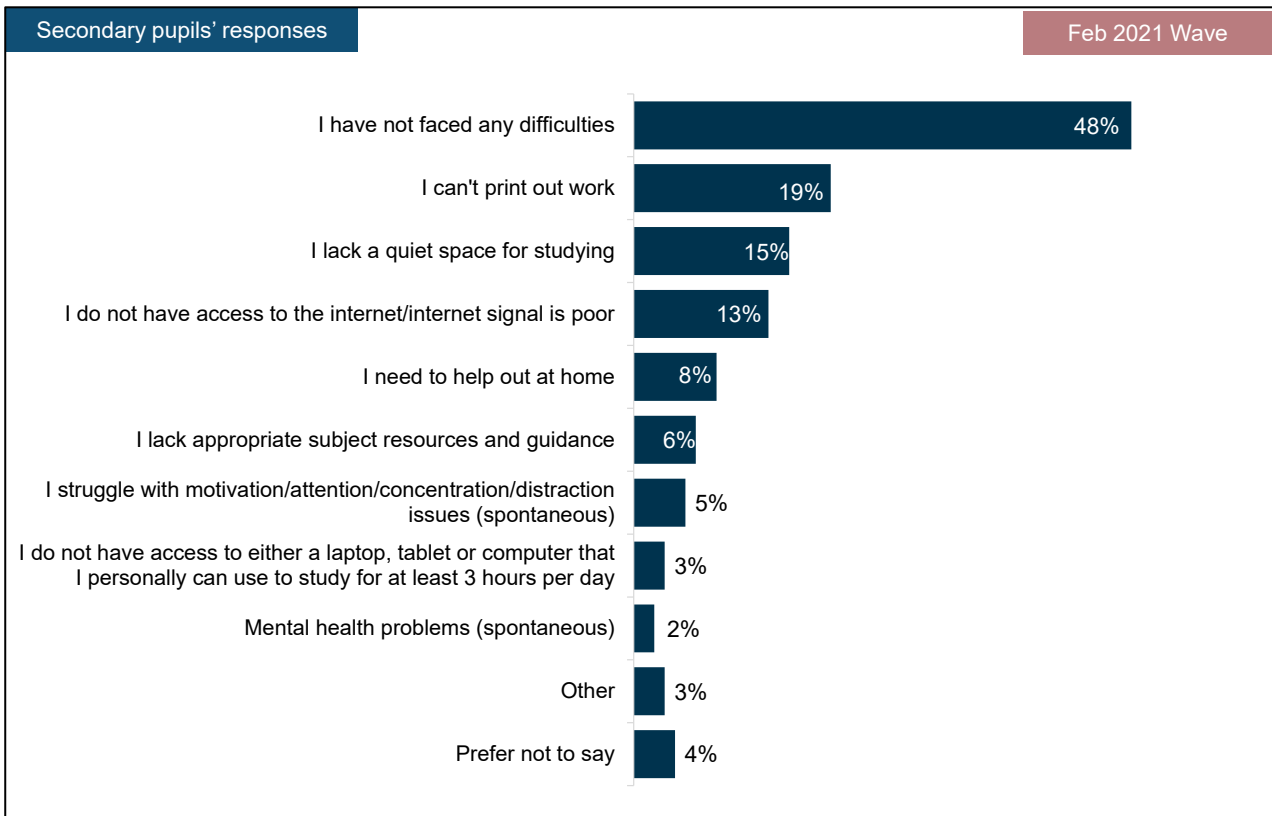
Three-in-five (60%) parents of FSM-eligible pupils reported experiencing at least one barrier, compared to 43% of parents of pupils not eligible for FSM, and were particularly likely to mention:

- Lacking a quiet space for study (23% vs. 12%)

- Not being able to print work (27% vs. 13%).

When pupils were asked about potential barriers to learning that made remote education at home difficult, nearly half (48%) reported not facing any difficulties with home education, a large improvement from the 25% who reported not facing any difficulties in October 2020. However, this comparison should be treated with caution, given that the February survey had slightly different routing and question options.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 38. Pupils' views on barriers to remote education**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 C3: “Which of the following barriers, if any, have made it difficult for you to learn at home? Pupils that were offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=1,405)

Some new responses emerged from pupils in February 2021, when a large proportion of pupils were learning at home compared to in October 2020. For example, 5% of pupils spontaneously reported struggling with their motivation, attention or concentration and 2% reported facing mental health problems.

Older pupils were more likely to have faced at least one barrier compared to young pupils (52% of year 11-13 vs. 45% of year 7-10). This included being more likely to struggle with

<sup>33</sup>This base was routed differently in February compared to December. In December, pupils were asked “did your school or college offer you any remote lessons..”? compared to in February when the question was “How many hours’ worth of remote education does your school provide...”?

motivation/attention/concentration/distraction (7% vs. 4%), having to help out at home (11% vs. 7%), not having access to the internet/poor internet quality (17% vs. 11%) and lacking a quiet space for study (19% vs. 13%).

Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to report any barriers to remote learning (54% vs. 42%), including the following specific barriers:

- Cannot print out work (22% vs. 17%)
- Lacking internet access/internet signal is poor (16% vs. 10%)
- Needing to help at home (12% vs. 4%).

Two-thirds of pupils eligible for FSM faced at least one barrier, compared to less than half of non-FSM pupils (67% vs. 44%). They were more likely to experience every response listed in Figure 38, with the exception of struggling with motivation/attention/concentration and distraction issues and mental health problems (both unprompted).

BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to report experiencing at least one barrier (58% vs. 44%), and were more likely to mention:

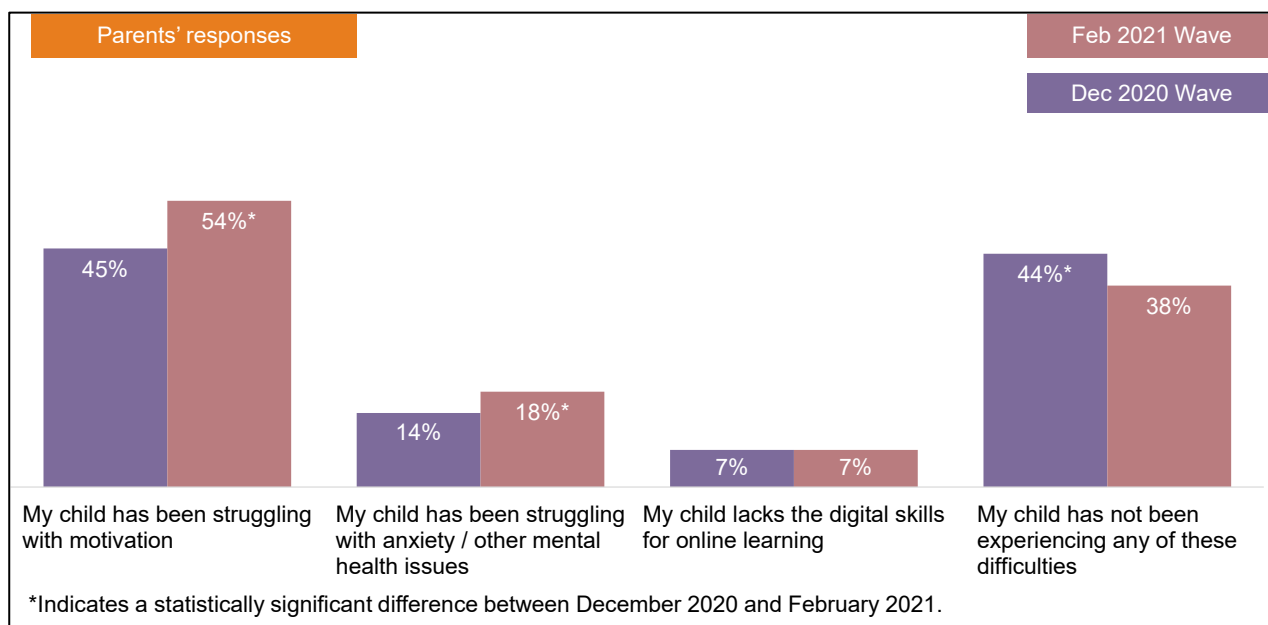
- Lacking a quiet space for studying (22% vs. 13%)
- Not having access to the internet/poor internet signal (17% vs. 12%)
- Needing to help out at home (12% vs. 7%)
- Not having access to a laptop, tablet or computer that they personally can use to study for at least 3 hours per day (5% vs. 2%).

## **Remote education and personal difficulties**

Parents of pupils offered at least some remote education in the last two weeks were asked if their child had been experiencing a number of personal difficulties, such as motivation, mental health and lacking digital skills. As shown in Figure 39, in February 2021 38% said their child had not experienced any of these difficulties: 60% felt their child had faced at least one of the difficulties discussed, up from 53% in December 2020.

More than half of parents whose child had been offered remote education in the past two weeks reported their child had struggled with motivation (54%), while around one-in-six (18%) said their child had struggled with anxiety or mental health issues and 7% said their child lacked digital skills for online learning.

**Figure 39. Parents' views on barriers to remote education for their children (prompted)**



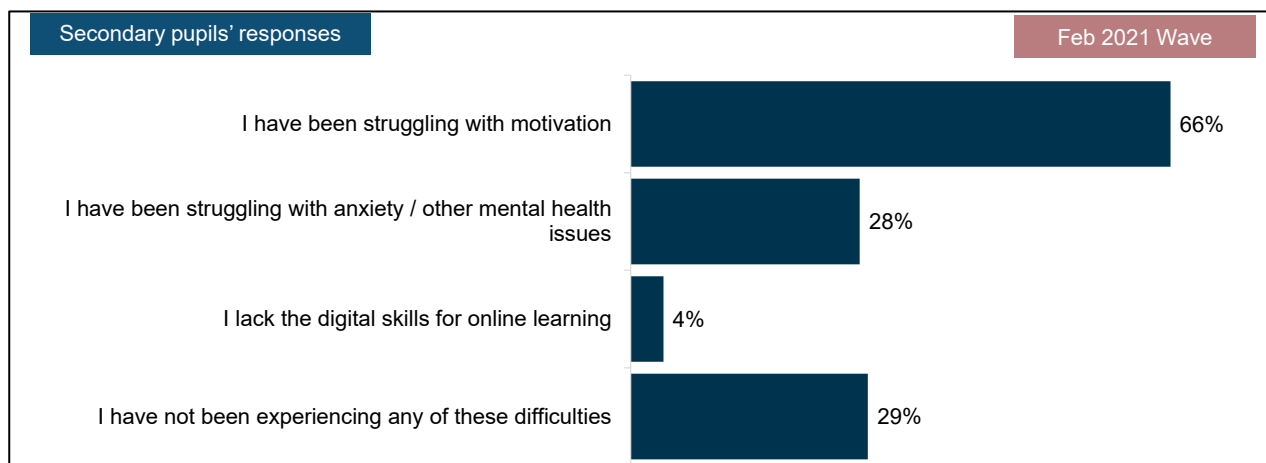
Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 P4: “Which of the following, if any, has [PUPILNAME] been experiencing?” Parents of pupils that were offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=2,600) / W6 Parents of pupils offered remote lessons this term (n=1,369)

Parents of secondary pupils were more likely than primary parents to say their child had not been experiencing any of these difficulties (44% vs. 34%). Accordingly, parents of primary children were more likely than secondary parents to say their child had been struggling with motivation (58% vs. 48%), and lacked the digital skills for online learning.

Parents of White pupils were more likely than parents of BAME pupils to say their child was struggling with anxiety or other mental health issues (20% vs. 14%) as were parents of pupils with SEND (39% vs. 15% among those without SEND) and of pupils eligible for FSM (25% vs. 17% among those not eligible).

Two-thirds of pupils offered remote education in the last two weeks reported that they struggled with motivation (66%), and around three-in-ten said they struggled with anxiety/other mental health issues. Three-in-ten (29%) pupils had not experienced any difficulties listed.

**Figure 40. Pupils' views on barriers to remote education**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 C4a: "Which of the following, if any, have you been experiencing?" Base: Pupils that were offered any remote learning in the last two weeks, or unsure (n=1,405)

Older pupils (in years 11-13) were more likely to report struggling with motivation (81%) and struggling with anxiety/other mental health issues (48%), compared to younger pupils in years 7-10 (57% and 20% respectively). Younger pupils were more likely to report not experiencing any difficulties (37% vs. 14% of year 11-13s).

The following subgroups were more likely to be struggling with anxiety/other mental health issue:

- Female vs. male pupils (40% vs. 18%)
- Pupils with SEND vs. pupils without SEND (37% vs. 27%).

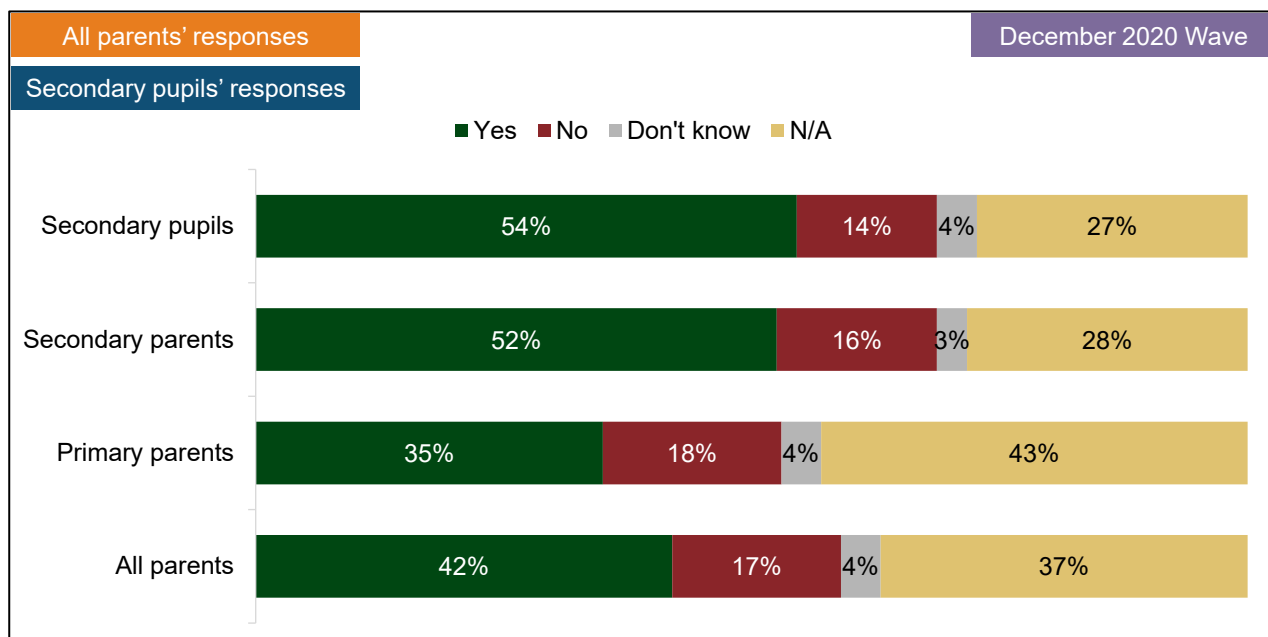
## Remote education in autumn term

In December 2020, parents and pupils were asked about their experiences of remote education across the whole of the autumn term, from the start of September. As shown in Figure 41, over half of secondary pupils (54%) said they had been offered remote education on days that they did not attend school, similar to the 52% of secondary parents that said this of their children. Around a third (35%) of parents of primary pupils said that their child had been offered remote education on days they did not attend school.

Almost two-fifths (37%) of parents said that their child's school had not offered them remote lessons in the autumn term because their child had attended school every day. More primary parents said this than secondary parents (43% vs. 28%).



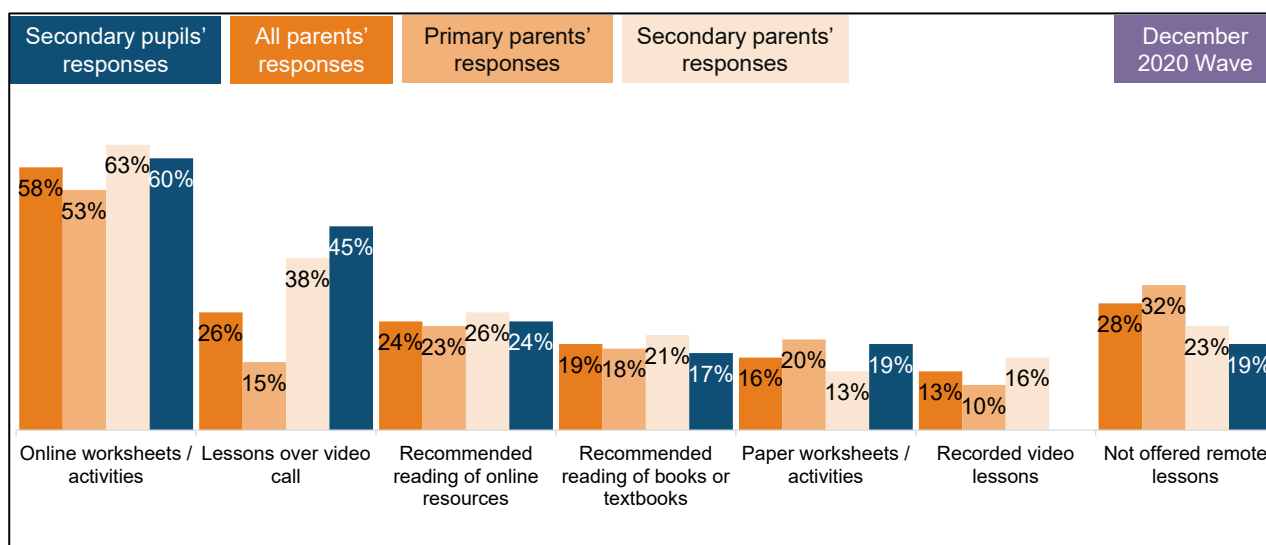
**Figure 41. Whether pupils were offered remote lessons since September**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L49\_1 / L34\_2: “Has your/your child’s school offered any remote lessons or other ways to catch up on days they are not physically attending school?” All pupils (n=1,555), All parents (n=3237, n= 1518 primary parents, n=1619 secondary parents)

Parents and pupils were also asked about the types of remote lesson they had been offered over the whole term. As shown in Figure 42, the most common type of remote learning offered to pupils who had not attended every day was online worksheets (58% of parents, 60% of pupils), followed by lessons over video call (26% of parents, 45% of pupils). Almost three-in-ten parents (28%) of pupils who had not attended every day said that their child had not been offered remote lessons, while around one-in-five (19%) pupils in this situation reported the same.

**Figure 42. Types of remote learning offered to pupils since the start of September**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L34B\_2 / L49\_2: "What type of remote lessons or other ways of learning has your child's school / your school offered when pupils can't physically attend school?" All pupils except those that attended every day this term (n=1,180), Parents of pupils except those who attended every day this term (n=2035, n= 899 primary parents, n=1136 secondary parents)

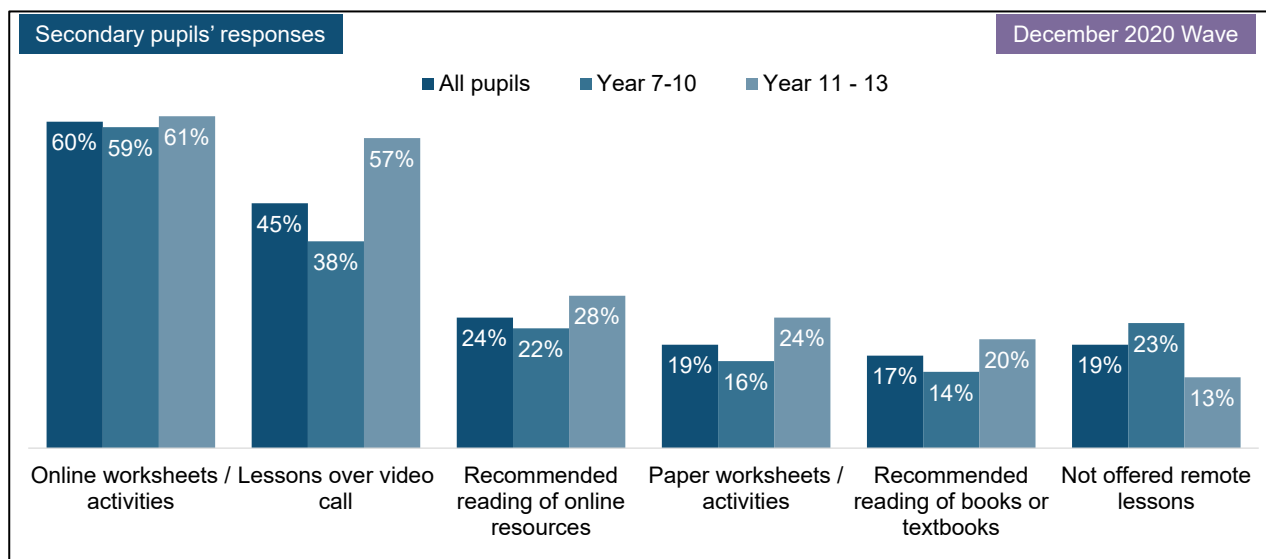
Secondary parents were more likely than primary parents to report that their child had been offered the following types of remote education: online worksheets (63% vs. 53%), lessons over video call (38% vs. 15%), recorded video lessons (16% vs. 10%). They were less likely to say that their child had been offered paper worksheets (13% vs. 20%).

Parents of pupils that had not attended every day, in the following groups were more likely to say that their child had not been offered any remote lessons:

- Pupils with SEND compared to pupils without SEND (37% vs. 26%)
- FSM-eligible pupils compared to non FSM-eligible pupils (34% vs. 26%).

As shown in Figure 43, of pupils that had not attended every day in the autumn term, those in years 11-13 were more likely than those in years 7-10 to have been offered lessons over video call (57% vs. 38%), recommended reading of online resources (28% vs. 22%), paper worksheets (24% vs. 16%) and recommended reading of books (20% vs. 14%).

**Figure 43. Types of remote education offered to pupils since the start of September**

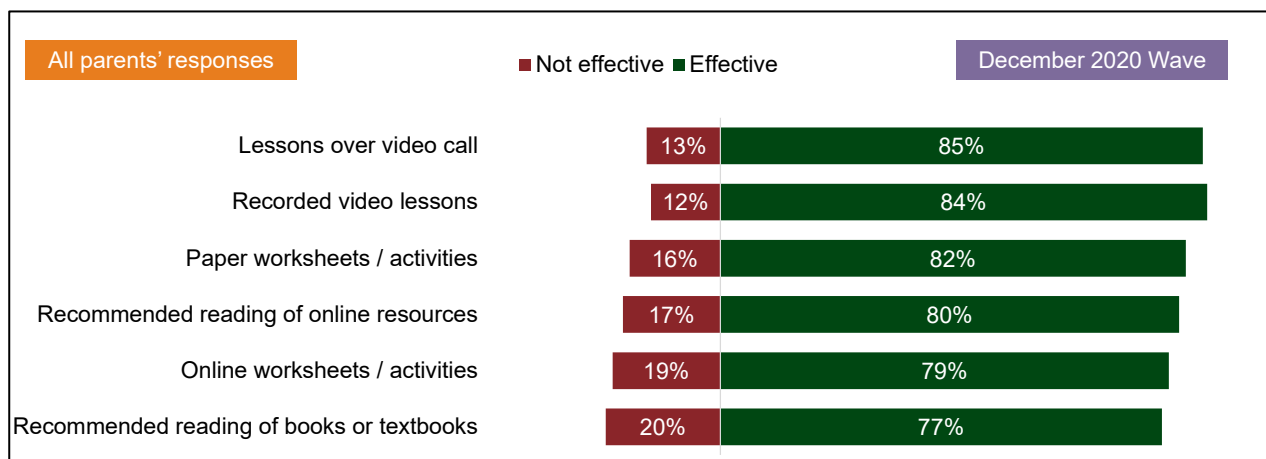


Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L49\_2: “What type of remote lessons or other ways of learning has your school offered when pupils can’t physically attend school?” All pupils except those that attended every day this term (n=1,180), Year 7-10 (n=512), Year 11-13 (n=668).

Pupils with SEND were more likely than pupils without SEND to say they had not been offered any remote lessons (29% vs. 18%). This was also true of pupils eligible for FSM compared to those not eligible (30% vs. 17%).

Parents and pupils were asked in December 2020 about how effective they thought the different types of remote education were. As shown in Figure 44, parents were most likely to be positive about the effectiveness of lessons over video call (85%), recorded video lessons (84%) and paper worksheets (82%). Although online worksheets were the most commonly offered type of remote learning, almost one-in-five parents (19%) thought that they were not effective.

**Figure 44. Parents' views on how effective different types of remote lesson were**



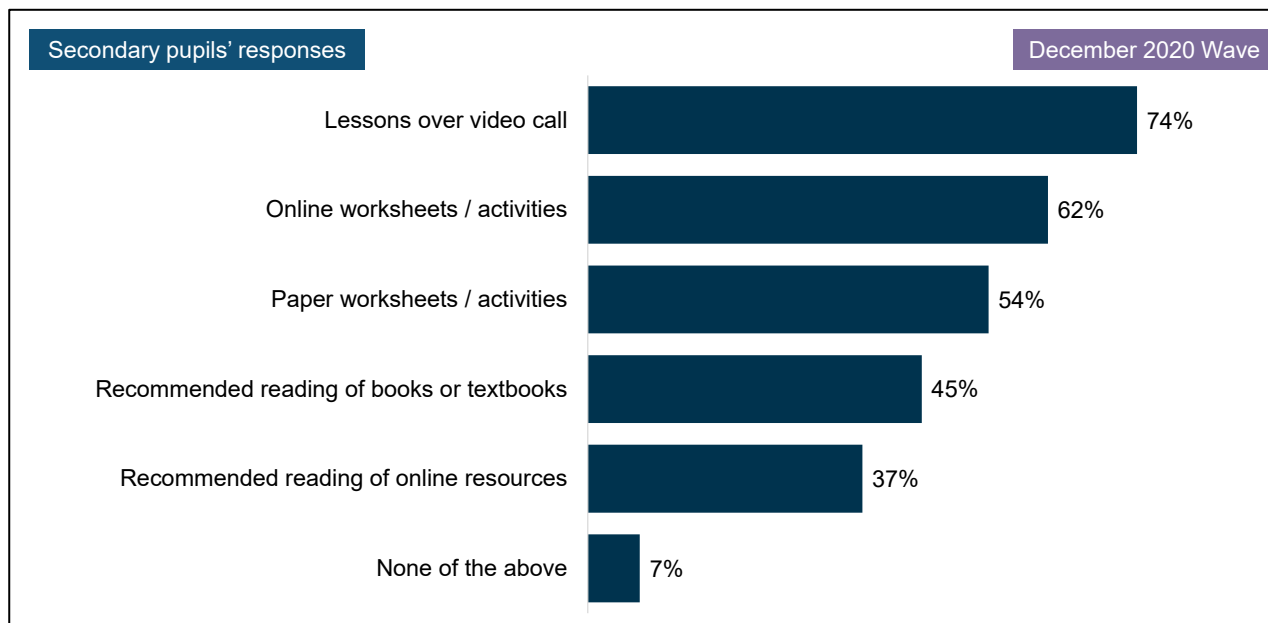
Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L34\_C\_2: “How effective, if at all, has [PUPILNAME] found the following types of remote learning?” All parents of pupils offered each type of learning in the Autumn 2020 term. Online worksheets/activities (n=1196), Paper worksheets/activities (n=328), Lessons over video call (553), Recorded video lessons (274), Recommended reading of books or textbooks (394), Recommended reading of online resources (501)

Parents of pupils with SEND were more likely to say that the following types of learning were not effective:

- Online worksheets (36% vs. 16%)
- Paper worksheets (31% vs. 13%)
- Recommended reading of books (33% vs. 18%)
- Recommended reading of online resources (35% vs. 14%).

Pupils that were offered more than one type of remote education were also asked which types they found effective. As shown in Figure 45, of those who had used lessons over video call, 74% said it was an effective type of learning (though pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to say this (62%) than non FSM-eligible pupils (76%). Online worksheets (62%) and paper worksheets (54%) were also seen as effective by pupils.

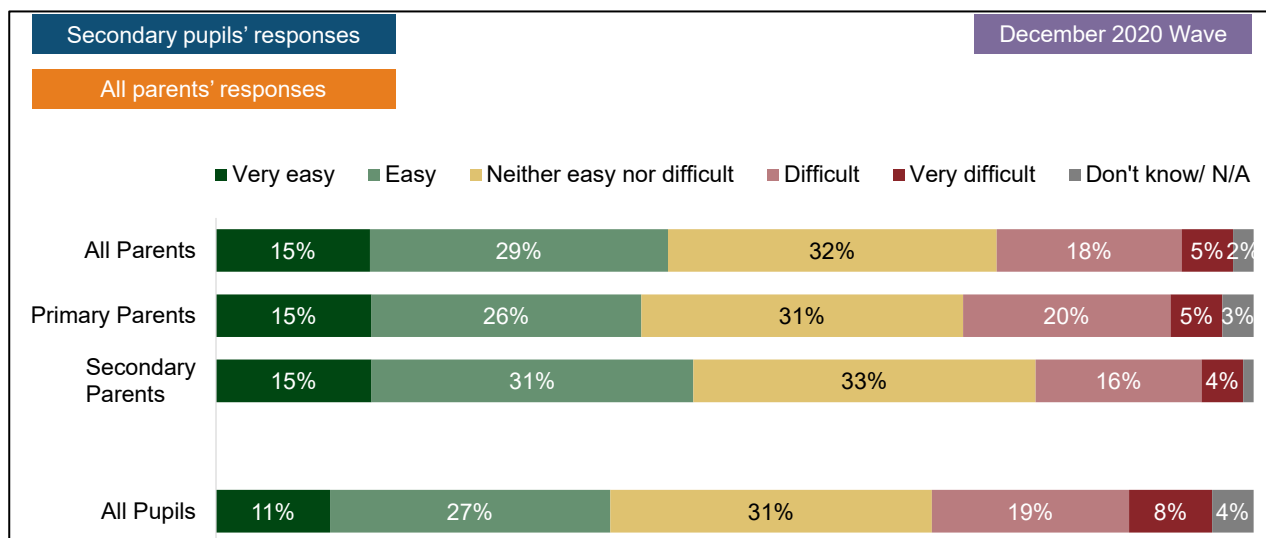
**Figure 45. Pupils' views on types of remote lessons were effective (if used more than one type of remote education)**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L49\_3: "Which of the following types of remote learning have you found effective?" All parents of pupils offered each type of learning in the Autumn 2020 term. Online worksheets/activities (n=560), Paper worksheets/activities (n=230), Lessons over video call (463), Recommended reading of books or textbooks (212), Recommended reading of online resources (298). Recorded video lessons not included, only 7 pupils reported experiencing this type of lesson.

Parents and pupils were asked how difficult their child/they found remote education since the start of September through to December. As shown in Figure 46, over two-fifths (43%) of parents said their child found home learning easy, while approaching a quarter (23%) found it difficult. Similarly, around two-fifths of pupils (38%) said they found home learning easy, while over a quarter (27%) had found it difficult.

**Figure 46. How difficult pupils found remote education**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L34\_D / L49\_4: “Since the start of September, how easy or difficult has [PUPILNAME] found remote/home learning? / Since the start of September, how easy or difficult have you found remote/home learning?” Parents of pupils offered remote lessons this term (N=1,369), Pupils that have done any home learning this term (n=989)

Parents of the following groups of pupils were more likely to say their child found home learning difficult:

- Primary pupils compared to secondary pupils (25% vs. 20%)
- White pupils compared to BAME pupils (25% vs. 15%)
- Pupils with SEND compared to pupils without SEND (50% vs. 18%).

Pupils in the following groups were more likely to say they found home learning difficult:

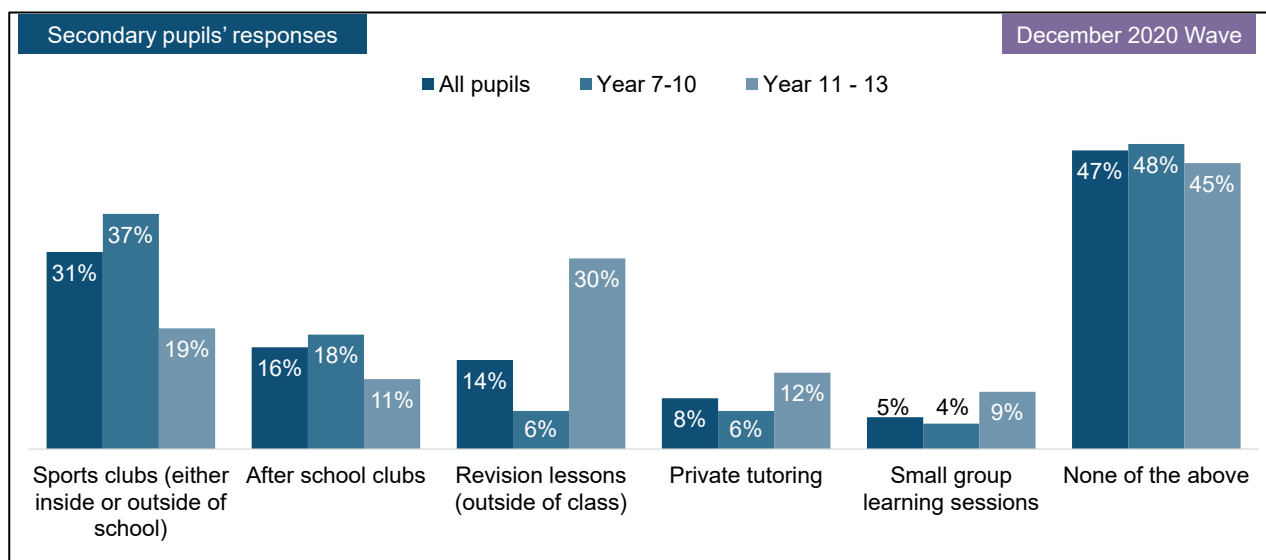
- Pupils in year 11-13 compared to year 7-10 (35% vs. 22%)
- Female compared to male pupils (32% vs. 23%).

Interestingly, BAME pupils were more likely to say they found home learning difficult compared to White pupils (33% vs. 26%), despite parents of BAME pupils being less

likely than parents of White pupils to say their child found home learning difficult (15% vs. 25%).

Pupils were asked if they had taken part in additional activities outside of their normal classes since September 2020. As shown in Figure 47, almost a third of pupils (31%) had taken part in sports clubs, while around one-in-six took part in after school clubs (16%) and one-in-seven took part in revision lessons (14%).

**Figure 47. Participation in additional activities outside of normal classes**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 L67: “Since September 2020, have you taken part in any of the following additional activities outside of your normal classes?” All pupils (n=1555), Year 7-10 (n=731) Year 11-13 (n=824)

Pupils in years 7-10 were more likely than those in years 11-13 to participate in sports clubs (37% vs. 19%) and after school clubs (18% vs. 11%), but less likely to take part in revision lessons (6% vs. 30%), private tutoring (6% vs. 12%) or small group learning sessions (4% vs. 9%).

The following groups of pupils were also more likely to take part in sports clubs:

- Male pupils compared to female pupils (34% vs. 27%)
- White pupils compared to BAME pupils (34% vs. 21%)
- Pupils without SEND compared to those with SEND (32% vs. 20%)
- Non-FSM-eligible pupils compared to those eligible for FSM (13% vs. 34%).

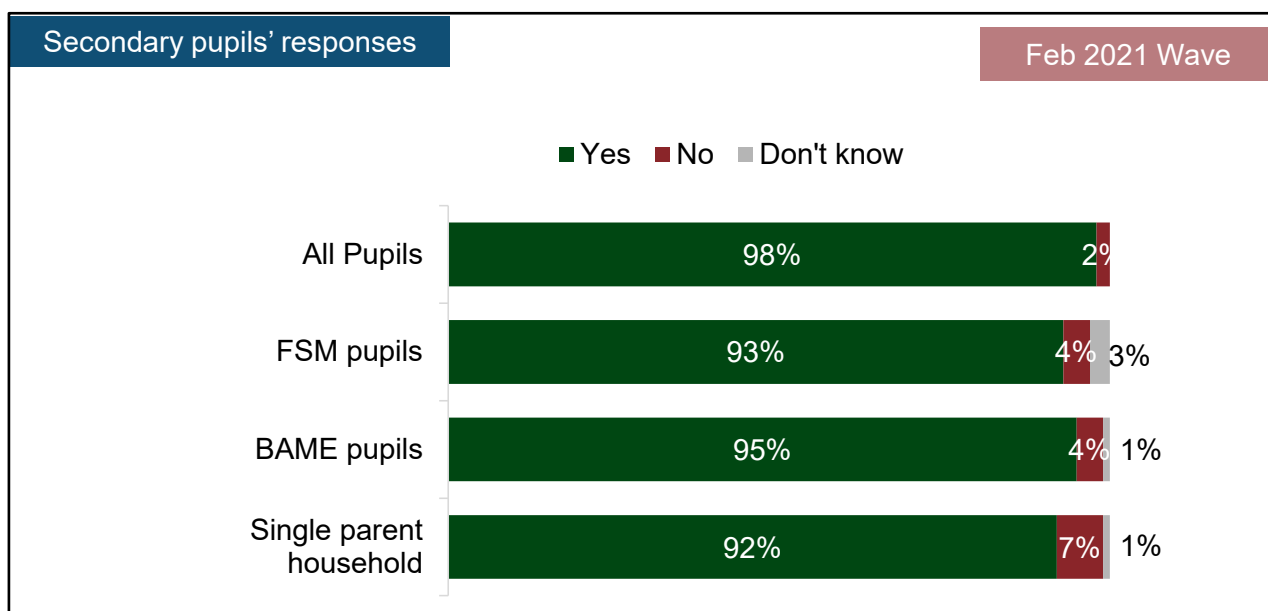
BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to take private tutoring (12% vs. 7%), as were pupils with SEND compared to pupils without SEND (12% vs. 7%), whereas pupils eligible for FSM were less likely than non-FSM-eligible pupils to take private tutoring (3% vs. 9%).

## Access to Technology

### Access to remote education technology

In February 2021 98% of pupils surveyed reported that they had access to a laptop, tablet, or computer that they could use for at least 3 hours a day.

**Figure 48. Pupils' access to a device**



Source: PPP Feb 2021 Wave 7. C2; “Do you have access to a laptop, tablet or computer that you can personally use to study for at least 3 hours per day?” All pupils (n= 1,537) FSM-eligible pupils (n=296) BAME pupils (n=336) Single parent household pupils (n=109)

White pupils were more likely than BAME pupils to report having access (98% vs. 95%), as were non FSM-eligible pupils compared to FSM-eligible pupils (98% vs. 93%).

In December 2020, 94% of parents surveyed reported that their child had access to a laptop, tablet, or computer that they could use for at least 3 hours a day, an increase compared to the 88% that said this in August. This was higher among parents of secondary pupils (97% vs. 92% among primary parents) and lower among parents of FSM-eligible pupils (83% vs. 96% among other parents) or of pupils with SEND (91% vs. 94% among pupils without SEND).

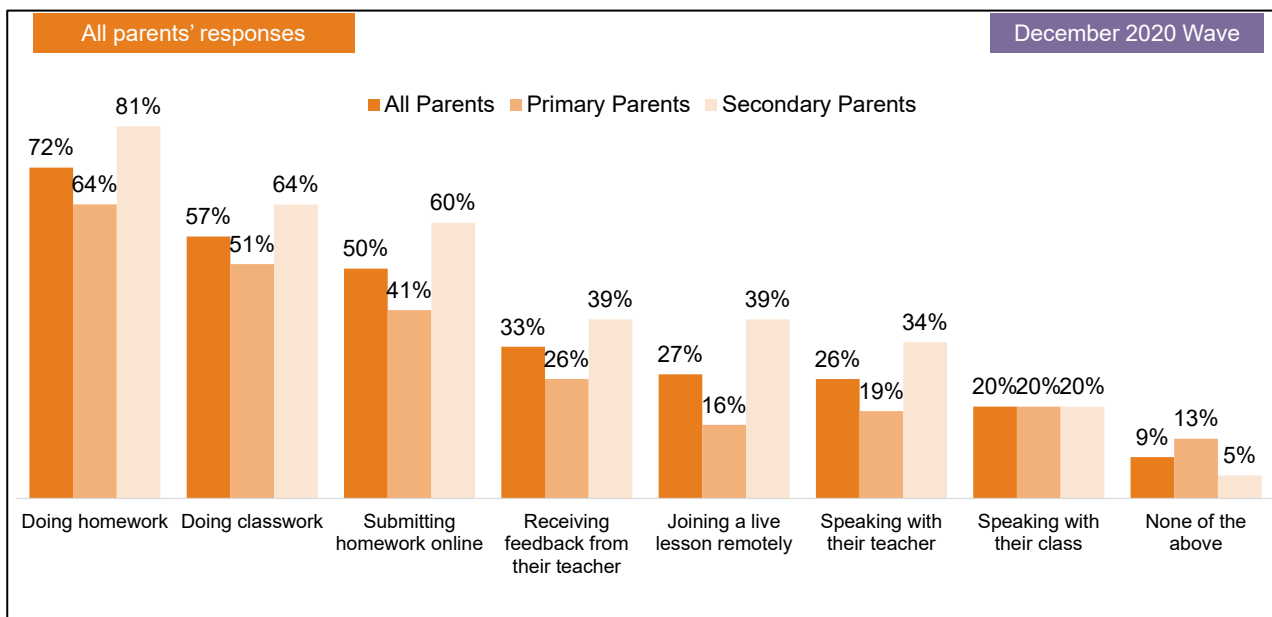


One-in-ten parents (10%) reported that their child had been given a device such as a laptop, and one-in-ten (10%) also reported that their child had been given help to access the internet. Parents of the following groups of pupils were more likely to say their child had been given a device:

- Secondary pupils (12% vs. 8% among parents of primary pupils)
- Those in urban areas (10% vs. 7% in rural areas)
- BAME (17% vs. 7% among parents of White pupils). They were also more likely to report being given access to the internet (14% vs. 9%)
- Parents of children eligible for FSM (17% vs. 8% among non-FSM-eligible pupils).

Parents of pupils that were given a device or internet access were asked what their child used it for. As shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, parents most commonly reported that it was used for doing homework (72%), followed by classwork (57%), followed by submitting homework (50%).

**Figure 49. What pupils used internet access or device for**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, C20\_1: “Has [PUPILNAME] used the device or internet connection for any of the following?” Parents of pupils given a device or internet access (n=549), primary parents (n=235), secondary parents (n=314).

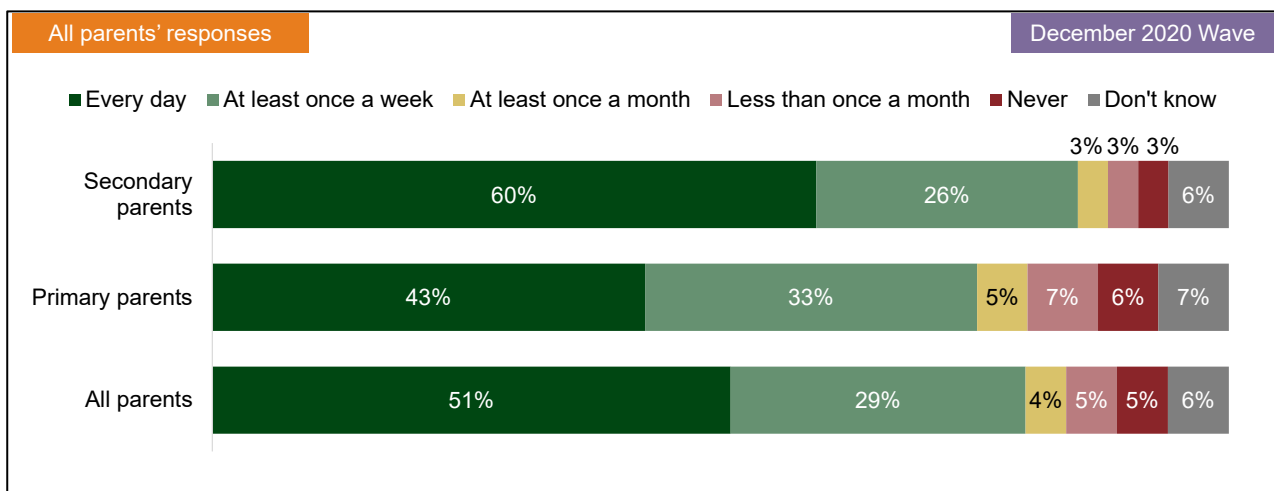
Parents of secondary pupils were more likely than primary parents to say their child used the device/internet for all the listed purposes other than speaking with their class (where there were no differences between the two groups).

Parents of pupils with SEND were less likely than parents of pupils without SEND to say their child used the internet/device for doing classwork (48% vs. 59%), receiving feedback from their teacher (22% vs. 35%), or joining a live lesson remotely (16% vs. 29%).

Parents of pupils eligible for FSM were less likely than those not eligible for FSM say their child used the device/internet to submit homework (42% vs. 53%).

As shown in Figure 50 **Error! Reference source not found.**, four-in-five parents (80%) of pupils given a device or internet said that their child used it at least once a week or more. Parents of secondary pupils were more likely than primary parents to say that their child used the device/internet every day (60% vs. 43%). Overall, just 5% of parents said the child never used the device or internet access provided.

**Figure 50. How often pupils used the device/internet they were given**



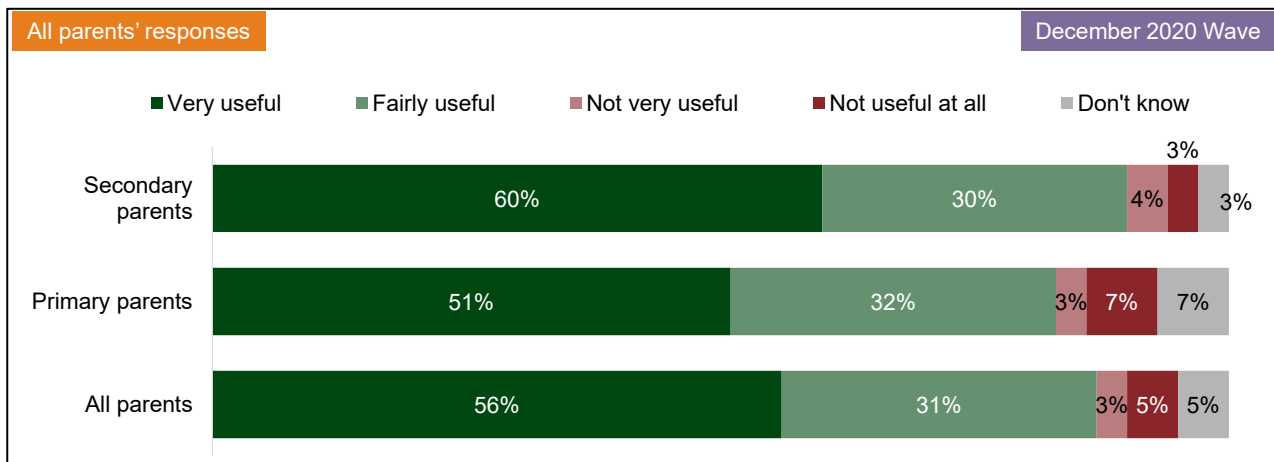
Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, C20\_2: "How often, if at all, has your child used the device or internet connection they have been provided?" Parents of pupils given a device or internet access (n=549), primary parents (n=235), secondary parents (n=314).

Parents of the following groups of pupils were more likely to use the device/internet they were given every day:

- Female pupils (58% vs. 45% among male pupils)
- BAME pupils (63% vs. 43% among White pupils)
- Pupils without SEND (53% vs. 41% among pupils with SEN).

As shown in Figure 51, almost 9 out of 10 (87%) parents of pupils that were given a device said that it was useful to support their child’s education.

**Figure 51. Usefulness of device given to pupil**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, C17C: “How useful, if at all, do you think this device has been to support [PUPILNAME]’s education?” Parents of pupils given a device (n=285), primary parents (n=105), secondary parents (n=180).

Parents of pupils in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to say that the device had been useful to their child’s education (96% vs. 85%).

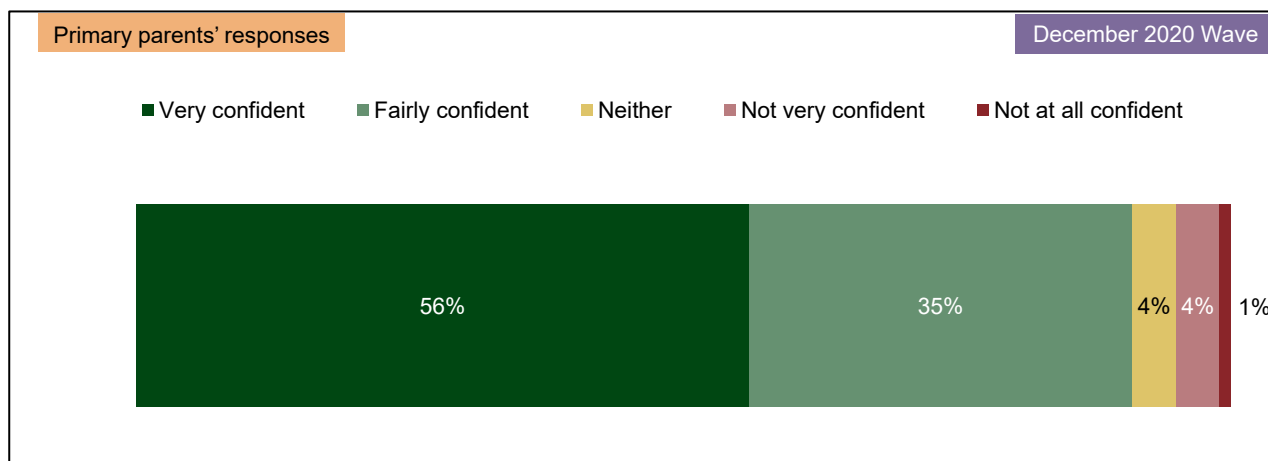
## Literacy and Reading at home

The Government remains committed to continuing to raise literacy standards – ensuring all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can read fluently and with understanding. Within the National Curriculum, the Programmes of Study for English have been developed to make clear the importance of reading for pleasure. They emphasise the importance of pupils listening to, discussing and – as their fluency increases – reading for themselves a wide range of stories, poems, plays and information books. Reading for pleasure, both at home and at school, brings a range of benefits. As well as the strong links between reading for pleasure and attainment, there are a number of other positive effects including improved text comprehension and grammar, positive reading attitudes, pleasure in reading in later life, increased general knowledge and character development. Recognising the importance of reading during the disruption to education caused by COVID-19, the English Hubs Programme has continued to support over 850 partner schools throughout the pandemic and will also play a role in supporting wider education recovery. In addition, we held a Reading Together Day on 16 July 2020 to celebrate the benefits of reading and to encourage children and their families to read together. As part of this, DfE published ten top tips to help parents support their children to read.

In December 2020 parents of primary pupils were asked whether they had supported their child's reading at home since the start of September. Almost nine-in-ten (88%) primary parents said they had supported their child's reading, with little variation between sub-groups.

As shown in Figure 52 over nine-in-ten parents (91%) who had supported their child's reading were confident about doing so. Female parents were more likely than male parents to say that they were not confident about supporting their child's reading (5% vs. 1%).

**Figure 52. Primary parents' confidence in supporting their child's reading**

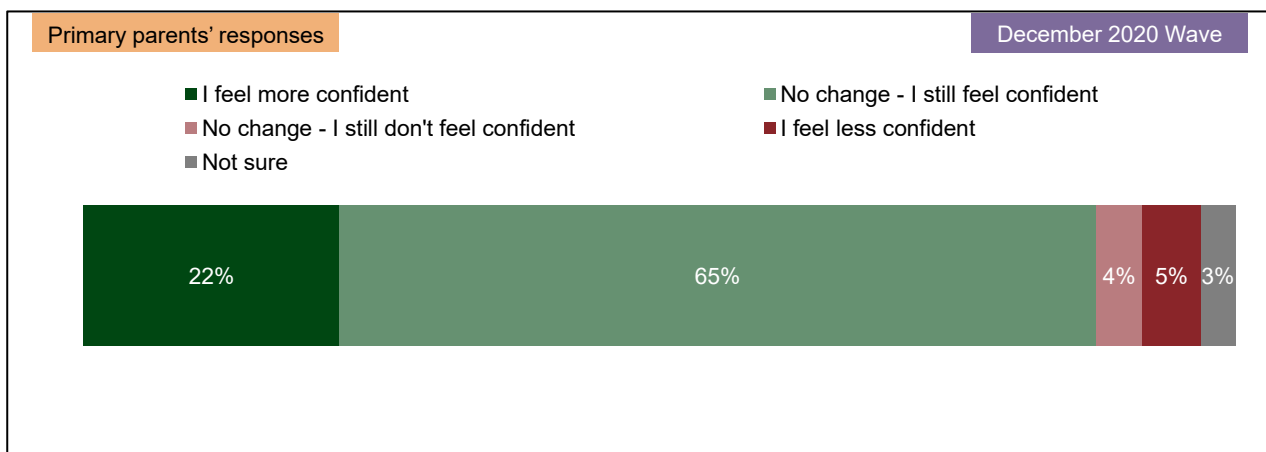


Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AC2: “How confident, if at all, do you feel about supporting [PUPILNAME]’s reading set by their school at home?” Primary parents who have supported their child’s reading at home (n=1,417)

Parents of primary pupils with SEND were less likely to say they were confident supporting their child’s reading (82% vs. 92% of primary parents of pupils without SEND). Similarly, parents of pupils eligible for FSM were less likely than parents of pupils not eligible for FSM to say this (86% vs. 92%).

Primary parents were asked if their confidence in supporting their child with reading had changed between March 2020 and now (December 2020). As shown in Figure 53 around two-thirds (65%) of parents that supported their child’s reading felt that their confidence had not changed, and they were still confident. Around a fifth (22%) felt more confident, and one-in-twenty (5%) felt less confident.

**Figure 53. Primary parents' change in confidence supporting child's reading**



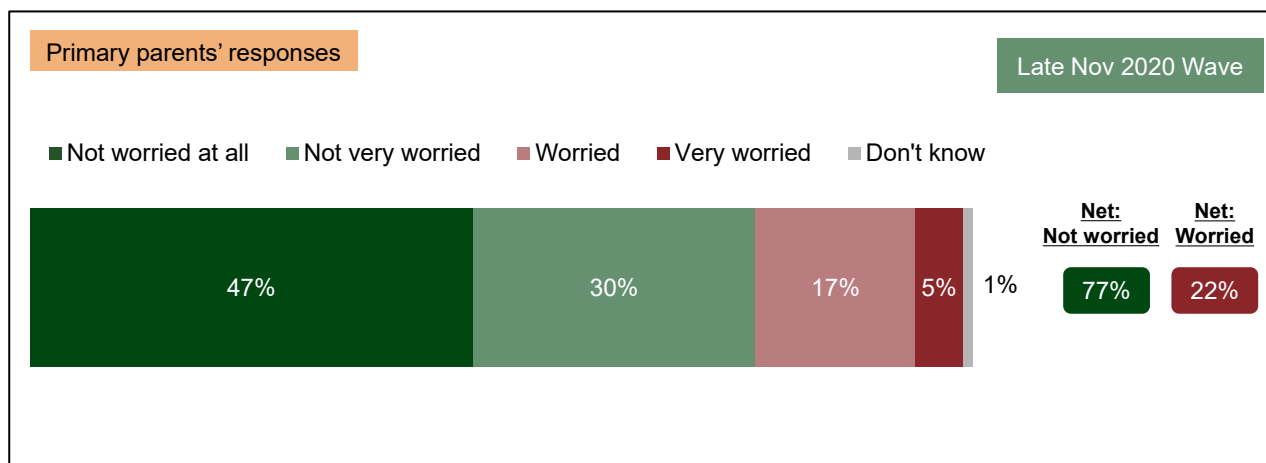
Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AC3: “Has your level of confidence about supporting [PUPILNAME]'s reading at home changed?” Primary parents who have supported their child's reading at home (n=1,417)

Parents of pupils with SEND were more likely than those without SEND to say that they now felt less confident supporting their child's reading (10% vs. 4%). This was also true of parents of pupils eligible for FSM compared to non-FSM-eligible pupils (9% vs. 5%).

### Parents concerns regarding child's progress in reading

When asked in late November 2020, over one-in-five (22%) year 1-6 parents were worried about their child's progress in reading, with one-in-twenty (5%) very worried.

**Figure 54. Primary parents' concerns regarding their child's progress in reading**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5, Y1: “Given the impact of COVID-19 and the disruption to education, how worried, if at all, do you feel about your child's progress in reading?”  
All year 1 - 6 parents (n=1,697).

The following parents were more likely to be worried about their child's progress in reading:

- Urban parents (23% compared with 17% rural)
- Unemployed parents (34% compared with 19% of employed parents)
- Parents of BAME pupils (33% compared with 18% of parents of White pupils)
- Parents of pupils with SEND (49% compared with 18% of parents of pupils without SEND)
- Parents of FSM-eligible pupils (31% compared with 20% of non-FSM-eligible pupils).

## Impact of COVID-19

There were a variety of difficulties parents and pupils may have experienced due to the pandemic. It was important to understand how these difficulties may have affected parents and pupils.

### Experience of difficulties during the pandemic

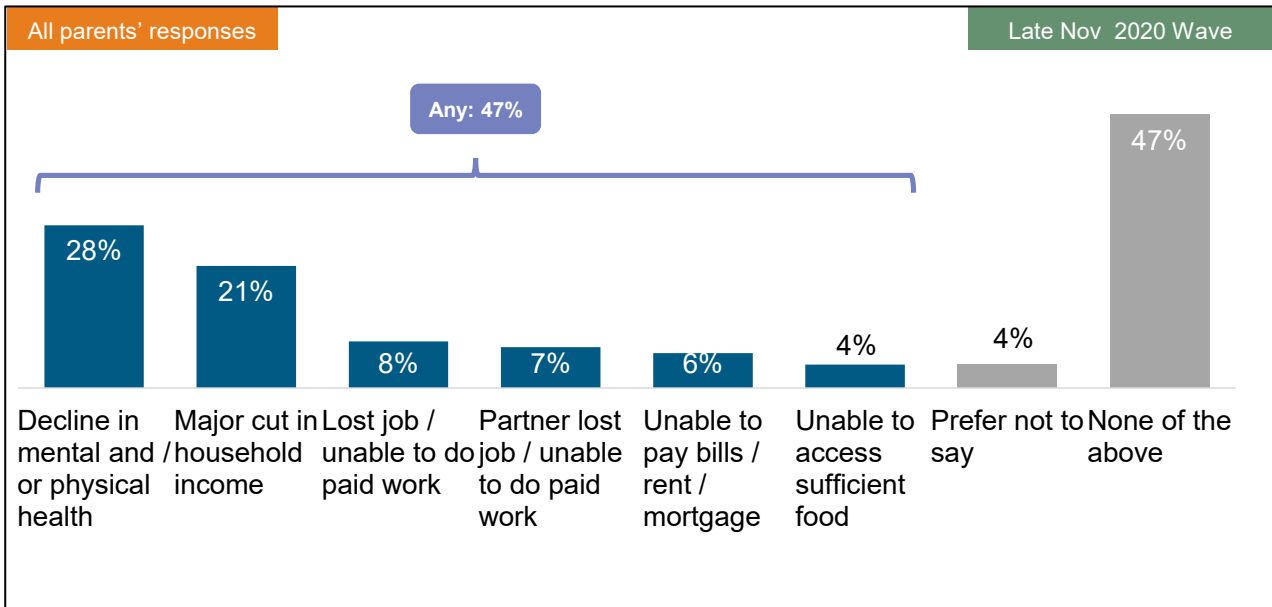
In November 2020, parents were asked about the difficulties they had faced during the pandemic. Almost half (47%) reported experiencing at least one of the seven events presented to them because of COVID-19 (these events are shown in Figure 55). The most commonly experienced was a decline in mental or physical health (28%), followed closely by major cut in household income (21%).

Parents of primary school pupils were more likely than parents of secondary school pupils to have experienced a decline in mental or physical health (29% vs. 26%). This was also more likely amongst parents in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber (35%, 33% vs. 28% overall).

Although less likely to have experienced a major cut in household income (17% vs. 22%), parents of FSM-eligible pupils were more likely than parents of non-FSM-eligible pupils to have been unable to access sufficient food (15% vs. 2%) and been unable to pay bills (12% vs. 4%). They were also more likely to have experienced a decline in mental or physical health (36% vs. 26%).



**Figure 55. Parents' experience of difficulties during the pandemic**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5, K3: “Which of the following, if any, have you experienced due to the COVID-19 outbreak?” All parents (n=3,388). Answer option ‘Evicted / lost accommodation’ not shown as selected by <0.5% of parents.

BAME parents were more likely than White parents to have lost their job/been unable to do paid work (11% vs. 8%), and/or to have experience a major cut in household income (25% vs. 21%).

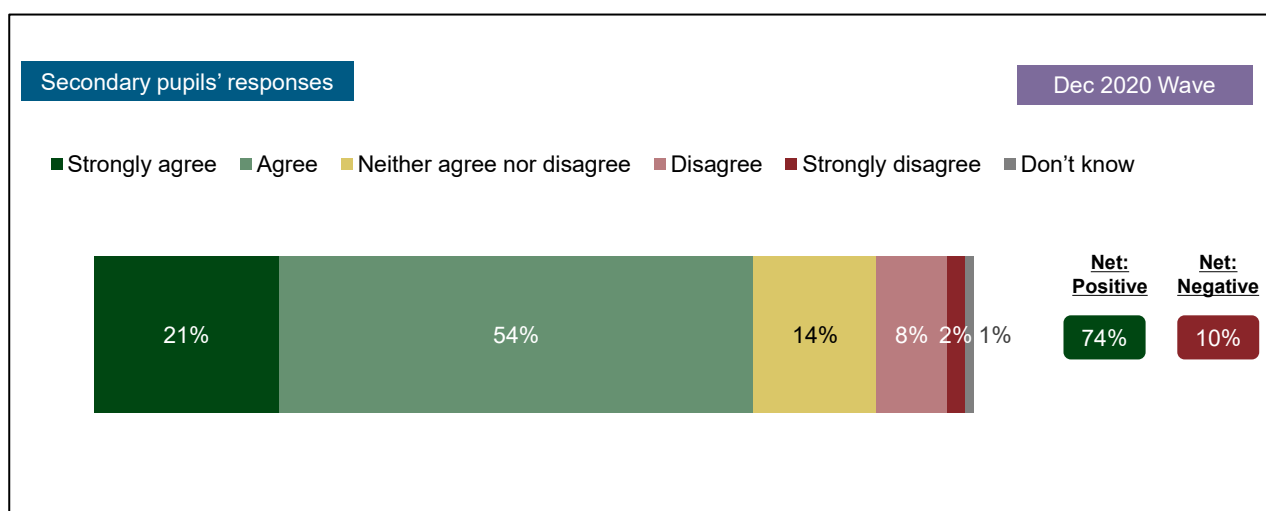
## Experiences of school: December 2020

Children and young people have had a very different experience of school this academic year, due to the pandemic. Understanding their experiences and how they were different to prior to the pandemic was important in understanding how the pandemic affected them.

### Ability to keep up with class and homework

In December 2020, pupils were asked about whether they had been able to keep up with class and homework in the autumn term (academic year 2020/21). As shown in Figure 56 and Figure 57, three-quarters agreed they had been able to keep up in class (74%), with seven-in-ten agreeing they have been able to keep up with their homework (70%). One-in-ten disagreed that they have been able to keep up in class, with 14% feeling the same about keeping up with homework.

**Figure 56. Percentage of pupils who have been able to keep up in class**



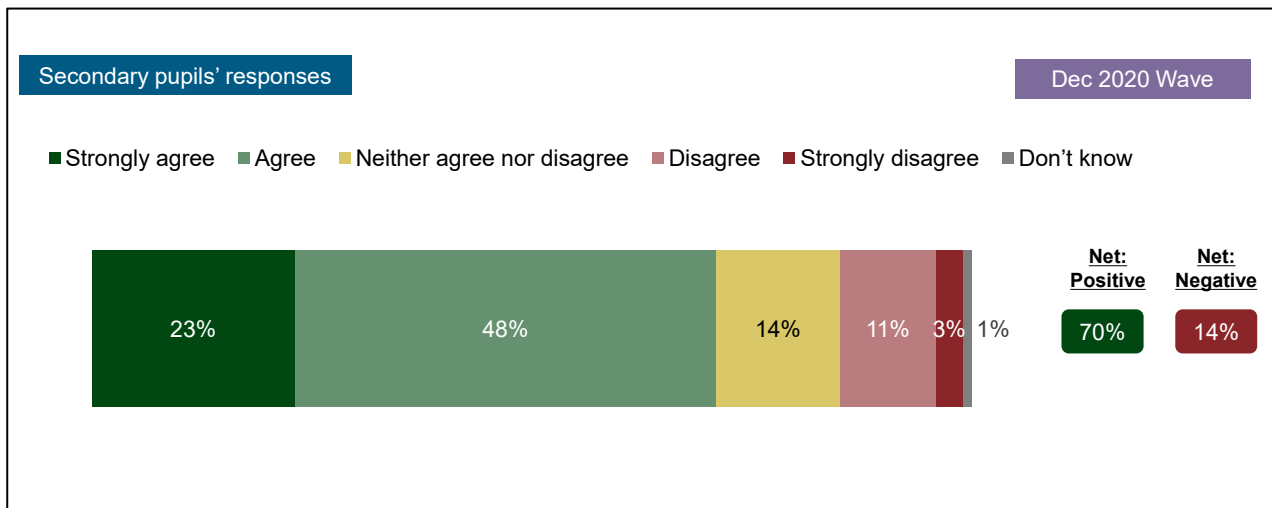
Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AB1\_1: "Thinking about your experiences at school this term, do you generally agree or disagree with the following statements? I have been able to keep up in class?" All pupils who have attended school this term (n=1,540).

Whether pupils felt they had been able to keep up in class varied, with the following more likely to agree that they had:

- Younger pupils (years 7-10) compared to older pupils (years 11-13) (78% vs. 68%)
- Male pupils compared to female pupils (77% vs. 72%)

- Non-FSM-eligible pupils compared to FSM-eligible pupils (77% vs. 63%)
- Pupils without SEND compared to pupils with SEND (77% vs. 60%)
- Pupils who attended school every day in the past two weeks (81%) compared to those who attended most days (63%) or some days (62%).

**Figure 57. Percentage of pupils who have been able to keep up with their homework**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AB\_2: “Thinking about your experiences at school this term, do you generally agree or disagree with the following statements? I have been able to keep up with my homework?” All pupils who have attended school this term (n=1,540).

Similarly, whether pupils felt they had been able to keep up with their homework also varied across pupils. The following were more likely to agree:

- Younger pupils (years 7-10) compared to older pupils (years 11-13) (74% vs. 64%)
- Male pupils compared to female pupils (73% vs. 67%)
- Non-FSM-eligible pupils compared to FSM-eligible pupils (72% vs. 59%)
- Pupil without SEND pupils compared to pupils with SEND (72% vs. 61%)
- Pupils who attended school every day in the past two weeks (76%) compared to those who attended most days (60%) or some days (58%).

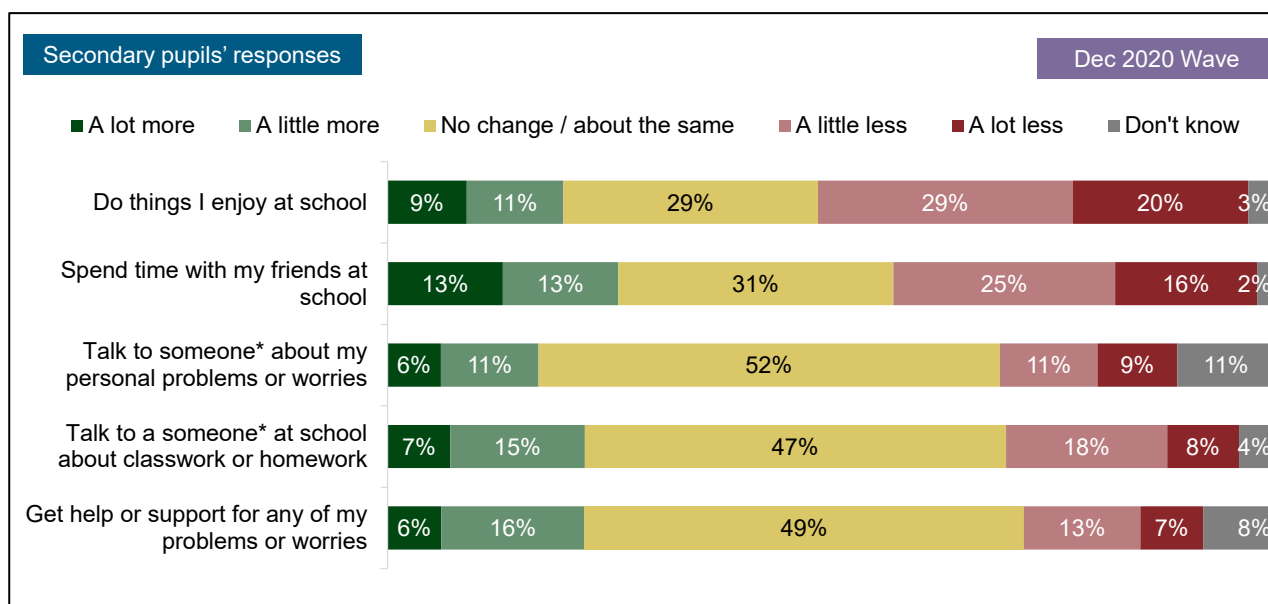
Unlike keeping up in class, BAME pupils were less likely to agree (compared to White pupils) that they have been able to keep up with their homework (67% vs. 72%).

## Change in experiences and support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

In December 2020 pupils were asked, in the context of COVID-19: “Thinking about your experiences at school this term, do you think you are able to do the following things more or less than before the pandemic, or has there been no change?”.

Half of all secondary pupils reported being able to do the things they enjoy (at school) less (48%), whilst one-in-four said they have not been able to spend as much time with their friends this term (41%). A fifth felt they were less able to get help or support for / talk to a teacher or other adult at school about a problem this term (20% respectively).

**Figure 58. Percentage of pupils who have experienced different things more or less this term**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AB2\_X: “Thinking about your experiences at school this term, do you think you are able to do the following things more or less than before the pandemic, or has there been no change?” All pupils who have attended school this term (n=1,540).

\*Someone referred to “a teacher or other adults at school

Female pupils were more likely to report that they had been *less* able to experience these things than male pupils. For example, a quarter (25%) said they had been *less* able to get help for a problem or worry this term (compared to 17% of male pupils) and half reported being *less* able to do the things they enjoy (51% vs. 45%).

A larger proportion of FSM-eligible pupils than non-FSM-eligible pupils reported that they had been less able to talk to a teacher or other adults at school about their personal problems or worries (25% vs. 20%).

In terms of those experiencing these things *more*, year 12 pupils were more likely than average to say they have been able to do things they enjoy at school *more* (29% vs. 20%) and talk to a teacher or other adults at school about classwork or homework *more* (35% vs. 22%).

BAME pupils were more likely than white pupils to have reported being able to do the following *more*:

- Do things I enjoy at school (25% vs. 18%)
- Spend time with my friends at school (33% vs. 24%)
- Talk to a teacher or other adults at school about classwork or homework (28% vs. 21%)
- Get help or support for any of my problems or worries (29% vs. 20%).

## Subject choices

This chapter examines year 7-10 pupils' responses to questions asked in December 2020 regarding their GCSE subject choices (subjects covered in detail are Art and Computer Science), as well as specific questions to year 10-11 pupils about their future Maths studies.

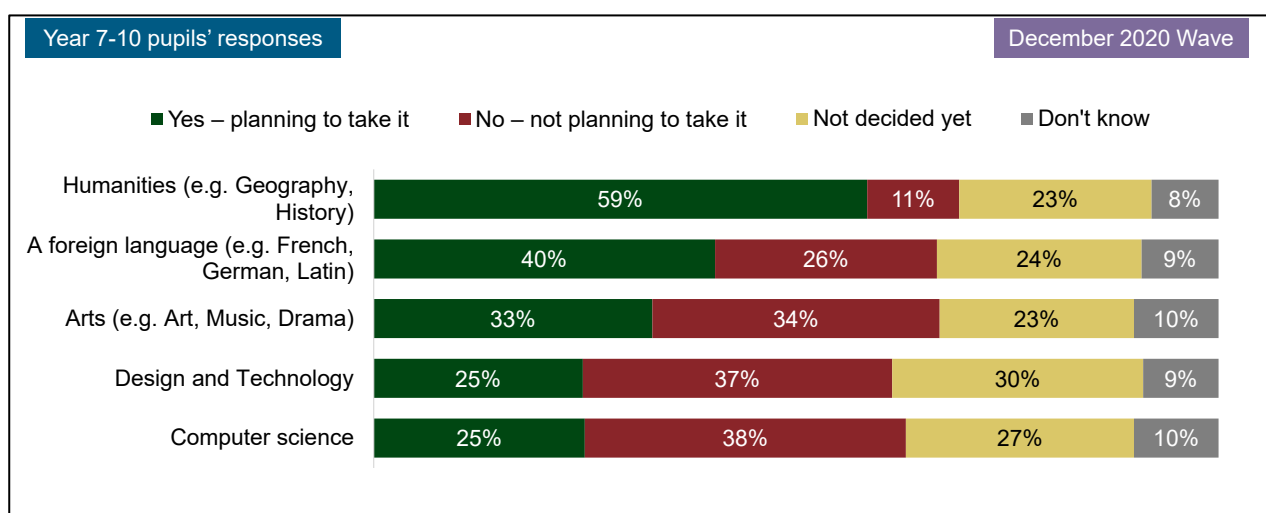
### GCSE Subject Choice

Pupils in year 7-10 were asked about whether they were planning to study Arts, Foreign Language, Design and Technology, Humanities or Computer Science GCSEs.

Humanities subjects were the most popular, 3 in 5 (59%) pupils reported planning to take a Humanities subject (e.g. geography or history). The least popular subjects were Computer Science and Design and Technology - a quarter (25%) of pupils reported they were planning to take each of these subjects.

'Not decided yet' was selected in around a quarter of cases for all subjects reflecting the range of year groups who were asked the question (with decisions about which GCSEs to study typically finalised year 8 or 9). Pupils in year 7 were significantly more likely not to have made up their mind yet (around half of all year 7 pupils selected 'not decided yet' for each subject).

**Figure 59. GCSE Subject choices**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AA1: “Are you, planning to take a GCSE in any of the following?” All year 7-10 pupils (n=1,006).

For each GCSE subject, the response differed significantly by gender. Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to report planning to take GCSEs in Foreign Languages (50% vs. 33%), Arts (45% vs. 24%) or Humanities (66% vs. 33%) whereas male pupils were more likely to report planning to take GCSEs in Design and Technology (28% vs. 20%) and Computer Science (37% vs. 9%).

BAME pupils in year 7-10 were more likely to report planning to take a GCSE in Computer Science compared to White pupils (32% vs. 23%), this was the only significant difference in future GCSE subject choice by ethnicity.

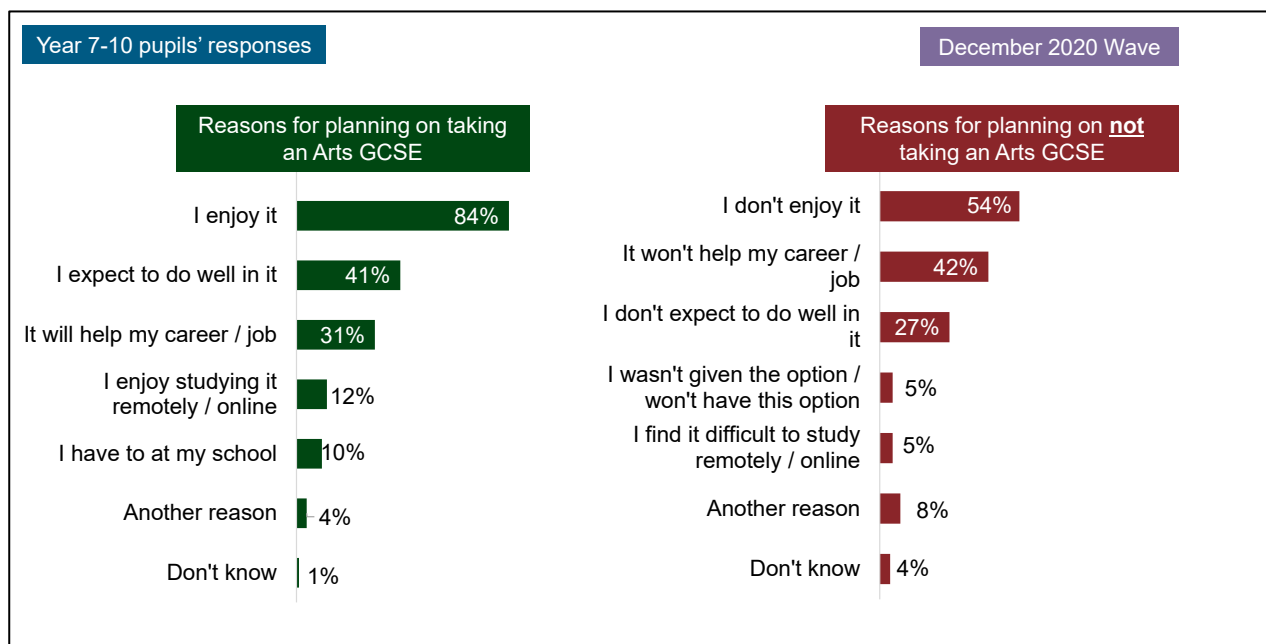
Pupils who were not eligible for FSM were more likely to report planning to take GCSEs in Humanities (60% vs. 50%) or Foreign Languages (42% vs. 32%), compared to FSM-eligible pupils.

## **GCSEs in Arts**

A third (33%) of all year 7-10 pupils planned to take a GCSE in the Arts (e.g. Art, Music, Drama). The main reason given for planning to take a GCSE in the Arts was because they enjoy it (84%), followed by the fact they expect to do well in it (41%). One-in-ten (10%) pupils reported planning to take a GCSE in the Arts is because it was compulsory at their school.

A third (34%) of all pupils in year 7-10 did not plan to take a GCSE in the Arts. The main reason given for deciding not to take an Arts GCSE was that they did not enjoy the subjects (54%), followed by reporting that it would not help their job or career (42%).

**Figure 60. Reasons for planning to take a GCSE in an Arts subject**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AA2 / AA4: “Which of the following reasons, if any, is why you plan to take a GCSE in Arts (e.g. Art, Music, Drama)? / Which of the following reasons, if any, is why you don't plan to take a GCSE in Arts (e.g. Art, Music, Drama)?” All year 7-10 pupils planning to take GCSE Art (n=257), All year 7-10 pupils not planning on taking GCSE Art (n=261)

There were no significant differences in reasons for deciding to take an Arts GCSE by demographics however there were some differences in why pupils did not plan to take GCSEs in the Arts:

- Non-FSM-eligible pupils who were not planning to take an Arts GCSE were more likely to report this was based not enjoying the subject, compared to FSM-eligible pupils (57% vs. 34%). Conversely, FSM-eligible pupils not planning on taking an Arts GCSE were more three times more likely to report that this was based on not being given the option, compared to non-FSM-eligible pupils (12% vs. 4%)
- White pupils were almost twice as likely as BAME pupils to report not taking an Art GCSE because they did not enjoy it (60% vs. 36%).

## GCSE in Computer Science

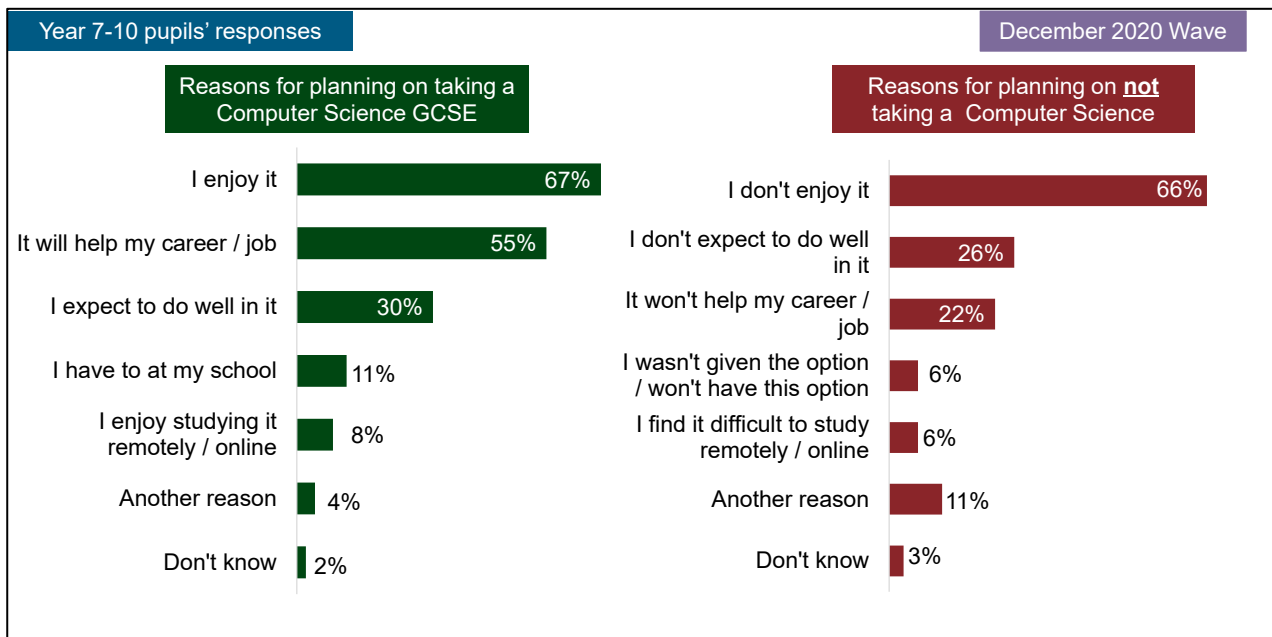
A quarter (25%) of all year 7-10 pupils plan to take a GCSE in Computer Science. The main reason given for planning to take a GCSE in Computer Science was that they enjoyed it (67%) and that they thought it would help with their career / job (55%).

Around two-in-five pupils (38%) reported not planning to take a GCSE in Computer Science. The main reason given for not planning on taking this GCSE was that they did



not enjoy the subject (66%), followed by not expecting to do well in it (26%) and thinking it will not help with a career (22%).

**Figure 61. Reasons for planning to take a GCSE in Computer Science**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AA3 / AA5: "Which of the following reasons, if any, is why you plan to take a GCSE in Computer Science / Which of the following reasons, if any, is why you don't plan to take a GCSE in Computer Science?" All year 7-10 pupils planning to take GCSE Computer Science (n=162), All year 7-10 pupils not planning on taking GCSE Art (n=349)

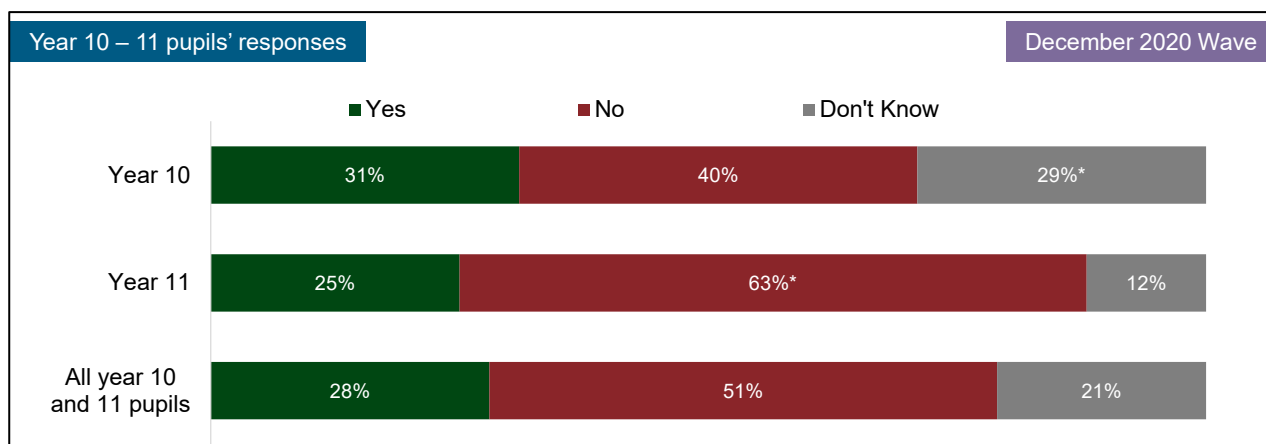
There were no significant difference by demographics in why pupils decided to take a GCSE in Computer Science however there were some differences in reasons pupils did not plan to take this GCSE;

- Female pupils were more likely to say it was because they did not enjoy it (72% vs. 55%) and were twice as likely to report that it was because they did not expect to do well in it (30% vs. 16%)
- White pupils were more likely than BAME pupils to say the reason was not enjoying it (71% vs. 48%), but less likely to report that it was because they were not given the option (4% vs. 13%), or that they found it hard to study remotely (3% vs. 13%).
- Non-FSM-eligible pupils were more likely to say the reason was not enjoying it compared to FSM-eligible pupils (70% vs. 47%).

## Future Maths studies

Just over a quarter (28%) of pupils currently in year 10 and 11 plan to continue studying Maths after they finish their GCSEs. Half (51%) did not plan to continue, but a fifth (21%) did not know. Pupils in year 10 were twice as likely as year 11 pupils to report not knowing yet (29% vs. 12%).

**Figure 62. Pupils intentions to continue maths after GCSEs**

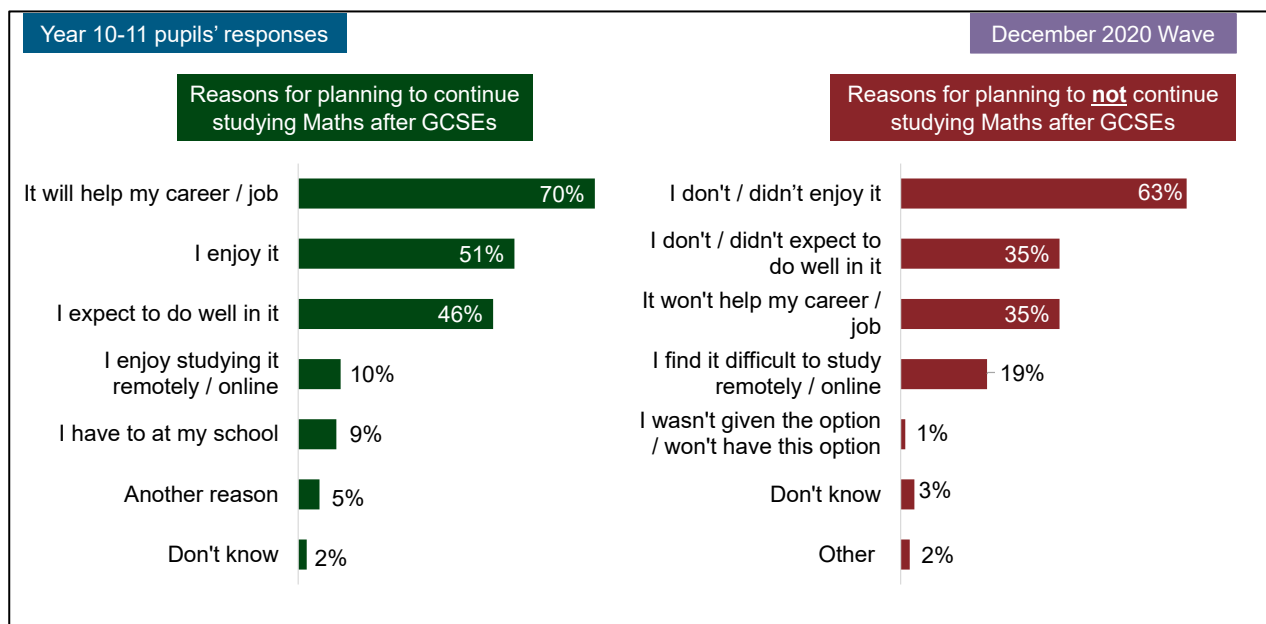


Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AA6: "After you finish your GCSEs, do you plan to continue to study Maths?" All year 10-11 pupils (n=551)

Male pupils were more likely to report planning to continue studying Maths after GCSEs compared to female pupils (33% vs. 23%). More than half of all non-FSM-eligible pupils reported not planning to continue Maths (54%), significantly more than the 39% of FSM-eligible pupils planning not to continue.

The 28% of pupils in year 10 and 11 who planned to continue Maths studies were asked why they planned to continue. The main reason given was that it would help their career (70%), followed by the fact they enjoy it (51%).

**Figure 63. Reasons for planning to continue/not continue to study Maths**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, AA7/AA8 “Which of the following reasons, if any, is why you don’t plan on studying maths beyond GCSE?” / Which of the following reasons, if any, is why you plan to study Maths beyond GCSE? All year 10-11 pupils planning to take Maths after GCSE (n=147), all year 10-11 pupils not planning to take Maths after GCSE (287)

Non-FSM-eligible pupils were almost twice as likely as FSM-eligible pupils to state that they were planning to continue to study Maths because they were expecting to do well in it (51% vs. 29%). This was also the case for pupils living in rural areas compared to urban pupils (64% vs. 42%).

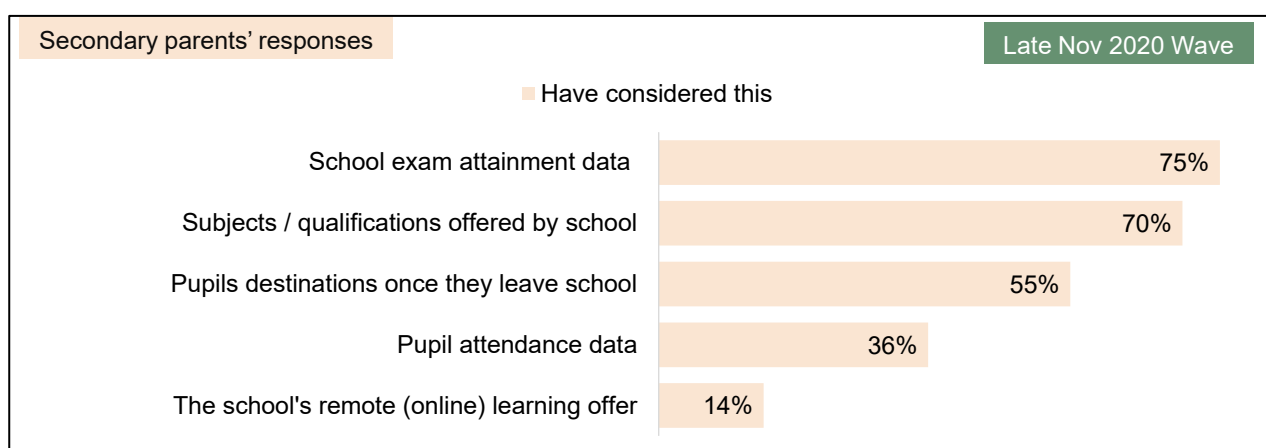
The 51% of all pupils who reported they were not planning to continue Maths after GCSEs were asked why this was. The most common reasons given were that they did not enjoy it (63%), they didn’t expect to do well in it (35%), or they don’t think it will help their career (35%).

Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to report not planning to continue Maths after GCSEs because they do not expect to do well in it (42% vs. 26%). Nearly half (48%) of FSM-eligible pupils who reported not planning to continue Maths after GCSEs stated that this was because they felt they did not need it for their career, significantly higher than 32% of non-FSM-eligible pupils who reported this.

## Secondary school choices

This chapter examines responses from parents regarding secondary school choices and their use of published information to support their decision making. At the time of asking the department was developing proposals for alternative accountability-related information that could be provided to support school choice (in the absence of school level attainment data). Detailed findings helped develop and refine proposals for alternative information by providing feedback on types of information used by parents.

**Figure 64. Published information sources that secondary parents considered during the secondary school application process**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5, Z1\_2: "Thinking about your children that have been through the secondary school application process, which of the following information, if any, did you consider when deciding where to apply?" All secondary parents who had been through the secondary school application process (n=1,159)

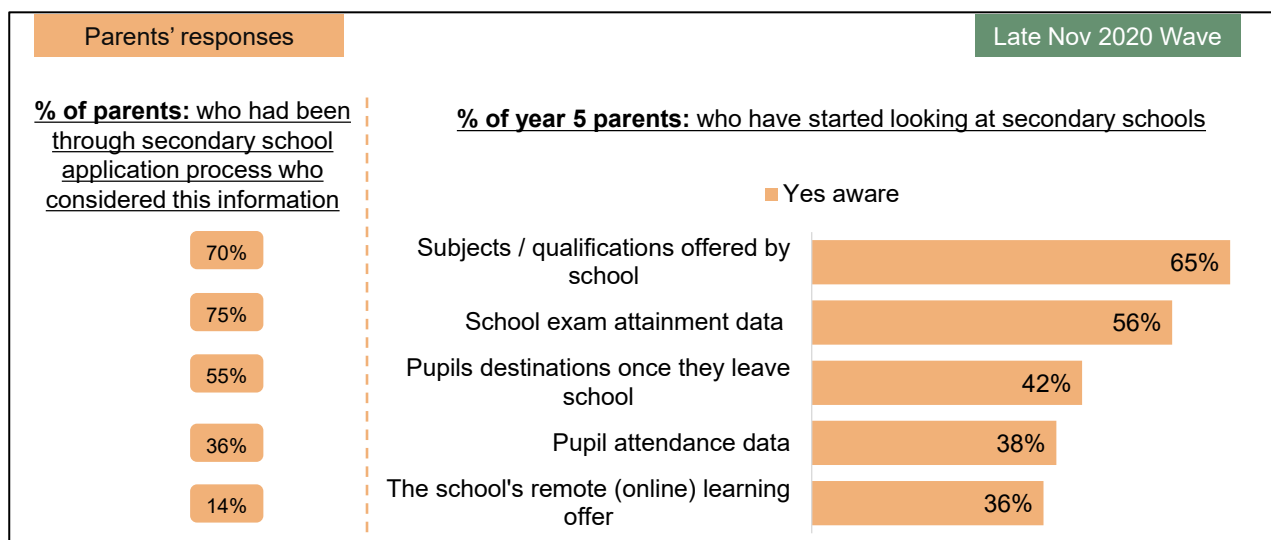
As shown in Figure 64 above, of the two-thirds of secondary school parents (67%) that had been through the secondary school application process, three-quarters (75%) had considered school exam data when applying, compared to 14% who had considered the school's remote learning offer. It is worth noting that secondary school applications needed to be made by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 for admission the following academic year, so all of the parents surveyed should have made their applications before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely than non-FSM parents to have considered pupil attendance data (43% vs. 35%) and the school's remote learning offer (23% vs. 13%), but less likely to have considered school exam data (62% vs. 78%).

Parents of pupils with SEND were less likely than those of pupils without SEND to have considered subjects / qualifications offered by the school (62% vs. 71%)

BAME parents were more likely than White parents to have considered the following information: subjects offered (81% vs. 67%), pupil destinations once they leave school (73% vs. 51%), pupil attendance data (56% vs. 31%) and remote offering (31% vs. 10%).

**Figure 65. Published information sources that parents are aware of when considering secondary school choices – those that have been through it, those that are set to go through it**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5, Z1\_2 / Z2\_2: “Thinking about your children that have been through the secondary school application process, which of the following information, if any, did you consider when deciding where to apply?” Secondary parents who had been through the secondary school application process (n=1159) / “Which of the following information, if any, are you aware of for the secondary school(s) you are considering for your child?”, Year 5 parents who have started looking at secondary schools (n=154)

Over half of year 5 parents (57%) had started looking into secondary schools for their child in late November<sup>34</sup>. Of these parents, two-thirds (65%) were aware of the subjects and qualifications offered by the secondary school(s) they were considering. This compares to just over a third (36%) who were aware of the school’s remote learning offer, meaning parents looking at secondary school(s) now (than previously, based on data on the above) may be more likely to consider this information.

Parents in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to be aware of school’s remote learning offer (55% vs. 32%).<sup>35</sup>

For all five information sources, parents with three or more children in their household were more likely to be aware of them.

<sup>34</sup> These parents will need to submit applications for secondary school by 31 October 2021, when their child is in year 6, to start secondary in September 2022

<sup>35</sup> Please note small rural base size (36). Urban base size 118.

## Higher Technical Qualifications

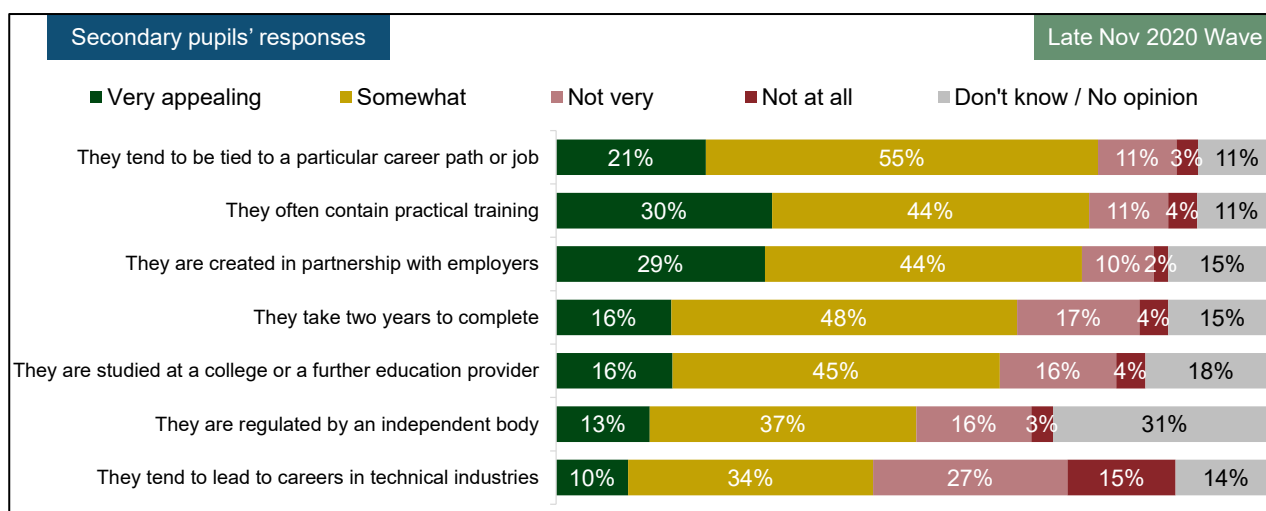
This chapter examines responses from pupils in late November 2020 regarding higher technical qualifications (HTQs).

In late November, a third (34%) of year 12 and 13 pupils had heard of HTQs, and of these pupils almost half (47%) were considering taking one. Some differences amongst different subgroups included:

- FSM-eligible pupils were more likely than non FSM-eligible pupils to have heard of higher technical qualifications (42% vs. 33%).
- Pupils in year 12 were more likely (than those in year 13) to be unsure about whether or not they might take a higher technical qualification (30% vs. 12%).

When thinking about what year 12 and 13 pupils might want to do after school / college, of the features of HTQs tested, the most appealing feature of HTQs is that they tended to be tied to a particular career path or job, with 76% saying this was very or somewhat appealing.

**Figure 66. Year 12 and 13 pupils considerations when deciding what they want to do after school / college**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5, W3: “How appealing, if at all, would the following features be to you when considering what you might want to do after school / college?” Pupils in year 12 and 13 (n=561)

BAME pupils more likely than White pupils (51% vs. 40%) to say that HTQs ‘tend to lead to careers in technical industries’ was appealing. Whilst, year 13 pupils were more likely than year 12 pupils to think the fact HTQs ‘are created in partnership with employers’ was appealing (79% vs. 71%).

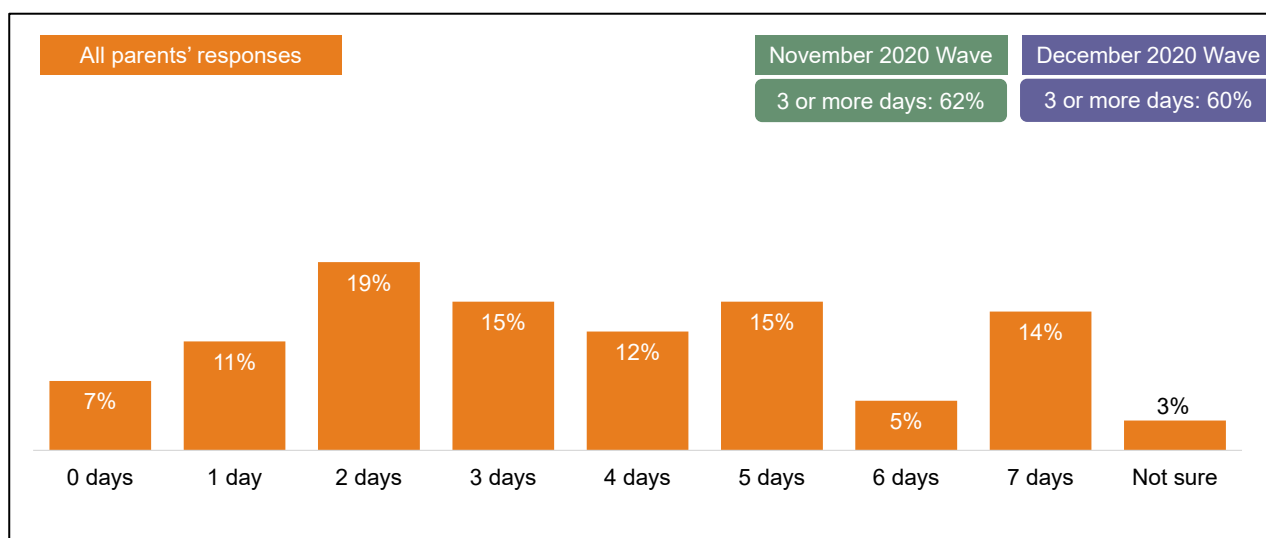
## Physical activity

This chapter reports on parents' perceptions of their child's physical activity, as well as pupils' own perceptions of their physical activity in the last seven days as reported in both November and December 2020.

### Parent's perception of pupil's physical activity

In the December wave, as in November, there continued to be a wide variety in reported physical activity of children from their parents. For example, 7% of parents reported their child had not exercised at all in the last seven days, and around one-in-six (14%) that said they had exercised on each of the last seven days. In December 2020, three-in-five (60%) parents reported their child had exercised on three or more days in the previous seven, an insignificant decrease from the 62% of parents who reported this in November 2020.

**Figure 67. Number of days in last seven that parents report child was physically active**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, V1 "Thinking about the last 7 days, on how many days did [PUPILNAME] take part in sport or physical activity" All parents (n=3,237)

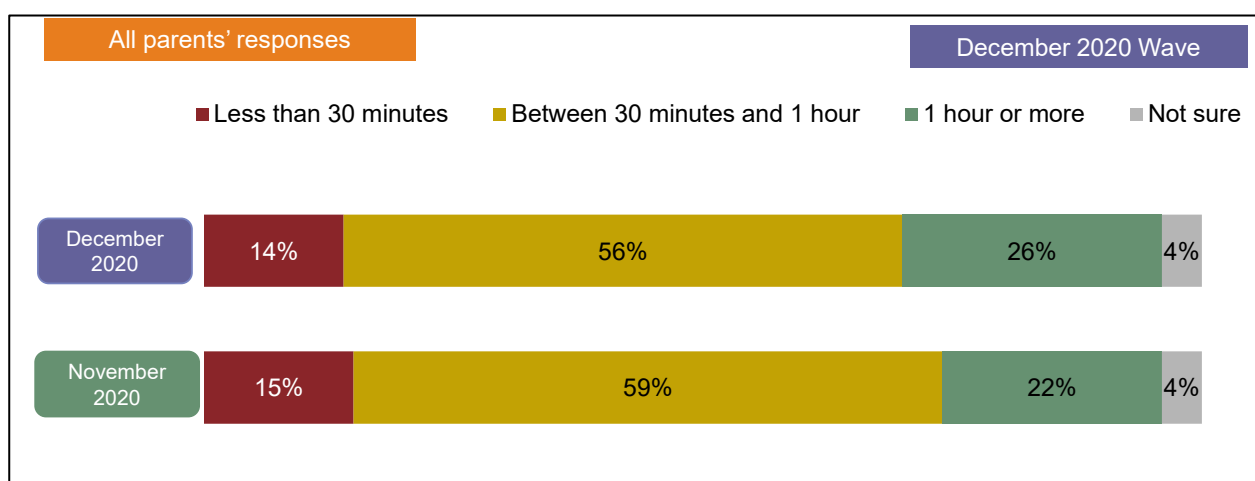
The following groups were more likely to report that their child had taken part in physical exercise on more than three of the last seven days:

- Parents of primary pupils (66% vs. 52% of secondary pupils)
- Parents of White pupils (65% compared with 45% of parents of BAME pupils)

- Parents with a higher household income (72% among those with a household income of £100,000 or more compared with 55% where the income was under £15,000)
- Parents of pupils with no SEND (61% compared with 53% of parents of pupils with SEND)
- Parents of non-FSM-eligible pupils (62% compared with 51% of parents of FSM-eligible pupils)

Parents whose child did at least one day of physical activity were asked how long each session was on average. The most common response (56%) was between 30 minutes to one hour. Parents of BAME pupils were twice as likely to say the average length of time their child spent on physical activity was less than 30 minutes, compared to parents of White pupils (21% vs. 13%).

**Figure 68. Parents report of average length of session of physical activity**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 and Late November Wave 5, V2: “On those days, how much time on average did [PUPILNAME] spend doing sport or physical activity?” All parents whose child did at least 1 day of exercise in the last 7 days W6 (n=3,010), W5 (n=3,149)

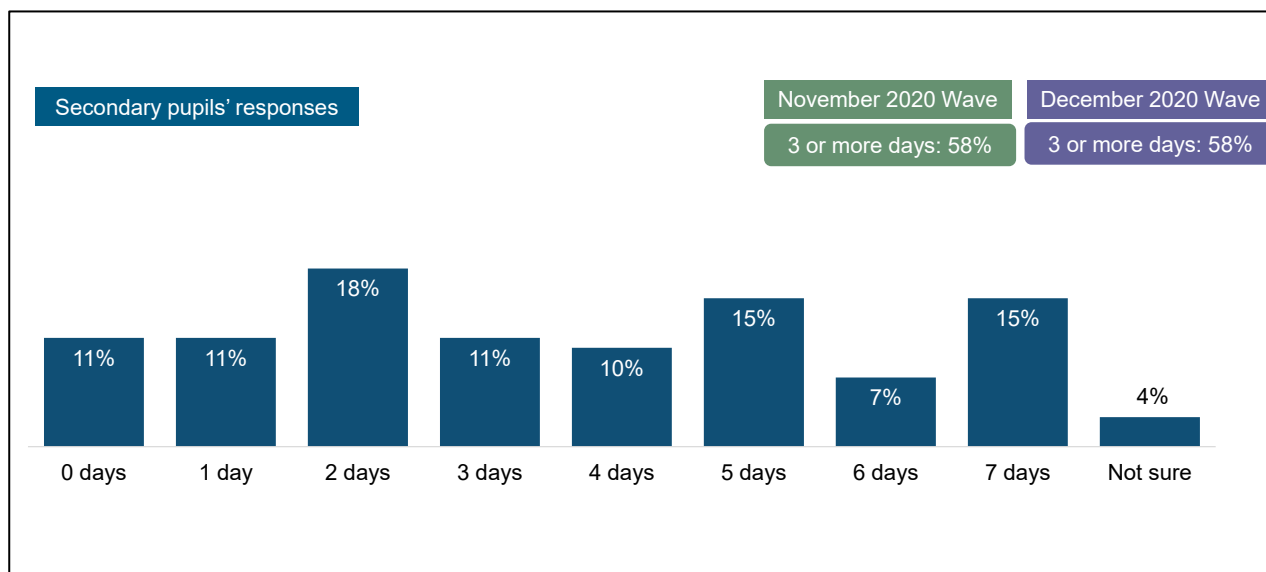
Parents of secondary pupils who did at least one day of activity were more likely to report their child on average spent one hour or more doing sport or physical activities, compared to primary parents (32% vs. 21%).

## Pupils perception of their own physical activity

Pupils reported similar patterns of activity as cited by parents, ranging from just over one-in-ten (11%) who had not exercised at all the last seven days to 15% who had exercised on each of the last seven days. In December 2020, around three-in-five (58%) pupils reported they had exercised on three or more days in the previous seven, no change from the 58% who reported this in November 2020.



**Figure 69. Number of days in the last 7 that pupils report being physically active**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6, V1 “Thinking about the last 7 days, on how many days did you take part in sport or physical activity” All pupils (n=1,555)

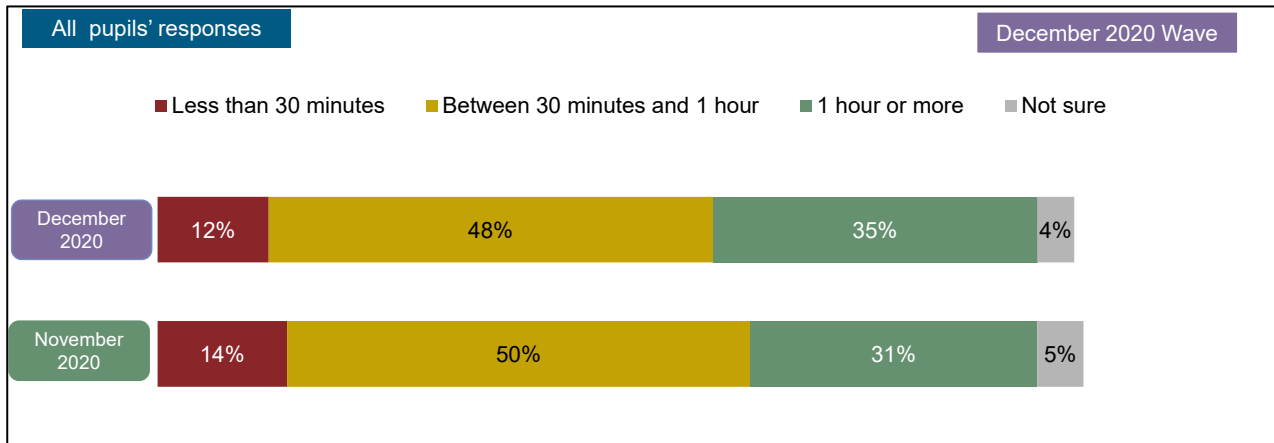
The following groups were more likely to report taking part in physical exercise on more than three of the last seven days:

- Younger pupils (60% of year 7-10 vs. 52% of year 11-13)
- White pupils (62% vs. 44% of BAME pupils)
- Non-FSM-eligible pupils (61% vs. 40% of FSM-eligible pupils)
- Pupils with no SEND (59% vs. 46% of pupils with SEND).

Pupils who did at least one day of physical activity were asked how long each session was on average. The most common response (48%) was between 30 minutes to one hour (the most common session length reported by parents as well).

Similarly to in November 2020, pupils in years 7-10 were more likely than those in years 11-13 to report exercising for more than 3 hours per week (41% vs. 32%), and more likely to report spending an hour or more on average exercising (37% vs. 31%).

**Figure 70. Pupils report of average length of session of physical activity**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 and Late November Wave 5, V2: “On those days, how much time on average did you spend doing sport or physical activity?” All pupils did at least 1 day of exercise in the last 7 days W6 (n=1,350), W5 (n=1,388)

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Pupil mental health and wellbeing is an ongoing priority for the Department for Education. The pandemic and associated lockdown measures are affecting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in a variety of ways. Being in school is likely to be beneficial for many children and young people, while being away from school will likely have had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

At each wave of the PPP, parents and pupils were asked a series of ONS-validated questions about personal wellbeing, including how happy they felt yesterday, their life satisfaction, the extent to which they feel the things they do in life were worthwhile, and their anxiousness levels. DfE is tracking these questions over time to understand how young people and their families are coping with the pandemic.

The questions in this series are asked in a similar way, using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'. The questions ask pupils 'overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?', 'overall, how satisfied are you with your life?', 'overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?' and 'overall how anxious did you feel yesterday?'. Parents are asked the same questions in relation to their child for both happiness and anxiousness.

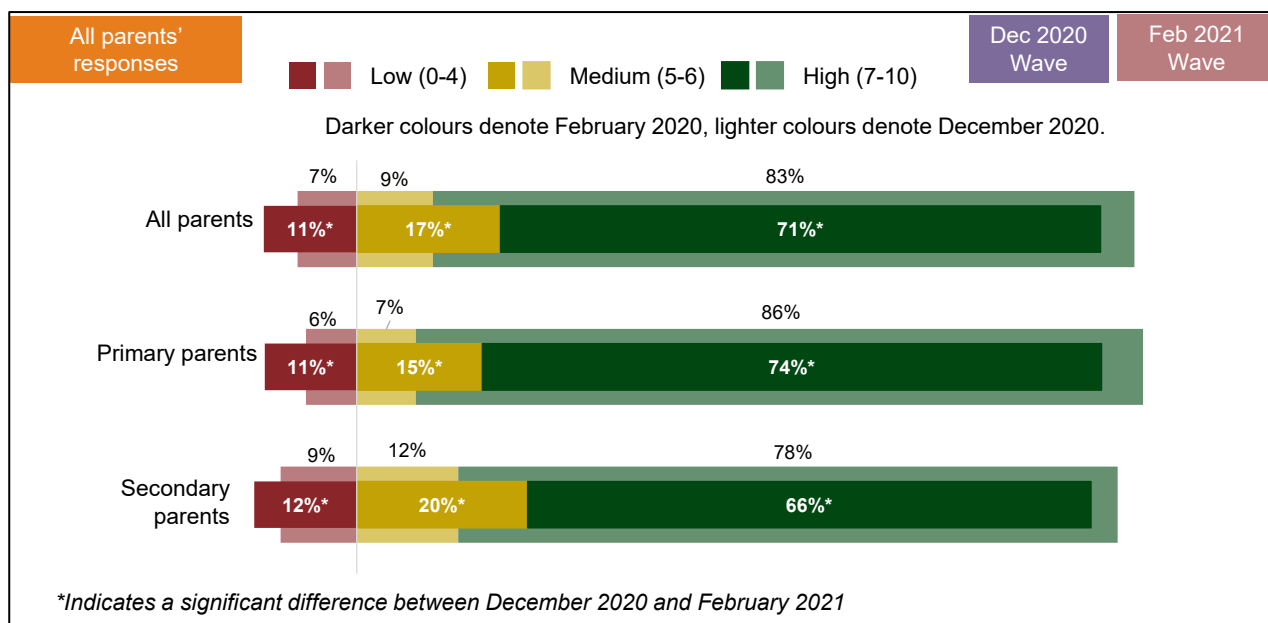
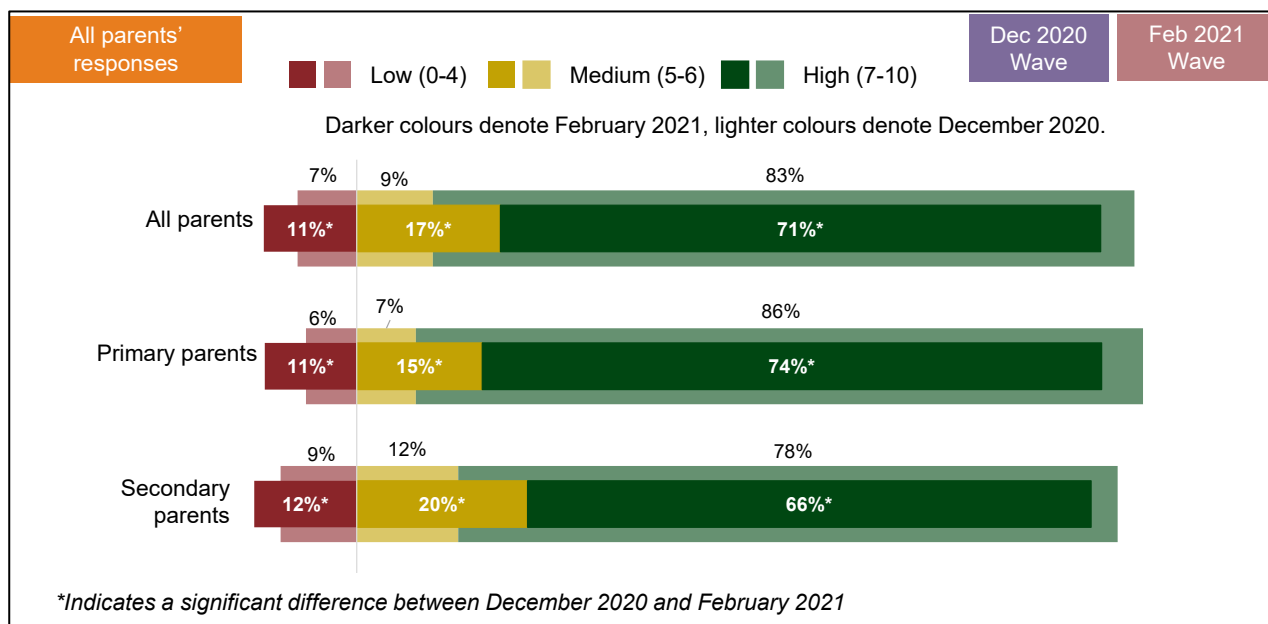
It is important to note that for the first three measures, a high score of 7-10 is a positive score as it suggests high levels of happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, whereas for the anxiousness measure a low score of 0-3 is a positive score as it represents low levels of anxiousness and a high score (6-10) is a negative score for those who were considered anxious.

## Pupil wellbeing

### Parents' views on pupil happiness and feelings of anxiousness

In February 2021, there was a sharp decrease in the happiness levels of pupils as reported by their parents, compared to the previous wave in December 2020. As shown in Figure 71, 71% of parents gave a high score (7-10) for their child's happiness, compared to 83% in December. Consistent with previous waves, primary parents were more likely to give a high score for their child's happiness compared to secondary parents (74% vs. 66%), but both scores reduced during this time (from 86% vs. 78%).

**Figure 71. Parents' views on pupil's happiness**

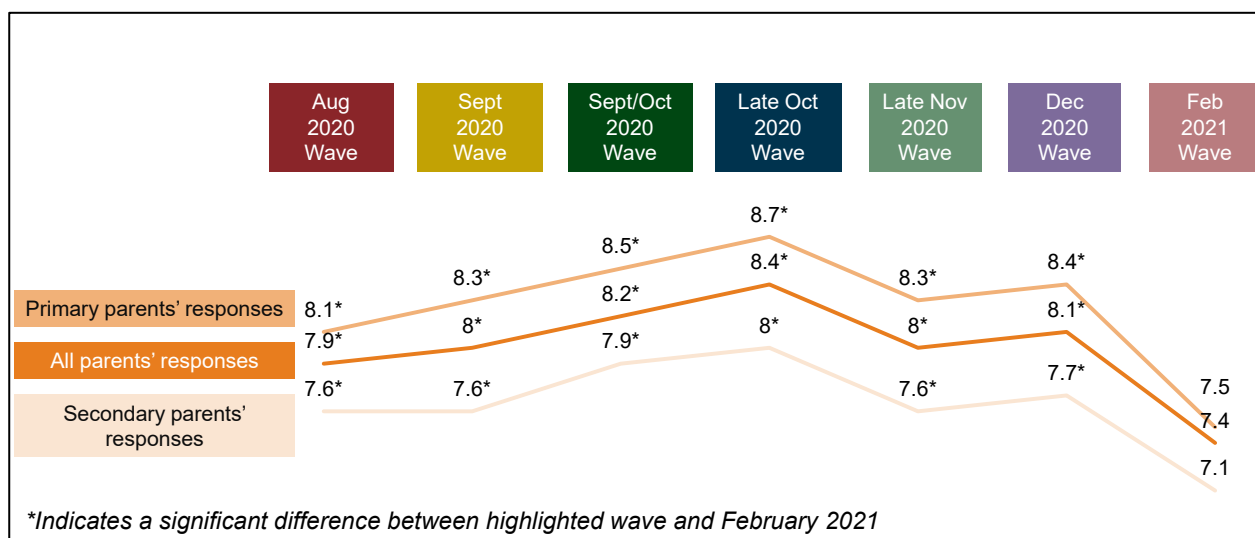


Source: PPP February 2021 and December 2020 Wave, O1: "Overall, how happy did Pupil appear yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'?" All parents (n=3,082/ n = 3,237), primary parents (n=1,541 / n = 1,618), secondary parents (n=1,541 / n = 1,619).

In February 2021, parents reported the lowest happiness mean scores for pupils compared to all previous waves (7.4). As shown in Figure 72, scores of pupil happiness had been increasing each wave between August and late October 2020 (a mean average of 7.9 in August to 8.4 in late October 2020), but then decreased in late November (8) before recovering slightly in December (8.1). Although mean scores are slightly different

between primary and secondary parents, the trend has been the same throughout the period shown.

**Figure 72. Parents’ views on pupil’s happiness (mean scores)**



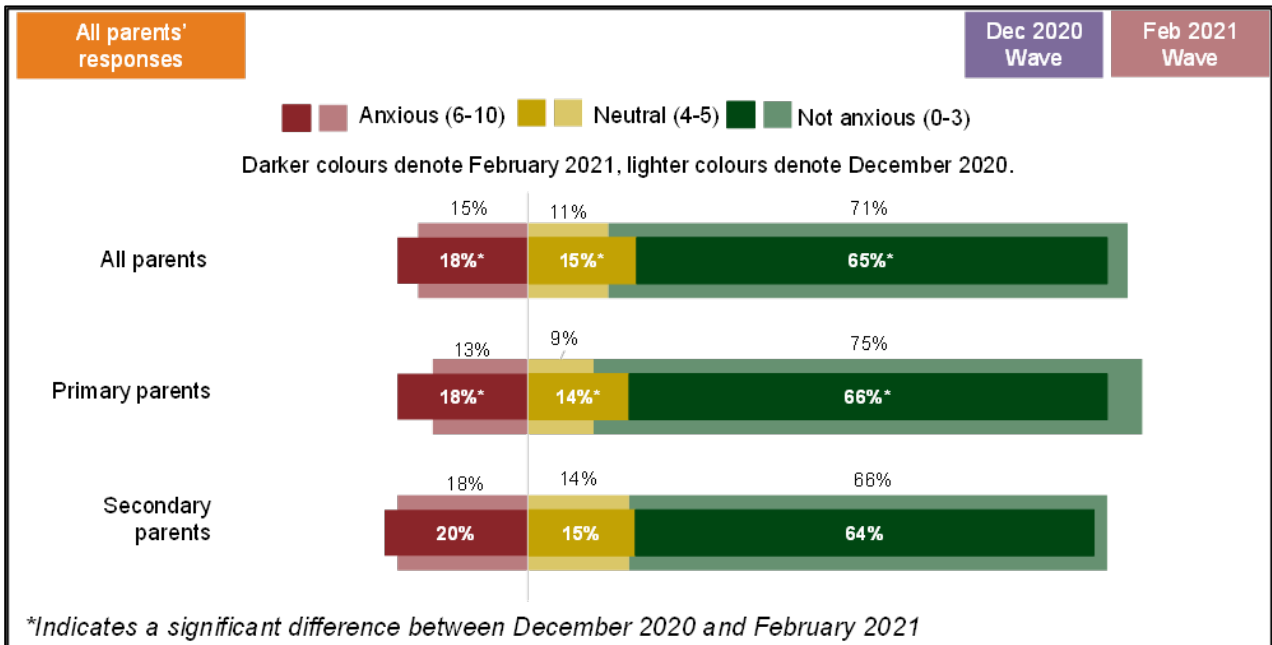
Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and February 2021, O1: “Overall, how happy did Pupil appear yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'?” All parents (n=7,191 / n = 4,005 / n = 3,491 / n = 3,542 / n = 3,388 / n = 3,237 / n = 3,082), primary parents (n=4,203 / n = 1,987 / n = 1,712 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,697 / n = 1,618 / n = 1,541), secondary parents (n= 2,988 / n = 2,018 / n = 1,779 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,691 / n = 1,619 / n = 1,541).

Consistent with earlier waves, lower happiness scores for their children were more likely in February 2021 amongst the following groups:

- Secondary parents than primary parents (7.1 vs. 7.5)
- Parents whose child is eligible for FSM versus those whose child is not eligible (7.1 vs. 7.4).
- Parents whose child has SEND versus those whose child had no SEND (6.4 vs. 7.5).

Perceived happiness scores decreased from December 2020 to February 2021, and anxiousness levels increased. As shown in Figure 73, 18% of parents gave a high anxiousness score (6-10) in February 2021, compared to 15% in December 2020, which is now back in line with anxiousness scores reported in August 2020 (18%).

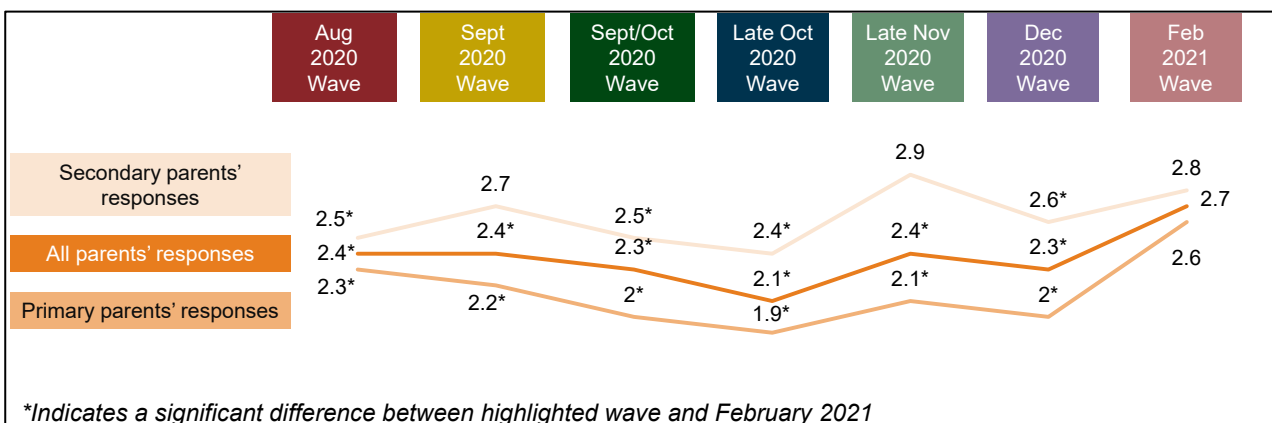
**Figure 73. Parents' views on pupil's anxiousness**



Source: PPP February 2021 and December 2020 Wave, O2: “On a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did Pupil appear yesterday?” All parents (n=3,082/ n = 3,237), primary parents (n=1,541 / n = 1,618), secondary parents (n=1,541 / n = 1,619).

As shown in Figure 74, anxiousness mean scores for pupils were higher in February 2021 for all parents and primary parents compared to all previous waves (2.7 and 2.6).

**Figure 74. Parents' views on pupil's anxiousness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and February 2021, O2: “On a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did Pupil appear yesterday?” All parents (n=7,191 / n = 4,005 / n = 3,491 / n = 3,542 / n = 3,388 / n = 3,237 / n = 3,082), primary parents (n=4,203 / n = 1,987 / n = 1,712 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,697 / n = 1,618 / n = 1,541), secondary parents (n= 2,988 / n = 2,018 / n = 1,779 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,691 / n = 1,619 / n = 1,541).

Broadly consistent with the findings in previous survey waves, higher mean scores of anxiousness for their children were more likely amongst the following groups in February 2021:

- Parents whose child is eligible for FSM (3.1 vs. 2.6 where the child is not eligible)
- Parents whose child has SEND (3.8 vs. 2.5 among non-SEND).

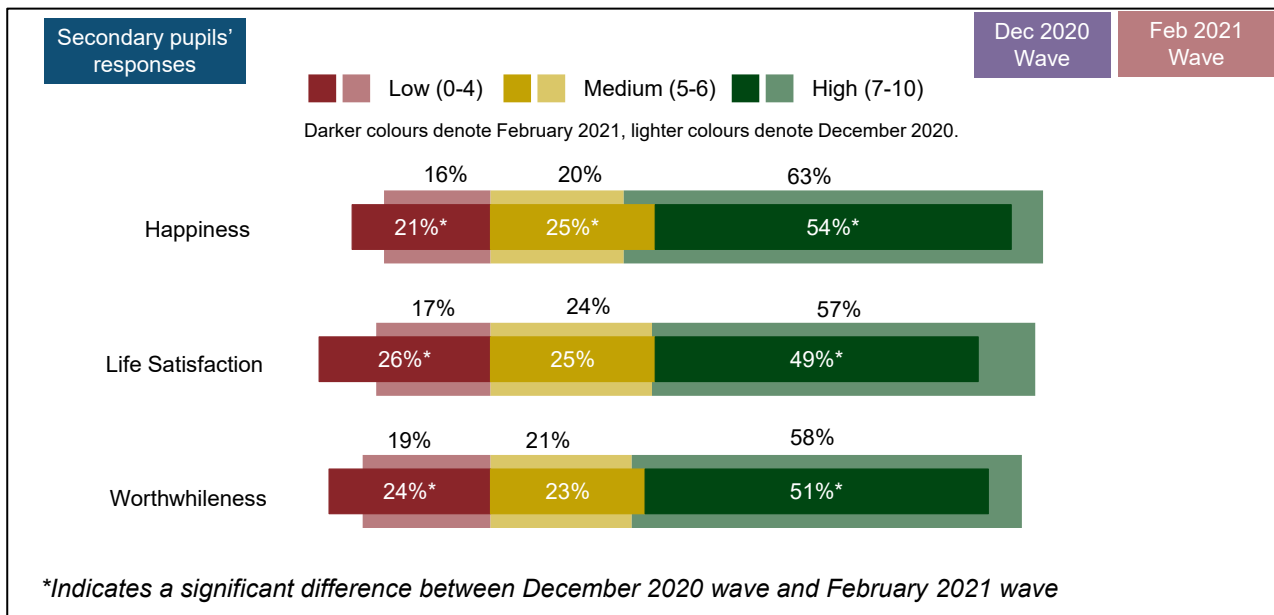
Unlike previous waves, there were no significant differences between the anxiousness mean scores given by primary and secondary parents about their children.

### **Pupils' views on their own wellbeing**

Secondary pupils were also asked about their own levels of happiness, life satisfaction, the extent to which they feel the things they do in life were worthwhile, and their feelings of anxiousness.

Matching parents' results reported above, pupils in February 2021 were less likely to give positive scores (7-10) for their own happiness, satisfaction and worthwhileness and more likely to give higher scores for anxiousness than in December 2020. As shown in Figure 75, just over half of secondary pupils (54%) gave a high score for happiness (7-10) compared to almost two-thirds (63%) in December 2021. At least a fifth of pupils (21%, 26% and 24%) gave a low score (0-4) for happiness, satisfaction, and worthwhileness.

**Figure 75. Pupils' views of their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness**



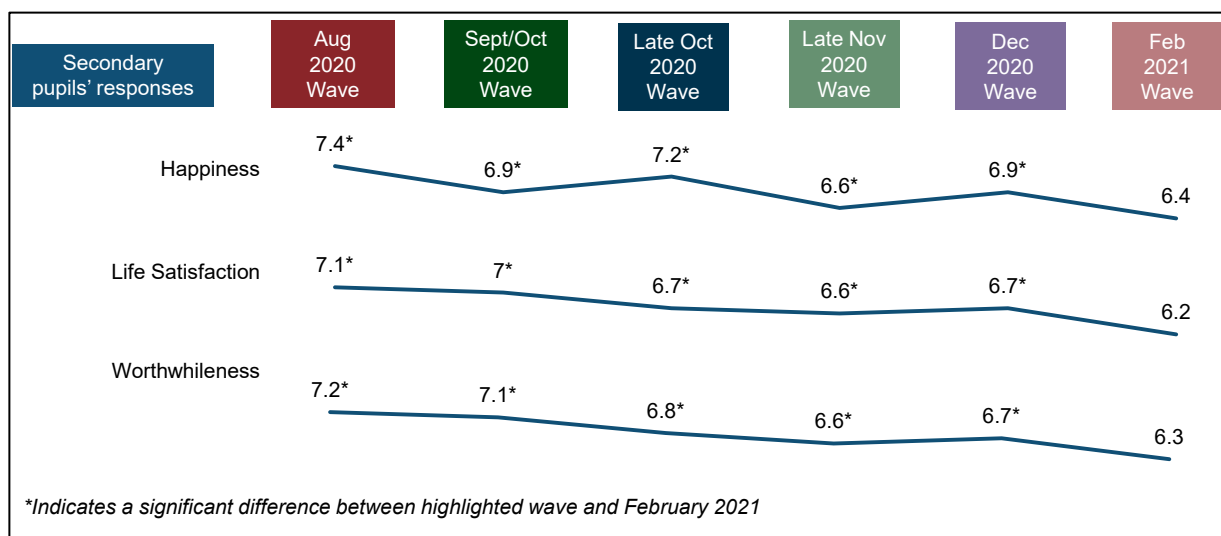
Source: PPP February 2021 and December 2020 Wave, B5: "Rating of each measure on scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely"" Secondary pupils (Dec n=1,555 / Feb n=1,537).).

As shown in Figure 76, among secondary pupils there has been a significant shift towards more negative scores across each of the four wellbeing measures since August 2020, with February 2021 showing the lowest reported scores.

- Self-reported scores for happiness (7.4 to 6.4), life satisfaction (7.1 to 6.2) and worthwhileness (7.2 to 6.3) have significantly declined between August and February 2021.
- Following a similar trend, self-reported levels of anxiousness have increased over this time period (from 2.5 to 3.4).

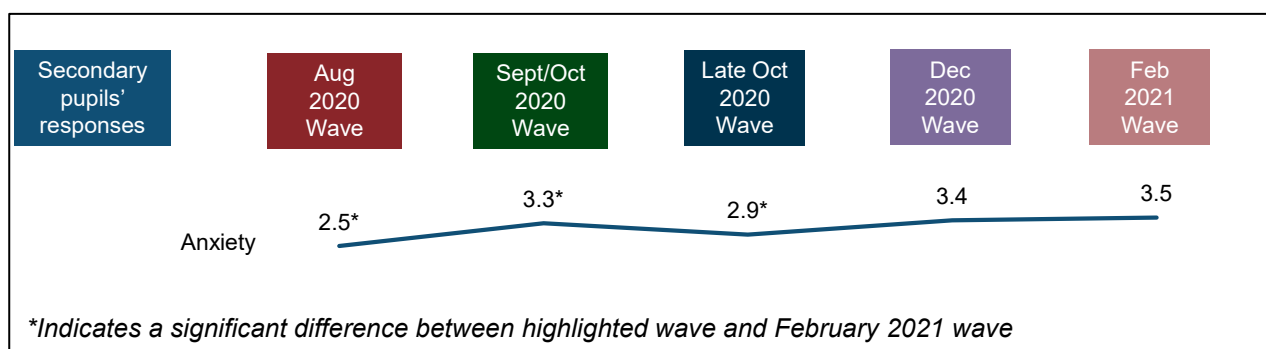


**Figure 76. Pupils' views of their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and February 2021, B5: "Rating of each measure on scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely"" Secondary pupils (n=5,327 / n=1,780 / n=1,661 / n=1,612 / n=1,555 / n=1,537).

**Figure 77. Pupils' views of their own anxiousness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and February 2021, B6: "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely'" Secondary pupils (n = 5,327 / n = 1,780 / n = 1,661 / n = 1,555 / n = 1,537).

Consistent with previous waves, older pupils (years 11-13) were significantly less likely to be doing well compared to younger pupils (years 7-10) across all four measures:

- Happiness: 6.9 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 5.7 for years 11-13 pupils
- Life satisfaction: 6.7 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 5.2 for years 11-13 pupils
- Worthwhileness: 6.9 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 5.3 for years 11-13 pupils
- Anxiousness: 3.1 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 4.3 for years 11-13 pupils.

Since August 2020, female pupils have continued to report poorer wellbeing scores than their male counterparts for all four measures. In February 2021, female pupils had significantly lower scores of happiness (a score of 7 to 10) (44% vs. 64%), life satisfaction (38% vs. 59%) and worthwhileness (39% vs. 61%), and higher levels of anxiousness (37% vs. 21%).

Also, in line with findings from the August survey, in February FSM-eligible pupils were more likely (than those not eligible) to give low scores for happiness (25% vs. 20%). In this wave, unlike in the August survey, there was not a significant difference for measures of life satisfaction, worthwhileness or anxiousness by FSM status.

## **Pupils' reasons for feeling anxious**

In February 2021, pupils who gave a high anxiousness score (6-10) were asked a follow up question asking what in the last two weeks<sup>36</sup> has made them feel anxious.

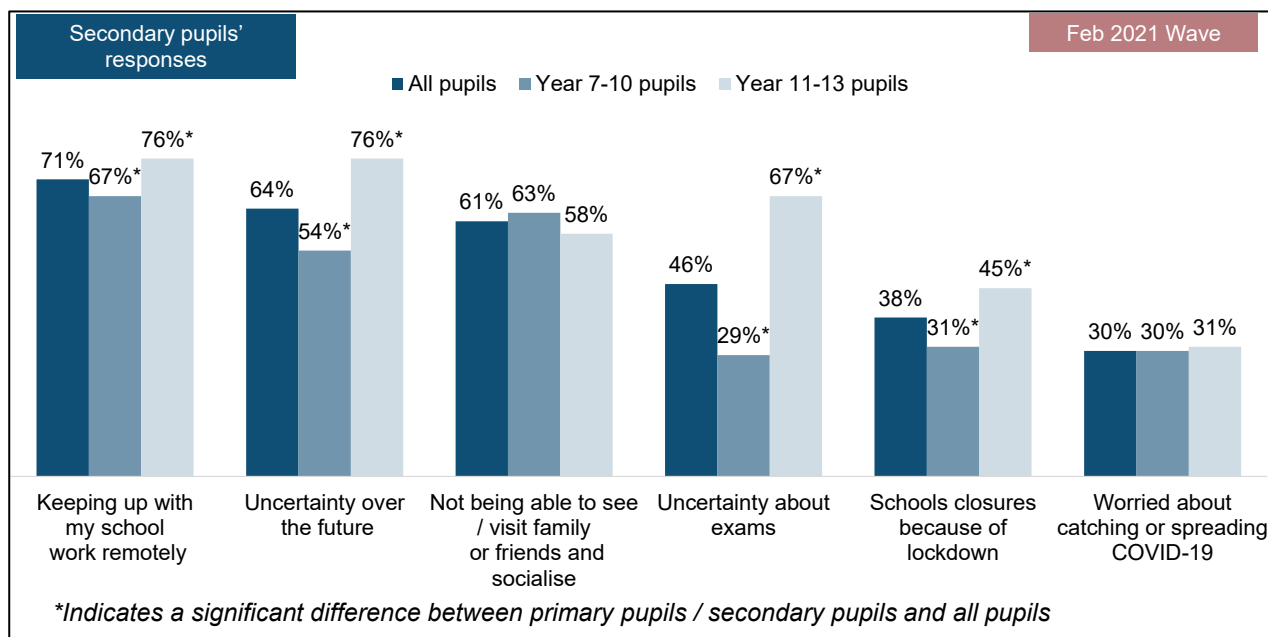
As shown in Figure 78, keeping up with schoolwork was the most common reason making pupils feel anxious (71%), followed by uncertainty about the future (64%) and not being able to see or visit friends and family (61%). Those in years 11-13 were much more likely to be anxious about exams than those in years 7-10 (67% vs. 29%). Three-in-ten pupils (30%) were worried about catching or spreading COVID-19, and this was even across year groups. Pupils were given an 'other (please specify)' option but very few pupils selected this and gave additional reasons for anxiousness.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The reported two weeks that pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 20<sup>th</sup> January - 7<sup>th</sup> February.

<sup>37</sup> The most common spontaneous reasons were "personal issues e.g. death/illness in the family" (2%) and "anxiety / depression / mental health issues" (1%)

**Figure 78. Reasons why pupils with high anxiousness were feeling anxious**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave, B24C: “Thinking about the last two weeks, what do you think has made you anxious?” Secondary pupils who said they had high feelings of anxiousness (n=517), year 7-10 pupils who said they had high feeling of anxiousness (n=187) and year 11-13 pupils who said they had high feelings of anxiousness (n=330).

BAME pupils were more likely to state keeping up with their schoolwork as the main cause of their anxiousness, compared to their White peers (81% vs. 67%).

The following pupils were more likely to report being worried about catching or spreading COVID-19 as a cause for their anxiousness:

- FSM-eligible pupils compared to non-FSM-eligible pupils (44% vs. 27%)
- Pupils with SEND compared to pupils without SEND (43% vs. 28%).

## Pupils’ loneliness

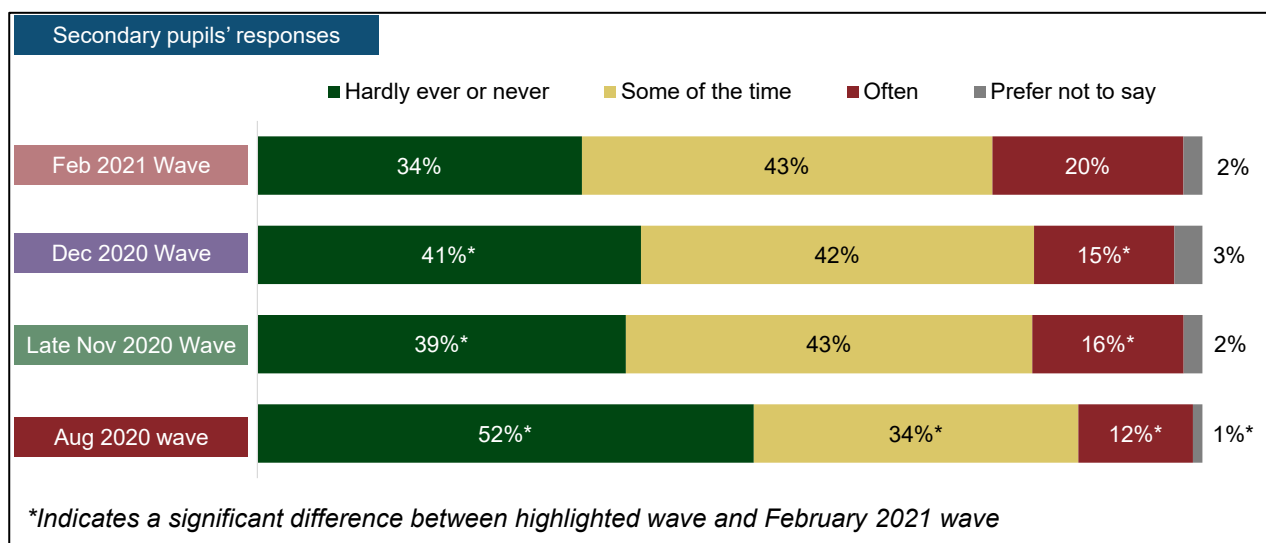
Loneliness is a key risk factor for poor mental health in children and young people. Social distancing measures and school closures for most pupils during the spring term 2021 will likely have affected their contact with friends and family.

In February 2021, pupils were asked the question: How often do you feel lonely?<sup>38</sup> A fifth of secondary school pupils reported they often felt lonely (20%), which is the highest

<sup>38</sup> Findings from the other loneliness questions can be found in the August-October findings report.

proportion reported since August 2020. Mirroring this trend, a third said they hardly ever or never felt lonely (34%) compared to a half in August 2020 (52%).

**Figure 79. Percentage of all pupils who felt lonely**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and February 2021, B12: “How often do you feel lonely?” Secondary pupils (n=5,327 / n=1,612 / n=1,555 / n=1,537).

Similarly, to previous waves:

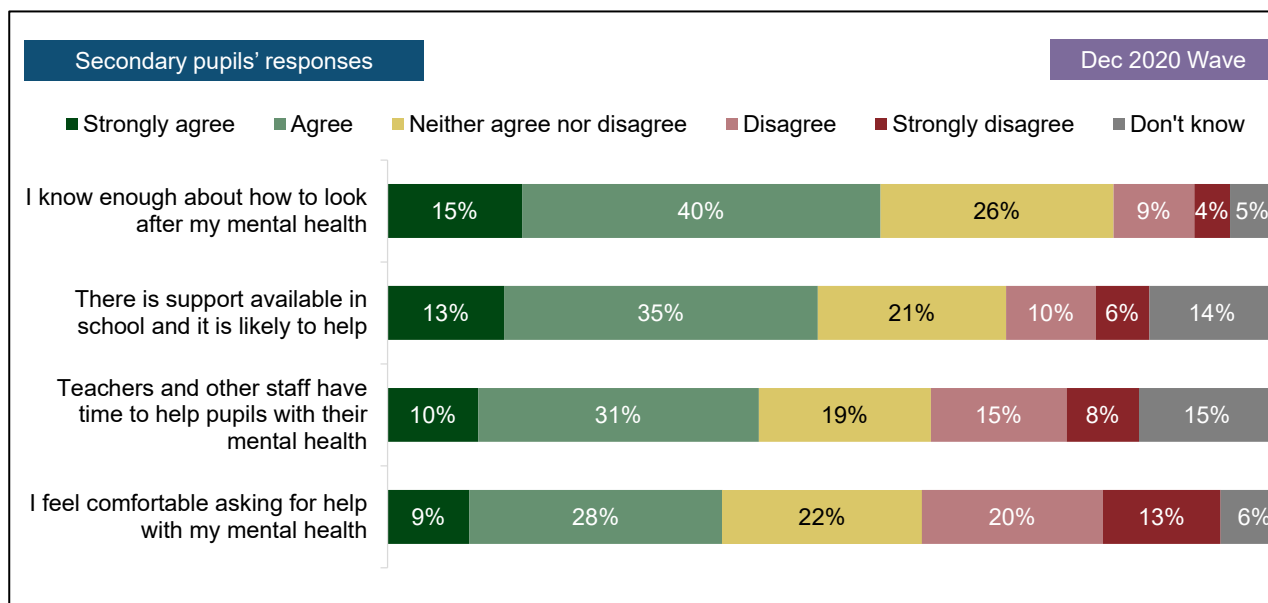
- Year 11-13 pupils were more likely than average to have felt lonely at least some of the time (74% vs. 59%), particularly year 12 and 13 pupils (34% and 40% often felt lonely compared to 20% on average).
- Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to have often felt lonely (28% vs. 13%) although both have seen an increase compared to August.

## Pupils’ feelings towards mental health support

In both February 2021 and December 2020, Secondary pupils were asked about their feelings about support that was available regarding their mental health.

In December, over half (55%) agreed that they knew enough about how to look after their mental health, but only 37% agreed they felt comfortable asking for help with their mental health. In comparison 48% agreed that there is support available at school and it is likely to help, and 42% felt teachers and other staff do have time to help pupils with their mental health. For the two statements about support at school (both generally and from teachers), over one-in-ten were not sure (14% and 15%).

**Figure 80. Pupils' feelings towards mental health support**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave, B25: "Thinking about your mental health this term, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?" Secondary pupils (n=1,555).

Older pupils (years 11-13) were more likely than younger pupils (years 7-10) to disagree with all of the statements shown:

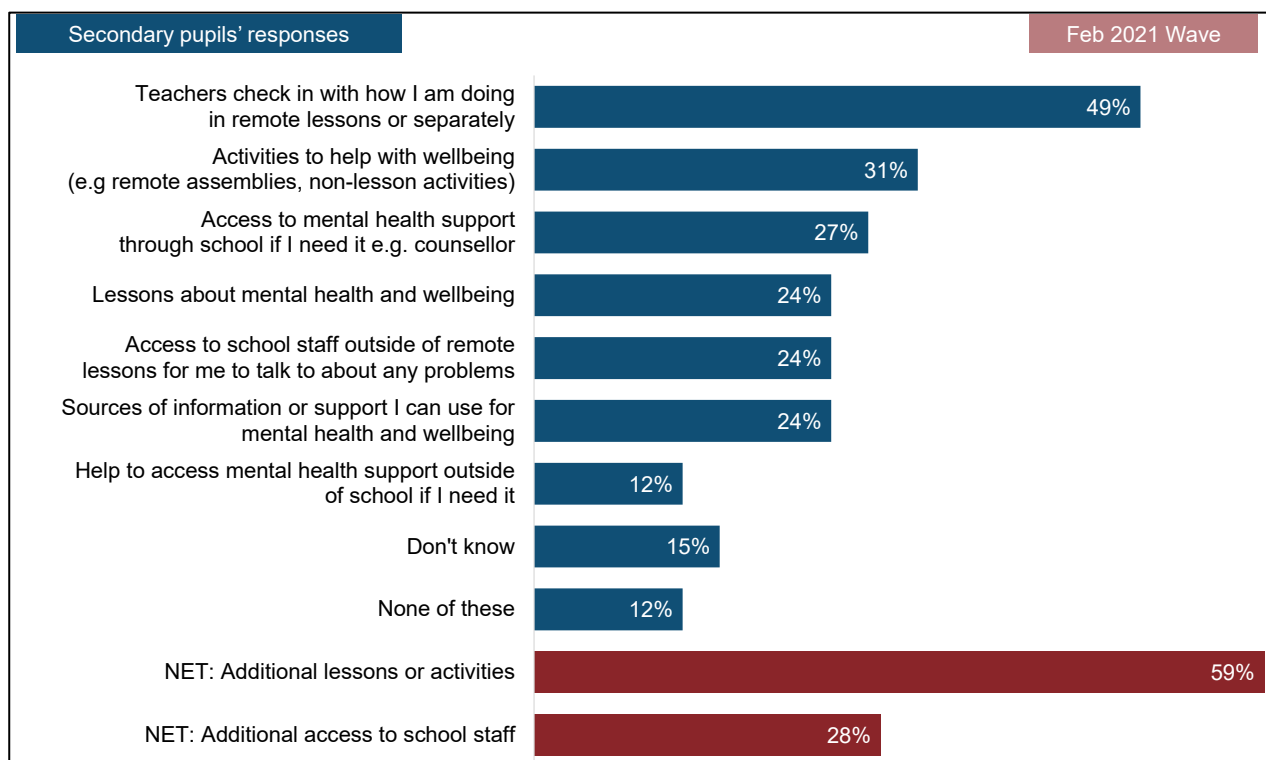
- I feel comfortable asking for help with my mental health (46% vs. 25%)
- Teachers and other staff have time to help pupils with their mental health (27% vs. 21%)
- There is support available in school and it is likely to help (21% vs. 14%)
- I know enough about how to look after my mental health (15% vs. 11%).

FSM-eligible pupils were more likely to disagree (compared to non-FSM-eligible pupils) that there is support available in school and it is likely to help (23% vs. 15%).

Pupils with SEND were less likely to agree (compared to pupils with no SEND) that teachers and other staff have time to help pupils with their mental health (34% vs. 43%) and that they know enough about how to look after their mental health (42% vs. 57%).

In February 2021, all pupils were asked which types of mental health and wellbeing support schools were providing pupils not physically attending school. Half of pupils said that teachers were checking in with how they were doing in remote lessons or separately (49%), whilst a third (31%) reported there being activities to help with wellbeing generally. Pupils were more likely to say that additional lessons and activities had been provided (59%) than additional access to school staff (28%).

**Figure 81. Types of mental health and wellbeing support provided by schools to pupils not physically attending school**

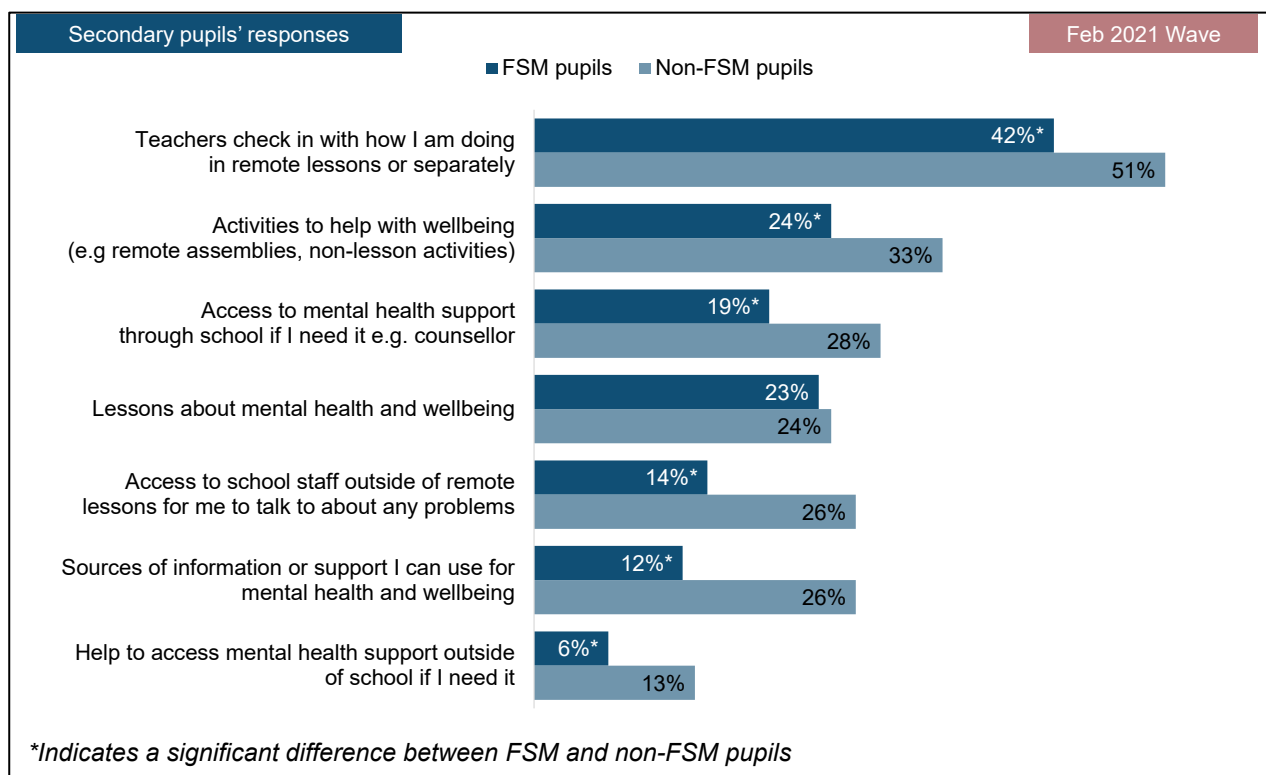


Source: PPP February 2021 Wave, MH1: “Which, if any, of the following is your school providing for pupils not physically attending school to help with their mental health and wellbeing?”  
Secondary pupils (n=1,537).

Pupils in years 7-10 were more likely than pupils in years 11-13 to say that activities to help with wellbeing (34% vs. 26%) and lessons about mental health and wellbeing (29% vs. 15%) were being provided. On the other hand, older pupils were more likely to report access to mental health support through school (30% vs. 25%) and sources of information or support they can use for mental health and wellbeing (27% vs. 22%) being available.

FSM-eligible pupils were less likely than non-FSM-eligible pupils to report having access to the different types of mental health support from their school, as shown in the following chart.

**Figure 82. Types of mental health and wellbeing support provided by schools to pupils not physically attending school**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave, MH1: “Which, if any, of the following is your school providing for pupils not physically attending school to help with their mental health and wellbeing?” FSM-eligible pupils (n=296) and non-FSM-eligible pupils (n=1,241).

Other differences amongst pupils included:

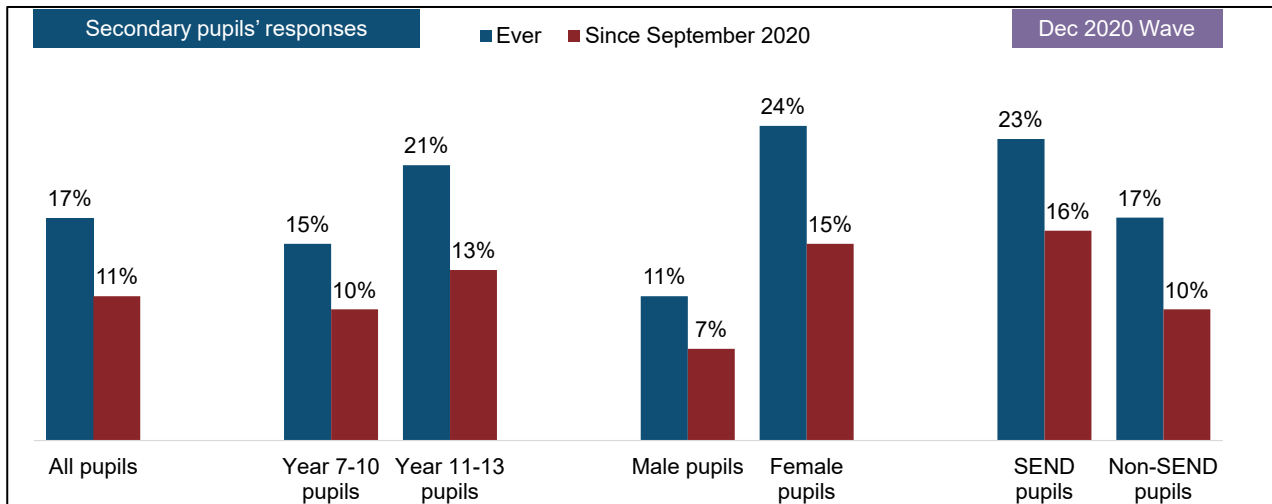
- White pupils were more likely than BAME pupils to report having access to school staff outside of remote lessons for me to talk to about any problems (25% vs. 18%).
- Pupils in rural areas were more likely to report having additional access to school staff than those in urban areas (35% vs. 26%).

## Seeking support for mental health concerns

In December 2020, pupils were asked whether they had sought help for a personal problem or a mental health concern at school (both ever and specifically in the autumn term 2020 / 21). Overall, 17% said they had ever sought help for a personal problem, and 11% had sought help for a problem since the start of September 2020. As shown in Figure 83, the percentage of those seeking help ever and this term varied across different groups. Older pupils were more likely to have sought help compared to younger

pupils, female pupils more likely than male pupils, and pupils with SEND compared to pupils without SEND.

**Figure 83. Percentage of pupils who have sought support for a mental health concern (ever and in the autumn term 2020)**

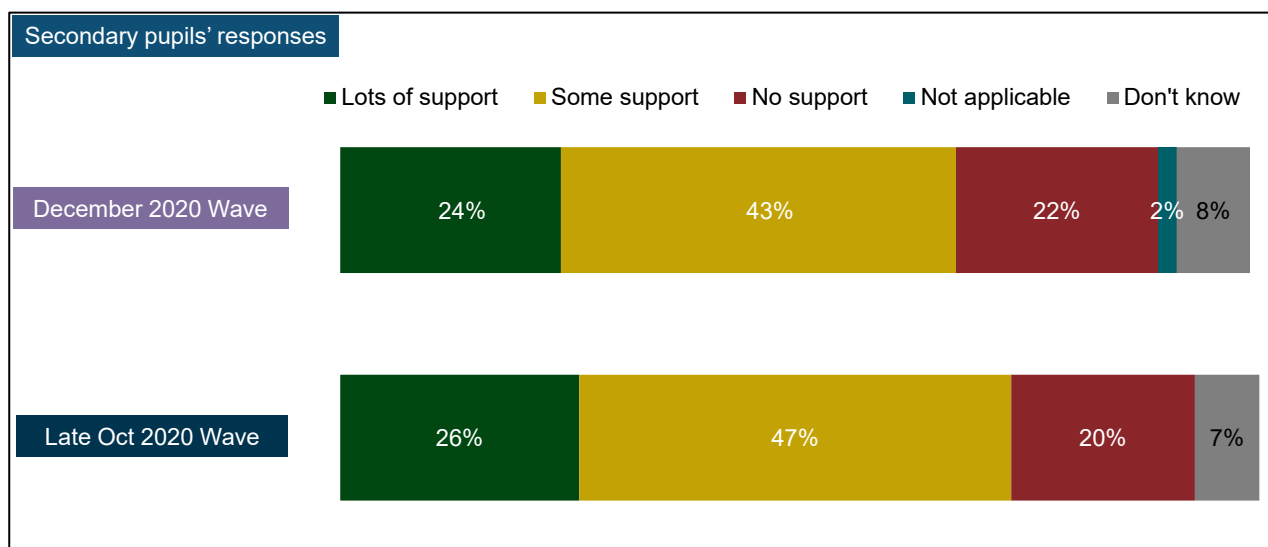


Source: PPP February 2021 Wave, AB3: “Have you ever sought help for a personal problem or a mental health concern at school?” and AB4: “Have you sought help for a personal problem or a mental health concern at school since the start of September?” All pupils (n=1,555), year 7-10 pupils (n=731), year 11-13 pupils (824), male pupils (n=640), female pupils (n=915), pupils with SEND (n=204) and pupils without SEND (n=1,351).

Around two-thirds (68%) of secondary pupils (who had attended during the term) felt that their school/college had supported them to at least some extent on mental health and wellbeing. This is a significant decrease of five percentage points from the 73% that reported this in late October 2020.



**Figure 84. Pupil views on level of school support around mental health and wellbeing**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, Late October Wave 4 L36\_2: “How much support would you say your school or college has provided to ensure that you have good mental health and wellbeing?” All pupils who attended school this term (n=1540 / 1652) Note there was no N/a option in Late October

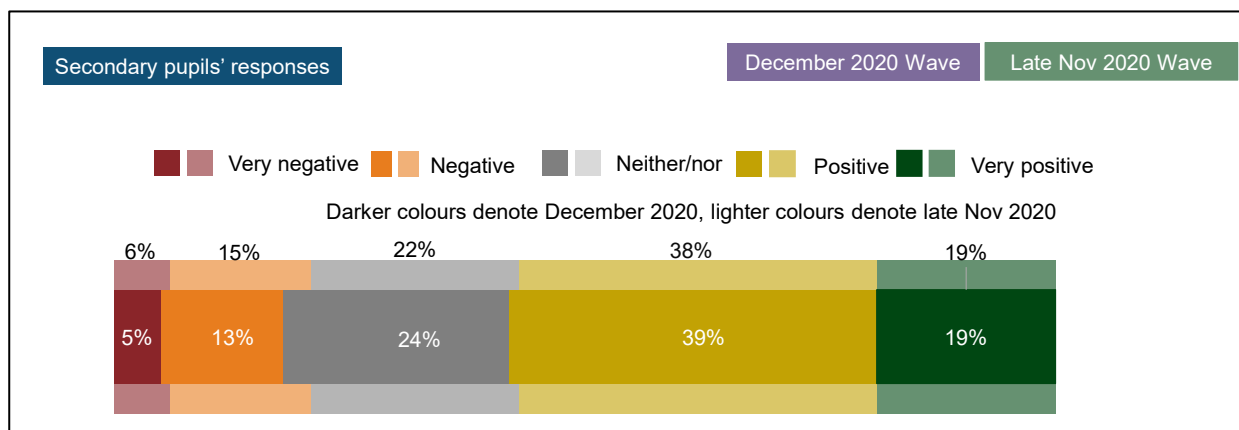
The following groups of secondary pupils were less likely to feel supported regarding good mental health and wellbeing:

- Pupils in exam years: 37% of year 11 and year 13 pupils reported receiving no support to encourage good mental health and wellbeing (compared with 22% among secondary pupils in other year groups)
- Female pupils: 64% felt supported (vs. 71% among males), while over a quarter (27%) felt they had received no support (compared with 18% among male pupils).
- Pupils eligible for FSM (61% felt supported vs. 69% among non-FSM-eligible pupils).

### Impact of school attendance on mental health

In December 2020, around three-in-five (58%) pupils felt that being back at school or college had had a positive impact on their mood and mental health. Just under a fifth (18%) felt it had had a negative impact, lower than the 21% reporting this in late November 2020.

**Figure 85. Impact of being in school on child’s mood and mental health**



Source: PPP December Wave 6, Late November wave 5 L64: “Overall do you think being back at school or college has had a positive or negative impact on your mood and mental health?” All pupils who have attended school this term (n=1,540 / 1599)

Pupils physically attending school or college every weekday were more likely to report a positive impact (62%) than those attending most (49%) or some (51%) weekdays. Male pupils were much more likely to be positive about the impact of attending school on their mood and mental health (65%) than female pupils (50%).

Pupils in exam years were more likely to report that being back at school had a negative impact on their mood and mental health than those not in exam years (30% in year 11 and 32% in year 13 vs. 18% among all secondary pupils). As we have discussed, pupils in exam years were more likely than average to report having no support from their school to help them have good mental health.

Pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to report being back at school as having a positive impact, compared to their non-eligible counterparts (52% vs. 59%). This difference did not occur in the previous wave in which the question was asked (late October 2020).

Parents were also asked about the impact of attending school on their child’s mental health. Overall, 85% of parents in December 2020 felt that being back in school had a positive impact on their child’s mood and mental health, up from 82% in November 2020.

The following groups of parents were less likely to report a positive impact:

- Parents of secondary pupils (80% vs. 89% of primary pupils)
- Parents of pupils with SEND (78% vs. 87% of parents of pupils without SEND)
- Parents from lower income households (78% of those with a household income of under £15,000 vs. 94% of those with £100,000 or more)

- Single parent households (75% vs. 86% of non-single parent households).

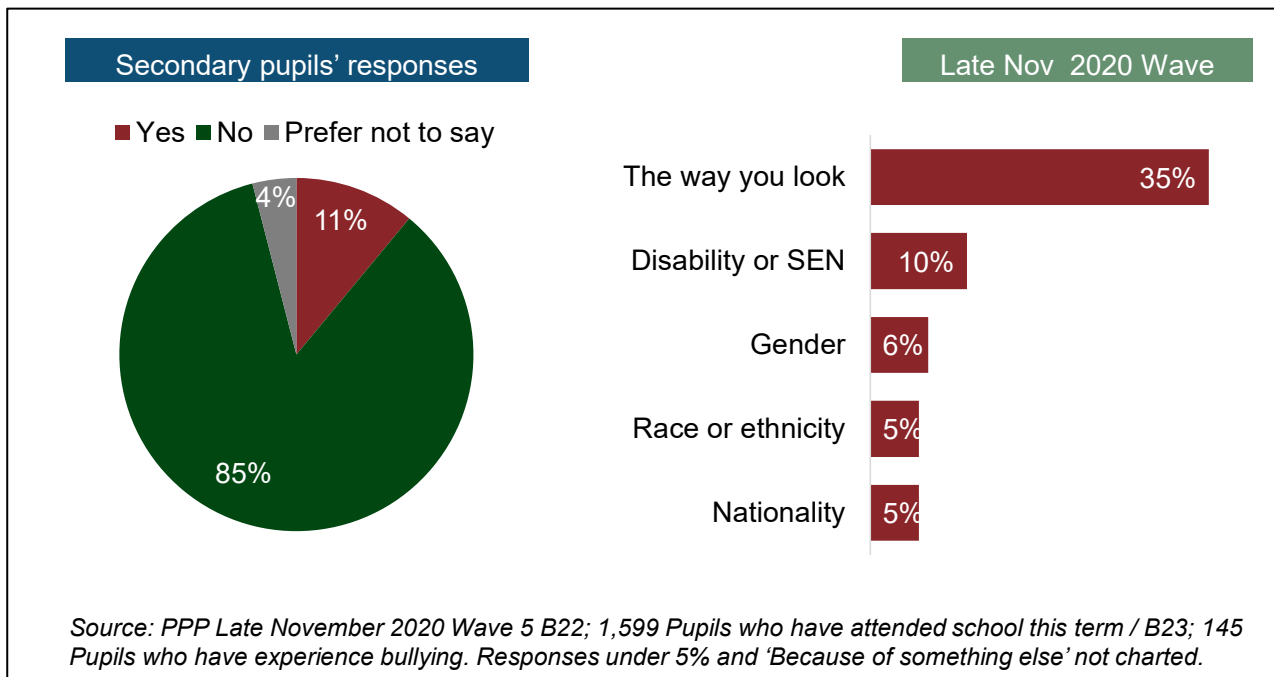
## **Pupils' experience of bullying**

Schools should be safe places where children are taught to respect each other and staff. School pupils should understand the value of education and appreciate the impact their actions can have on others. This culture should extend beyond the classroom to the corridors, dining hall and playground, as well as beyond the school gates. By law, every school must have a behaviour policy in place that includes measures to prevent all forms of bullying among school pupils.

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms, including online, and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or gender identity. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

In November 2020, pupils were asked about whether or not they had been a victim of bullying in autumn term 2020. Around one-in-ten (11%) pupils reported they had been a victim of bullying this term. A third of these (35%) said this was because of the way they looked.

**Figure 86. Whether secondary pupils had been the victim of bullying this term and the reasons why they thought they had been bullied**



Source: PPP November 2020 Wave, B22: “Since you returned to school/college this term, have you been victim of bullying at school for any reason?” Pupils who have attended school this term (n=1,599). B23: “Which of the following reasons, if any, do you think is the reason you have experienced being bullied since returning to school / college?” Pupils who have experienced bullying (n=145). Responses under 5% and ‘because of something else’ reason not charted.

The following were more likely to have been the victim of bullying:

- Pupils in year 7-10 (15%, compared to those in year 11 (5%), year 12 (3%) and year 13 (3%))
- Males (13% vs. 9% of female)
- Pupils eligible for FSM (17% vs. 10% among those not eligible).
- Pupils with SEND (22% vs. 10% among those without). A fifth (20%) of pupils with SEND that were bullied said this was because of their disability or special educational need.

## Relationships, Sex and Health Education

DfE want to support all young people to be happy, healthy, and safe. DfE want to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. That is why the Department has made Relationships Education compulsory for all primary school pupils, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all secondary school pupils, and Health Education legally compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools.

Schools are also required by law to publish a Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and to consult parents on this, which can be done online. However, for many schools, development of a fully comprehensive relationships education/relationships and sex education policy and RSHE curriculum will be an iterative process, which will need to continue into next year. Teachers and school leaders know their pupils best, and with the additional pressures of Covid-19 and home learning, schools have been encouraged to prioritise RSHE content based on the needs of their pupils, with particular attention to the importance of positive relationships, as well as mental and physical health. Teaching in the 2021/22 academic year should seek to address any gaps in pupils' RSHE education this year.

In late November 2020, parents were asked about the provision of RSHE in their child's school or college, which this short chapter explores.

One-in-three (33%) parents said that their child's school or college had shared information with them about how they will teach RSHE this academic year. More than nine-in-ten (91%) parents whose child had shared information reported that this was clear, with just under half (47%) felt this explanation was very clear.

The following groups were more likely to report receiving information from their child's school or college about how they will teach RSHE this academic year:

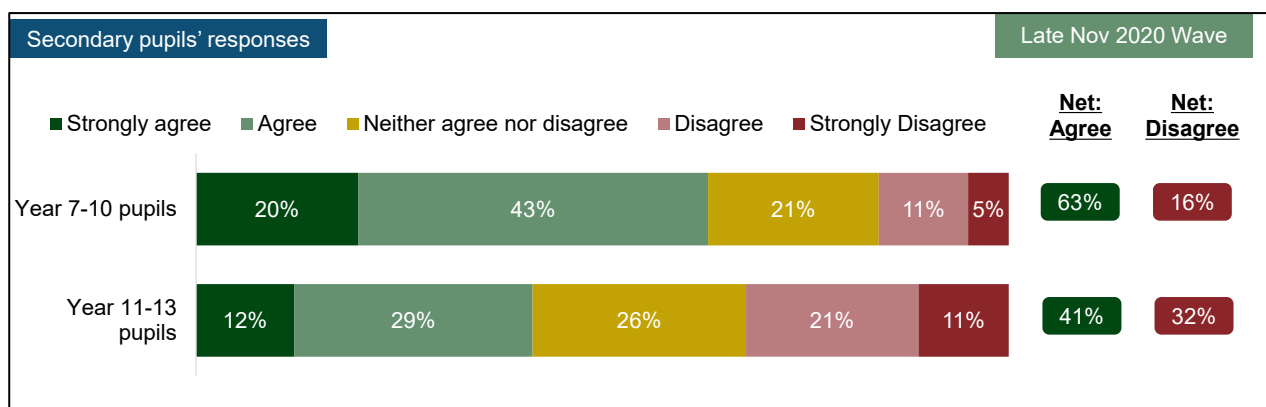
- Parents of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) pupils (38% compared with 32% of parents of White pupils)
- Parents of pupils with no Special Educational Needs or disabilities (34% compared with 28% of parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs or disabilities (SEND))
- Parents in London (98%) were more likely than average (91%) to have received clear information
- Parents of White pupils (50%) were more likely than parents of BAME pupils (38%) were more likely to say it had been explained very clearly.

In the same wave, pupils were asked about receiving important information from their school or college about developing and maintaining positive relationships with other people, and their physical and mental health.

Over half of all secondary pupils said they agreed that their school or college has taught them important information about developing and maintaining positive relationships (55%), a further 22% disagreed and 23% neither agreed nor disagreed (1% said prefer not to say). A higher percentage of pupils overall (63%) agreed that their school or college teaches them important information about physical and mental health, with only 17% disagreeing (19% neither agreed nor disagreed).

As shown in Figure 87, younger pupils were more likely to agree that they have been given information about developing and maintaining positive relationships than older pupils (63% for year 7-10 pupils vs 41% for year 11-13 pupils). A similar pattern was seen regarding information on physical and mental health, with seven in ten (70%) year 7-10 pupils agreeing with the statement compared to half (51%) of year 11-13 pupils.

**Figure 87. Percentage of pupils who agreed that their school or college teaches them information about developing and maintaining positive relationships**



Source: PPP November 2020 Wave, L66\_1: "Now thinking about what you learn at school, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? My school or college teaches me important information about developing and maintaining positive relationships with other people (for example family, friends and peers)" Secondary pupils (n=1,609).

For both statements, male pupils were more likely than female pupils to agree:

- My school or college teaches me important information about developing and maintaining positive relationships (60% vs 51%)
- My school or college teaches me important information about physical and mental health (68% vs 59%)

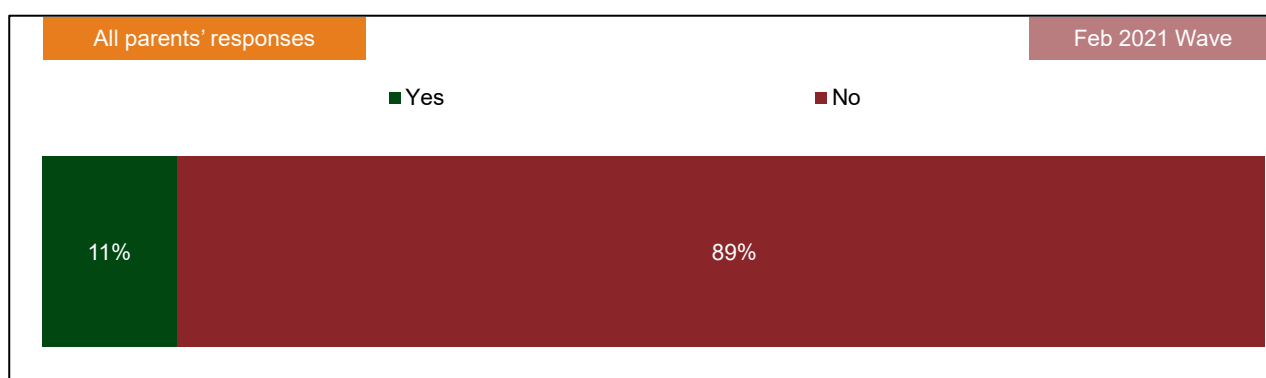
## Childcare

This chapter examines responses from parents on use of wraparound childcare. It compares demand at two different points: the autumn term 2020 and during the national lockdown in January 2021. Information was important to help build a picture of demand and use of wraparound childcare including for children of critical workers and vulnerable children during the pandemic.

### Use of wraparound childcare in autumn term 2020

In the February 2021 wave, parents were asked several questions regarding childcare provision in January 2021, as well as on the childcare they used in the autumn term of 2020. As shown in Figure 88 **Error! Reference source not found.**, one-in-ten (11%) parents reported having used wraparound childcare in the autumn term.<sup>39</sup> Around a fifth (18%) of primary parents had used wraparound childcare in the autumn term, whereas just 2% of secondary parents had.

**Figure 88. Whether parents had used wraparound childcare in the autumn term**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 M25: “Did [PUPIL NAME] attend wraparound (before and after school) childcare in the autumn term?” All parents (n=3,028).

Employed parents were three times more likely than unemployed parents to have used wraparound childcare in the autumn term (13% vs. 4%).<sup>40</sup> Parents in the highest household income bracket (£100,000 or more per year) were twice as likely to report using wraparound childcare in the autumn term, compared to parents in the lowest household income bracket (under £15,000 per year) (19% vs. 9%).

<sup>39</sup> “Before and after school childcare”

<sup>40</sup> Employment status based on self-reported employment status in February 2021

## Use of wraparound childcare since the January 2021 national lockdown

Parents of pupils who met the eligibility criteria for school attendance in January 2021 (vulnerable children and children of critical workers) were asked if they had used wraparound childcare since the introduction of the national lockdown on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021.<sup>41</sup> For reference, 48% of parents reported that their child met the eligibility requirements for January 2021 school attendance, more information about the reasons given for eligibility by parents can be found in Figure 6.

Just 5% of eligible parents said their child had attended wraparound care since the new national restrictions came into place (5<sup>th</sup> January 2021).<sup>42</sup> Nine percent of eligible primary parents had used this childcare from 5<sup>th</sup> January onwards compared with no eligible secondary parents.

Use of wraparound childcare since 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 among eligible parents was higher among:

- Parents who were working, but not from home (7%)
- Those with a household income under £15,000 a year (9%)
- Parents who were key workers (7%)

Parents whose children were still attending school, were far more likely to have also used wraparound childcare. Around one-in-eight (12%) eligible parents whose child had attended school every day in the last two weeks had also attended wraparound childcare.<sup>43</sup> There was a very small number of parents (1%), whose child was eligible for school attendance from 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 onwards, who reported that their child did not attend school at all in the previous two weeks of being surveyed but had attended some form of wraparound childcare since 5<sup>th</sup> January.

### Reasons for not using wraparound childcare

As discussed, only 5% of parents whose child was eligible for a school place had used wraparound childcare since 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Where parents whose child was eligible for wraparound childcare and had used it in the autumn term, but not since 5<sup>th</sup> January, they

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<sup>41</sup> Parents were asked at question L72 whether or not their child met the eligibility criteria. They were given a definition to help them respond to the question: “*Although schools have been closed to most pupils since January 2021, some pupils have been eligible to attend school settings because they are either vulnerable, or the child of a key / critical worker.*” Due to self-reported data, this response may not match their individual NPD variables or response to other questions. 48% of parents reported that their child met the eligibility criteria for January 2021 school attendance.

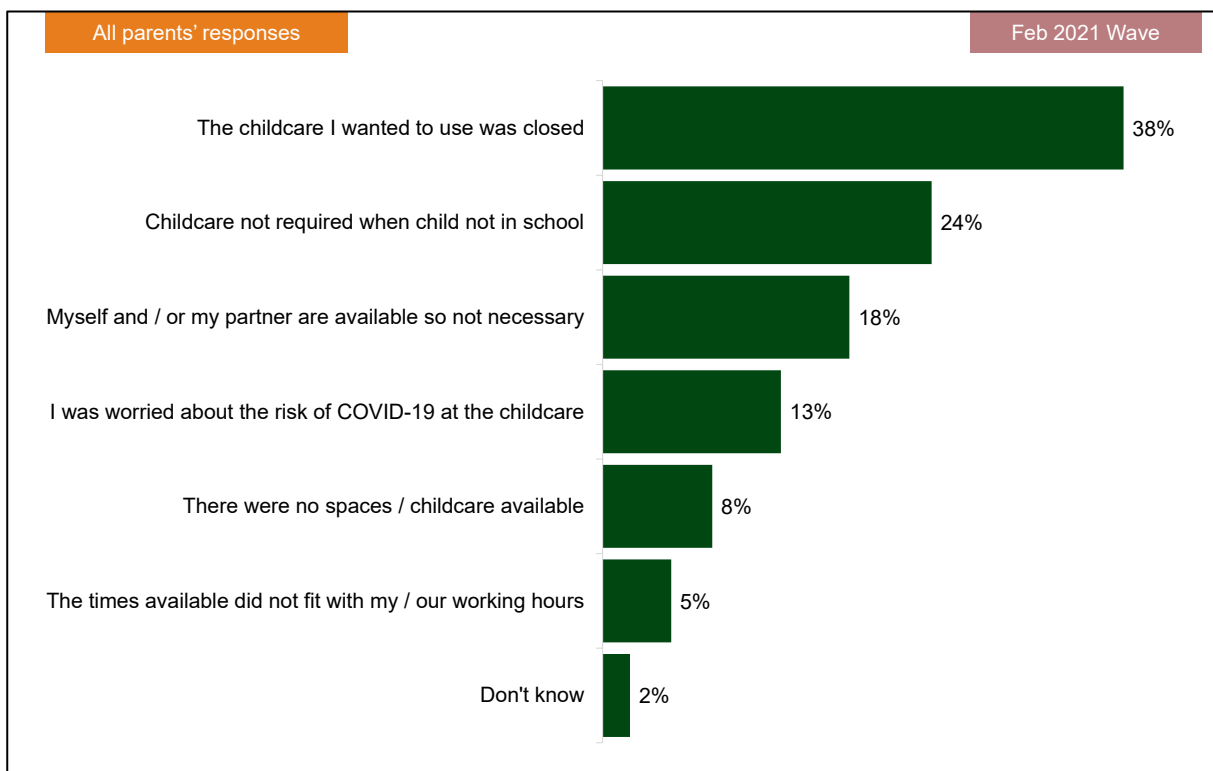
<sup>42</sup> Eligible primary parents n=795, eligible secondary parents n=703

<sup>43</sup> Parents of pupils who meet the eligibility criteria for school attendance as of January 2021 n=1498, those whose child had attended school every day in the last two weeks n=310



were asked why this was. The most common reason given was that the childcare they wanted to use was closed (38%). Whilst the parents asked had children who were eligible for school attendance and wraparound childcare, as reported in the Attendance chapter, not all eligible parents sent their child to school. Therefore, a reason parents eligible for wraparound care used

**Figure 89. Eligible parents’ reasons for not using wraparound childcare in the national lockdown in January 2021**

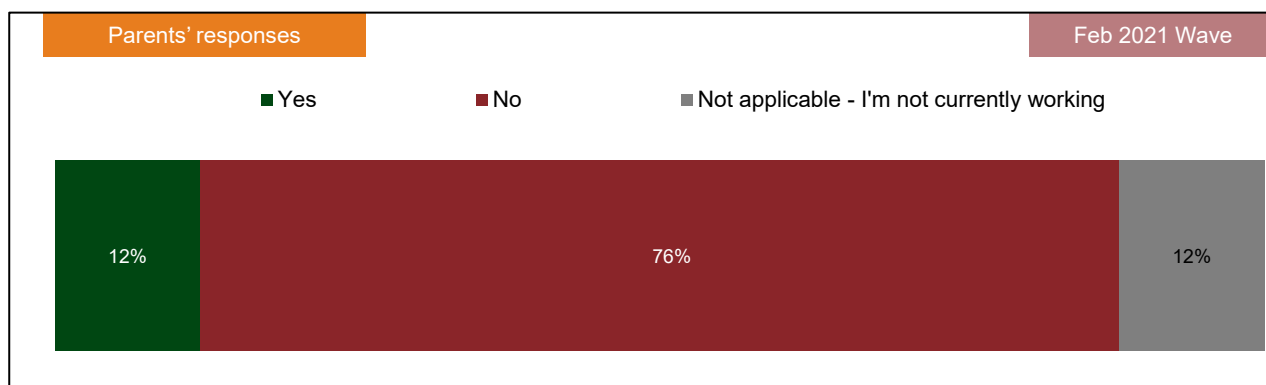


Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 M27: “Why hasn't [PUPIL NAME] been attending wraparound (before and after school) childcare since new national restrictions were introduced? Parents whose child was eligible but did not attend childcare in January 2021 (n=142).

### Impact of childcare availability on working hours

Three-quarters (76%) of employed parents reported in February 2021 that the current availability of wraparound childcare had not affected their work pattern and / or working hours. Around one-in-eight (12%) reported that the availability of wraparound childcare had affected their work in some way. For 12% of employed parents, this question did not apply as they were not currently working e.g. on furlough.

**Figure 90. Impact of wraparound childcare availability on parents working pattern / hours**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 M29: “Has the current availability of wraparound (before and after school) childcare affected your work pattern and/or working hours during school term?”  
All employed parents (n=2,339).

Around a fifth (19%) of employed primary parents reported the availability of childcare had affected their work pattern and/or working hours, compared to only 3% of employed secondary parents.<sup>44</sup>

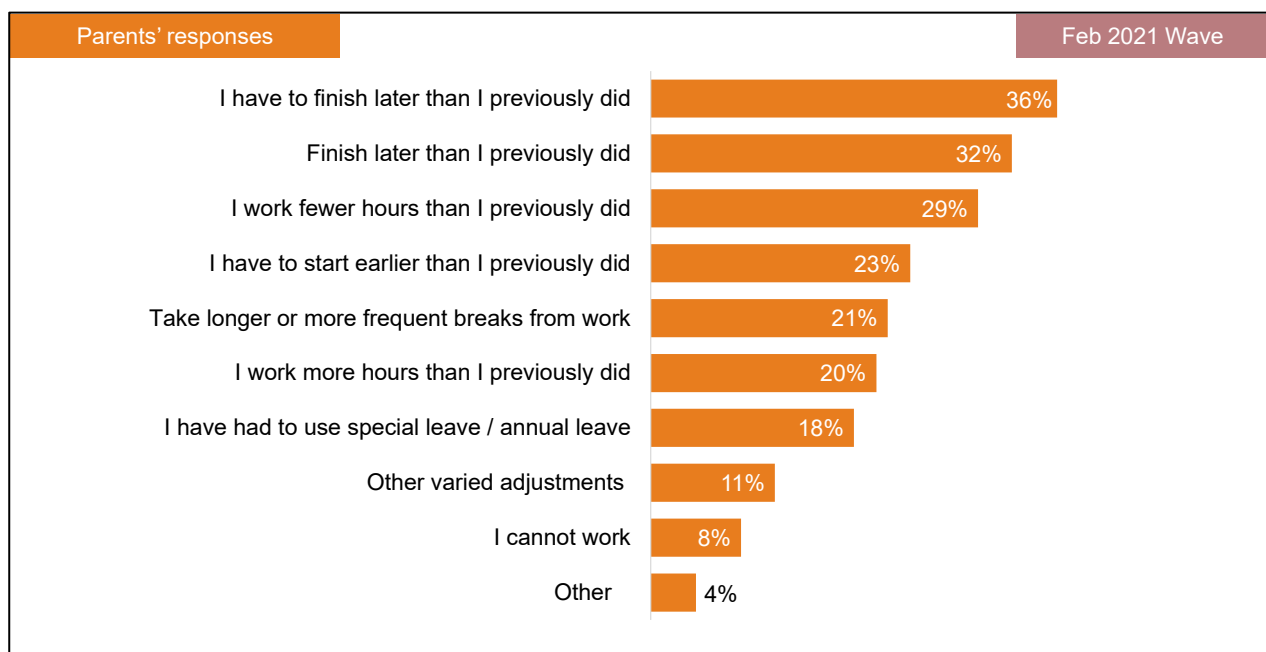
Parents in full time employment were more likely to report having their work affected by wraparound childcare availability, compared to self-employed parents (14% vs. 8%). Interestingly, there was no significant difference depending on whether or not parents were currently working at home or away from the home.

### Impact of wraparound childcare availability on working parents

The 12% of parents who reported that the availability of wraparound childcare had impacted their working pattern/hours were asked *how* it had affected them. Around a third of these parents (36%) reported finishing work later than they previously did, and around three-in-ten (29%) said they worked fewer hours than previously.

<sup>44</sup> Employed primary parents (n=1137), employed secondary parents (n=1202)

**Figure 91. How availability of wraparound childcare affected parents working hours/patterns**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 M30: “How has the current availability of wraparound (before and after school) childcare typically affected your work pattern and/or hours” All parents who report the availability of childcare affects their ability to work (n=256). Not sure = 2%.

Parents working entirely from home were the most likely to report finishing work later than previously due to current availability of wraparound childcare (55%) - this was less of an issue for parents who were not working at home (21%). Home workers were also more likely to report starting work earlier (36% vs. 23% average) and were twice as likely to report having to take longer or more frequent breaks from work (42% vs. 21% average). This could be due to their child’s remote learning needs.

Full time parents reported working more hours compared to part-time parents as a result of availability to wraparound childcare. (29% vs. 11%).<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, part time parents were more likely to report working less hours due to wraparound childcare availability compared to full time parents (39% vs. 18%).

Parents whose children were not eligible to attend education in school in February 2021 were more likely to report having their working hours/patterns affected by wraparound childcare availability. For example, compared with three-in-ten (31%) parents whose child was eligible to attend school, who reported finishing work later than they previously did, nearly half (48%) of all parents whose child was not eligible for school attendance reported finishing work later.

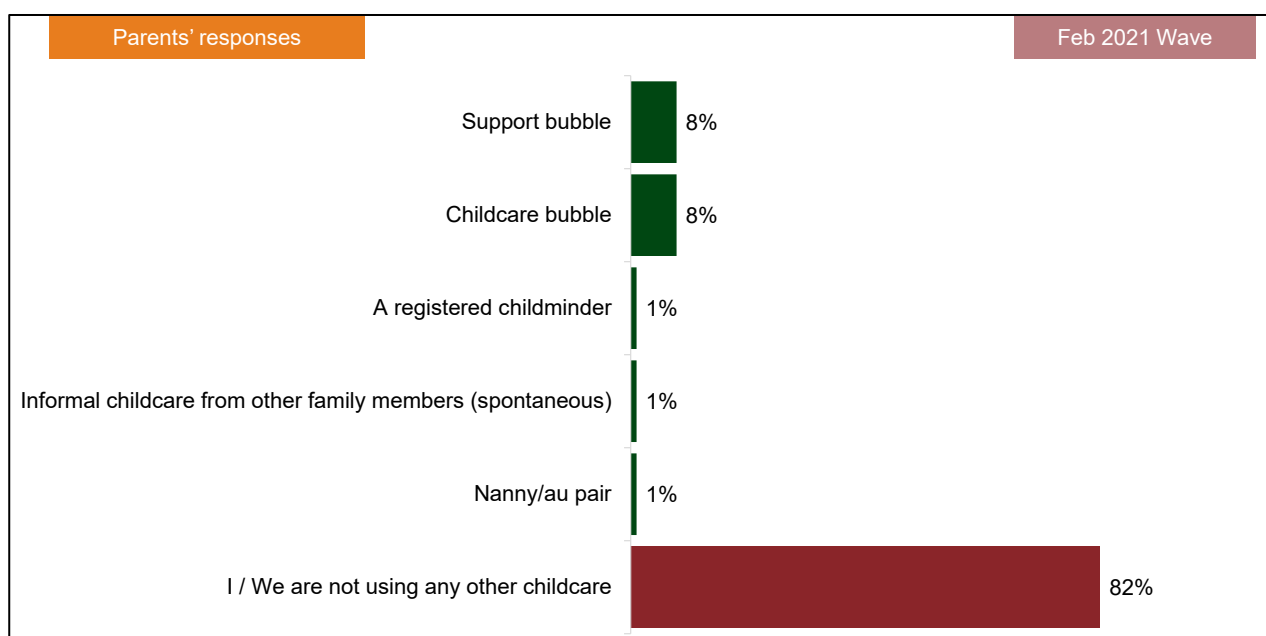
<sup>45</sup> Parents working status was as self-reported in this wave (February 2021) of the research

## Types of childcare used by parents

In February 2021, parents were also asked if they were currently using any of the following types of childcare (excluding wraparound childcare), such as support bubbles, childcare bubbles, a registered childminder, informal childcare from other family members, or a nanny/au pair, or if they were using no other childcare.

Four-in-five parents (82%) reported they were not currently using any forms of childcare (excluding wraparound childcare, which they had answered separate questions on as reported earlier in this chapter). The most common forms of childcare (excluding wraparound childcare) being used were the childcare bubble<sup>46</sup> and the support bubble<sup>47</sup> (both 8%).

**Figure 92. Types of childcare used by parents (excluding wraparound childcare)**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 M28: “Which of the following forms of childcare, if any, are you currently using for [PUPILNAME]?” All parents (n=3,082). Not sure = 2%.

As reported throughout the childcare chapter and as expected, secondary parents were less likely to be using any other childcare (excluding wraparound childcare) compared to primary parents (92% vs. 75%).<sup>48</sup> Of secondary parents using childcare, the support bubble was the most common (5% of all secondary parents).

<sup>46</sup> Where one household links with one other household to specifically provide childcare

<sup>47</sup> Where a household with one adult joins with another household, on an exclusive basis

<sup>48</sup> When parents were asked about any other forms of childcare they were using, this was asked after whether they were using wraparound childcare, so they were asked to exclude wraparound childcare from their response. Other childcare included the codes as specified in Figure 88

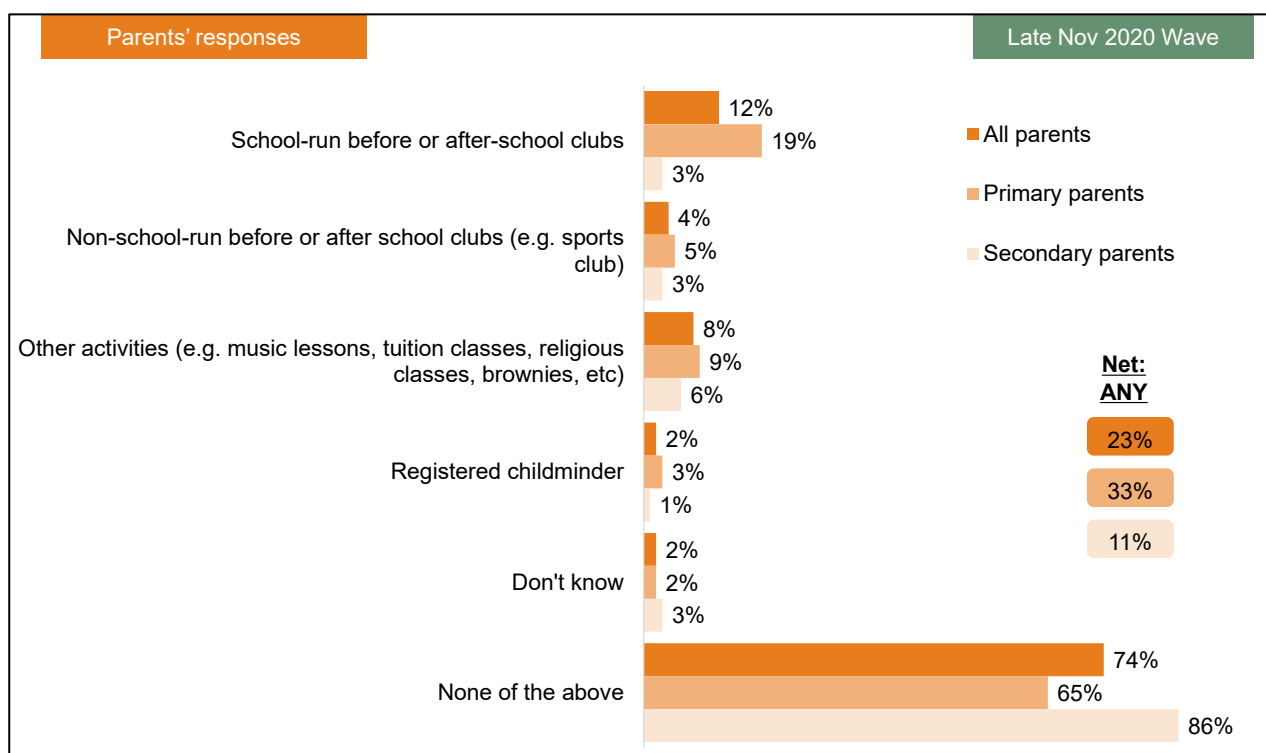
Parents in the North East were more than twice as likely than average to report using a support bubble for childcare (19% vs. 8%), parents in London were more likely than average to not be using any childcare (excluding wraparound childcare) (88% vs. 82%).

Whilst there was little significant difference by location of work (home/non-home) or employment status, parents in the highest household income bracket were more likely than those in the lowest household income to report not using any childcare (excluding wraparound childcare) (£100,000 or more 86% vs. £15,000 or less 74%).

## Childcare during November lockdown

In late November 2020, parents were asked which types of childcare or activities they had used for their child since the beginning of the November national lockdown restrictions (5<sup>th</sup> November 2020): 23% had used at least one, with school-run before or after-school clubs being the most popular (12%).

**Figure 93. Types of childcare used by parents during the November lockdown**



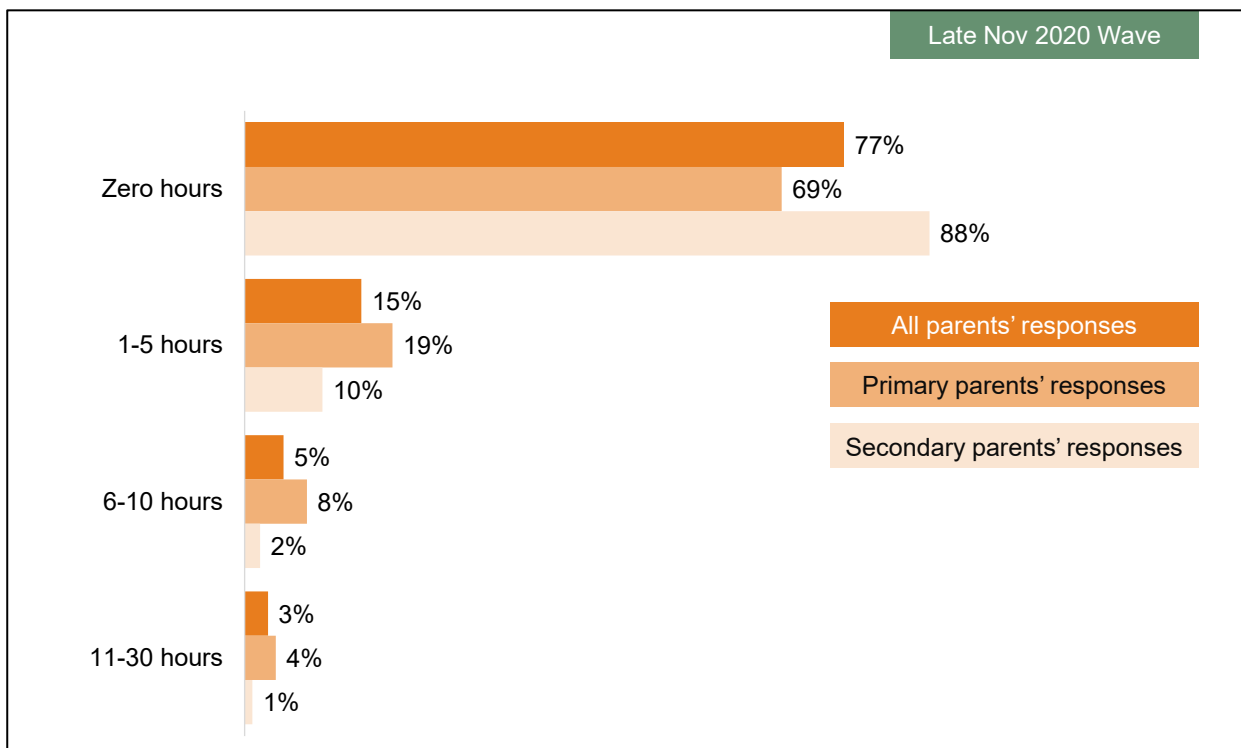
Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5 M19: “Which of the following types of childcare or activities have you used for your child since the beginning of the new national lockdown?” All parents (n=3,388)

Primary parents were more likely to have used any form of childcare compared to secondary parents (33% vs. 11%). Parents with a child eligible for FSM (free school meals) were less likely than those of non-FSM eligible pupils to have used any childcare

(17% vs. 25%) Parents with a child with SEND were less likely than parents overall to have used any childcare (19% vs. 23%).

When asked how many hours on average per week their child had spent in childcare or out of school activities, 77% had used zero hours, with 15% using 1-5 hours. Only 8% had used more than 6 hours on average per week.

**Figure 94. Hours parents reported child spent in childcare / out of school activities**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5 M20: “Since the beginning of the new national lockdown, how many hours on average per week has your child spent in childcare or out of school activities?” All parents (n=3,388). 31 hours or more not shown as <0.5% selected this option across all parent groups.

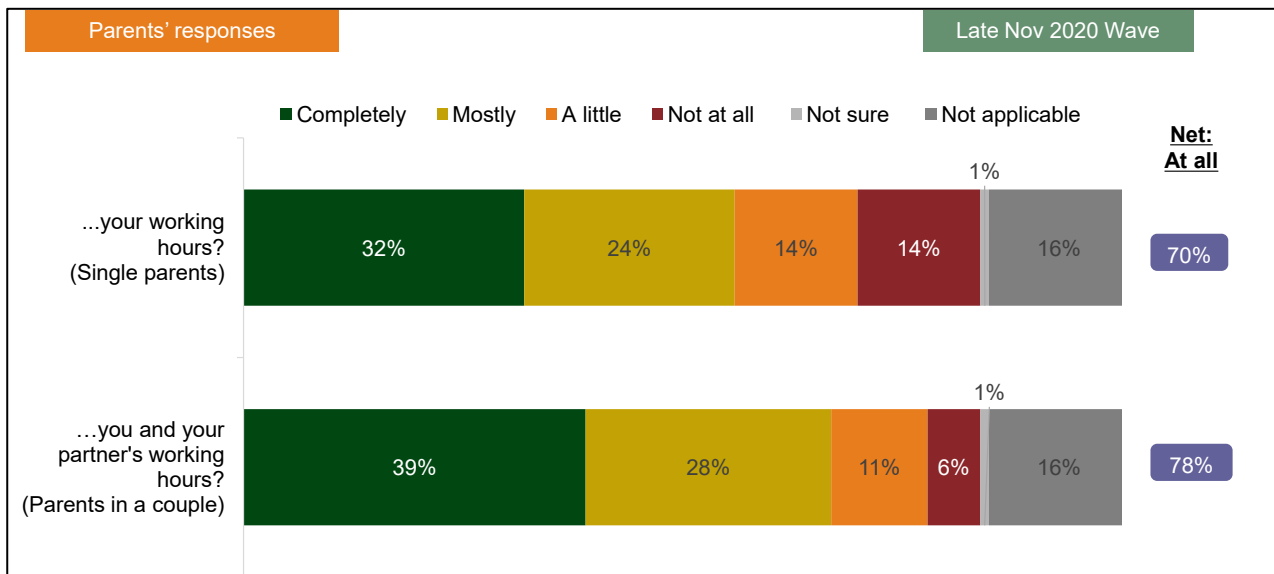
Primary parents were more likely to have used one or more hours of childcare compared to secondary parents (as shown in the chart below).

Parents with a child eligible for FSM were more likely to have used zero hours of childcare during the November national lockdown (83% vs. 75% of non-FSM parents), than the same findings for parents with a SEND child (81% vs. 76% of pupil without SEND).

Of parents who have used childcare activities during the November 2020 national restrictions (5<sup>th</sup> November 2020), 55% of parents in single parent households said this childcare has fitted in with their working hours ‘completely’ or ‘mostly’. This is lower than

the figure reported by parents living in a couple, answering for their and their partner's working hours (67%).

**Figure 95. Extent to which childcare activities fitted with parents working hours**



Source: PPP Late November 2020 Wave 5 M19/M91B: “Have the childcare or out of school activities you have used since the new national lockdown your child fit with... your working hours?” / “Have the childcare or out of school activities you have used since the new national lockdown your child fit with... your partners' working hours?” All single parents who have used childcare since 5th Nov (n=3133) / All parents in a couple who have used childcare since 5th Nov (n=572)

Primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to say that childcare fitted in ‘completely’ with their working hours (single parents: 36% vs. 18%) or their and their partner’s (parents in a couple: 42% vs. 27%).

Half of single parents with a child eligible for FSM (56%) said that childcare fitted with their working hours ‘at all’ compared to 76% of single parents with a non-FSM child. A similar pattern was reflected amongst parents in a couple (59% vs. 79%).

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) 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).

Many children and young people who have SEND may also have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’.

A pupil receives SEND Support when extra or different help is given from that provided as part of the school’s usual arrangements. A pupil has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan when a formal assessment has been made. A document is in place that sets out the child’s needs and the extra help they should receive.

Children and young people with SEND may have specific specialist support needs, including as set out in their EHC plan.<sup>49</sup> Specialist services include for example: Educational Psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), specialist teachers (e.g. with a mandatory qualification for children with hearing and vision impairment) and therapists (including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists).

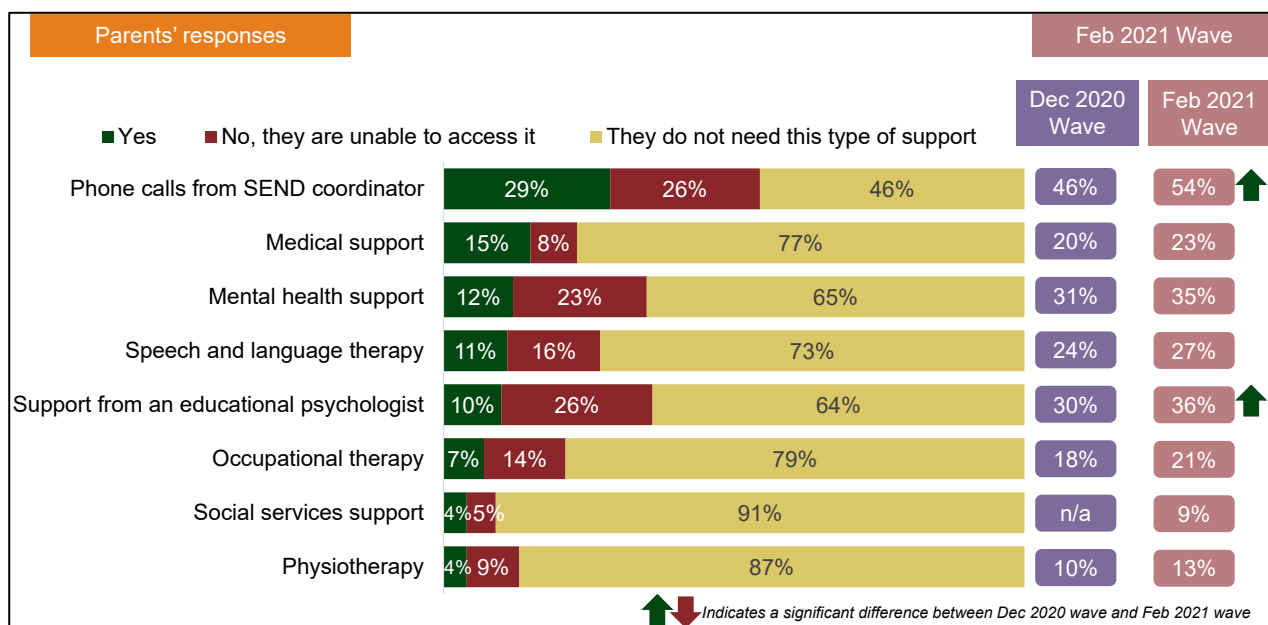
In February 2021, 15% of parents considered their child to have SEND (the same proportion to December 2020, but a significantly higher number compared to the 11% in August 2020). Of the 15% of parents who considered their child to have SEND (in February 2021), the most common types of support currently being received by their child were phone calls from a SEND coordinator (29%) and medical support (15%). Around a quarter of parents (26%) of SEND pupils reported being unable to access phone calls from a SEND coordinators or support from an education psychologist.

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<sup>49</sup> See Glossary for definition



**Figure 96. Parent views of the extent to which children considered to have SEND were able to access the required support**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 N12: "Is [PUPILNAME] currently receiving any of the following types of specialist support?" Parents who consider their child to have SEND (n=488).

As seen in Figure 96, the number of parents reporting their child needing either calls from a SEND coordinator (54% vs. 46%) or support from an educational psychologist (54% vs. 46%) increased from December 2020 to February 2021. These are the two forms of support which parents were most likely to report not being able to access.

Parents of primary pupils were twice as likely as secondary parents to report needing but not being able to access support from an educational psychologist (33% vs. 17%).

Similar to December 2020, primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to report their child needing speech and language therapy and accessing it (16% vs. 4%) as well as needing this support and not being able to access it (21% vs. 9%). Primary parents were more likely to report their child needing occupational therapy and receiving it (10% vs. 3%), as well as twice as likely to need it but be unable to access it (18% vs. 10%), compared to secondary parents.

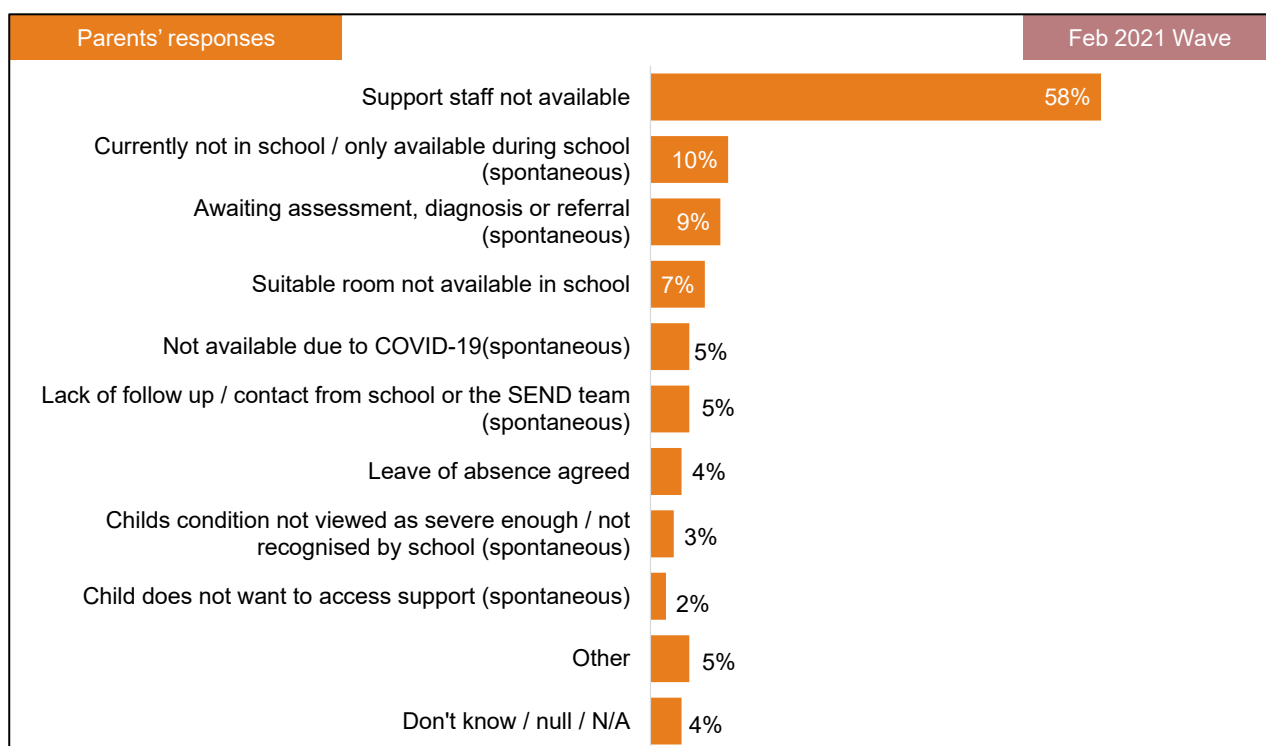
Parents of pupils with SEND who were also eligible for FSM were more likely to report not being able to access the following types of support (although needing to) compared to those with pupils with SEND but not FSM eligible: support from an educational psychologist (35% vs. 22%); and, mental health support (33% vs. 19%). These patterns were also seen in December 2020. A new pattern in February 2021 was for parents of

pupils eligible for FSM to be more likely to report needing but not receiving access to occupational therapy (20% vs. 12%), as well as phone calls from SEND coordinator (33% vs. 22%).

## Reasons for issues in accessing specialist support

In February 2021, parents who experienced issues accessing support for their child with SEND were asked why. Around three-in-five (58%) parents reported this was due to support staff not being available.<sup>50</sup> Not currently attending school / support only being available during school were the next most common reasons for support not being accessed (10%), followed by their child awaiting assessment, diagnosis, or referral (9%), both answers given spontaneously under the “other – please specify” response option in this wave.

**Figure 97. Parent views on why child is not able to access specialist support**



<sup>50</sup> The response code options given to parents were different between November (wave 6) and December (wave 7) so direct comparisons between waves aren't reported

## Mass testing

This chapter reports parents' understanding and views of mass testing for COVID-19 in schools which were included in the surveys in December 2020 and February 2021.

### Knowledge of mass testing

In December 2020, the vast majority of parents (86%) had heard of massing testing for COVID-19. Two-thirds (65%) had heard of mass testing and knew what it was, while a fifth (21%) had heard of mass testing but were not sure what it meant.

The following sub-groups were more likely to have heard of mass testing for COVID-19:

- Male parents vs. female parents (91% vs. 85%)
- Parents in a rural area vs. urban area (90% vs. 85%)
- White parents vs. BAME parents (89% vs. 76%)
- Non-FSM parents vs. FSM parents (88% vs. 79%).

Parents of primary pupils were more likely than secondary parents to have heard of mass testing but were not sure what it was (22% vs. 18%), and the same was true for FSM parents compared to non-FSM parents (26% vs. 19%).

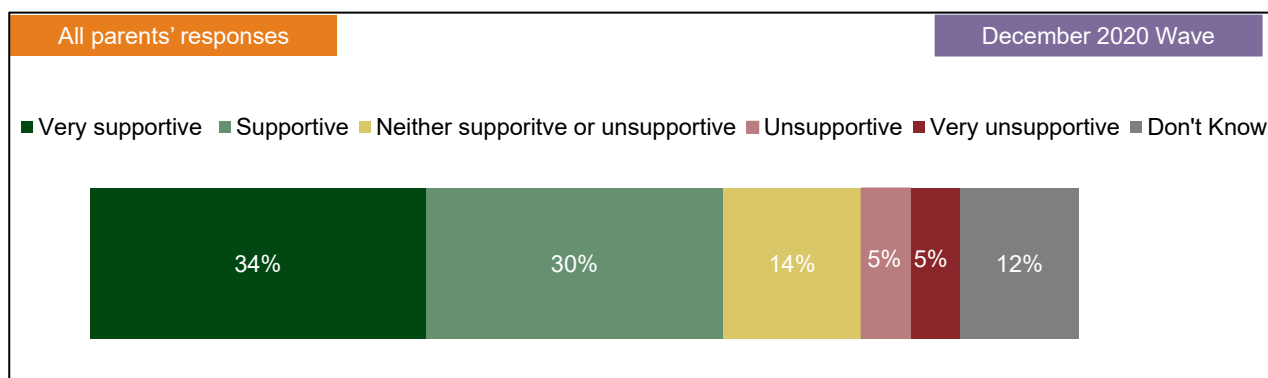
### Views on mass testing in schools

Almost two-thirds (64%) of all parents were supportive of their child being part of mass testing in school; one-in-ten (10%) were unsupportive. The remaining parents either responded 'don't know' (12%) or were neither supportive nor unsupportive (14%).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> This question was asked for all parents, including the 14% of parents who had not heard of mass testing and the 21% who had heard of it but were not sure what it was. This may explain why there is a relatively higher number of don't know responses to this question.

**Figure 98. Parents level of support for their child being part of COVID-19 mass testing in schools**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 AD2: “Considering what you know mass testing to mean, or what you think it might mean having now heard of it, how supportive or unsupportive would you be of your child/children being part of mass testing for COVID-19 in schools?” All parents (n=3,237)

Parents of secondary pupils were more supportive of their child being involved in mass testing in schools compared to parents of primary pupils (73% vs. 57%).

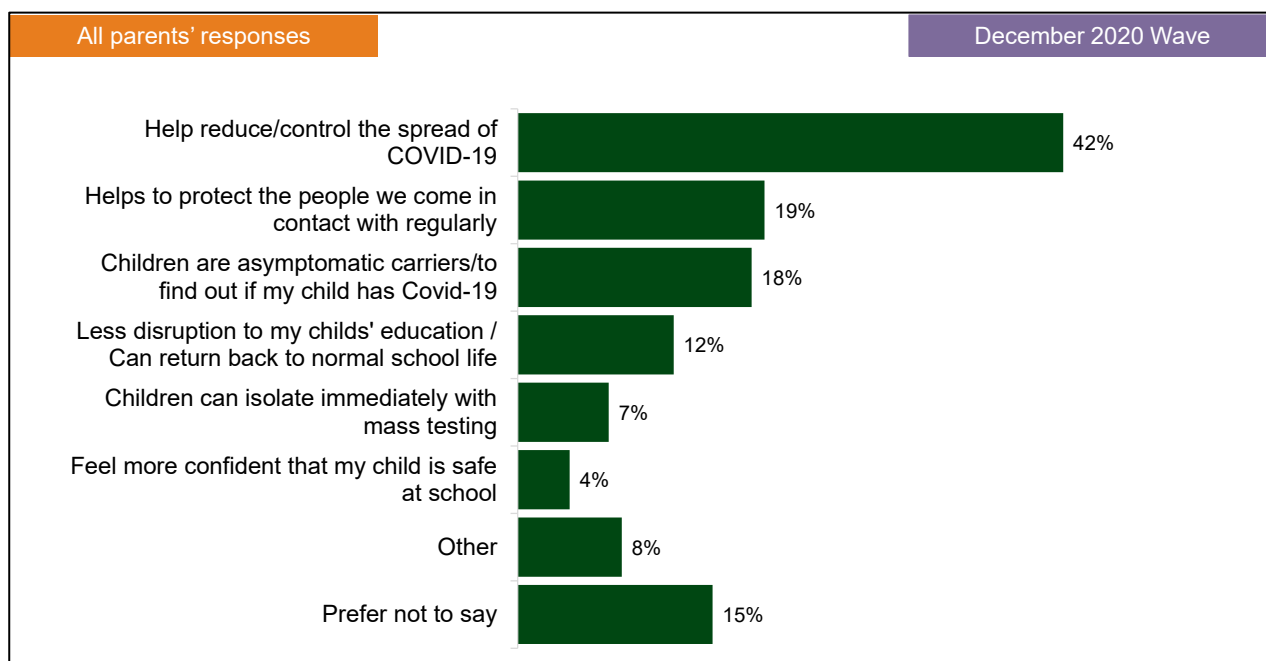
The following parent groups were significantly more likely to be supportive of mass testing:

- Male parents compared to female parents (73% vs. 63%)
- Rural parents compared to urban parents (72% vs. 62%)
- White parents compared to BAME parents (68% vs. 52%)
- Non-FSM parents compared to FSM parents (68% vs. 47%).

### Reasons for support of mass testing

Helping to reduce/control the spread of COVID-19 was the main reason why parents were supportive of their child being part of mass testing (42%) in December 2020. Parents were also supportive due to an understanding that children can be asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 (18%) and to help protect the people they and their child come into contact with regularly (19%).

**Figure 99. Reasons for support of their child’s involvement in COVID-19 mass testing in schools (spontaneous responses)**



Source: PPP December 2020 Wave 6 AD3: “What are the main reasons you are supportive of your child/children being part of mass testing for COVID-19 in schools?” All parents who were supportive of mass testing (n=2,183)

The findings in the chart above come from an open-ended question. The following quotes provide example responses given by parents.

***What are the main reasons you are supportive of your child/children being part of mass testing for COVID-19 in schools?***

*“To ensure his safety, along with his classmates and school staff. Anymore lost time/time out of school will be detrimental, so if this would ensure schools could stay open, I would be fully supportive.”*

**Parent of a male pupil in Year 5**

*“To ensure children who have Covid (asymptomatic) are identified so that spread is less likely in school and to the wider community.”*

**Parent of a female pupil in Year 11**

*“If it keeps the rate of infection down, I’m happy for my child to be tested. This then allows schools to react and put more measures in place to keep the children safe.”*

**Parent of a male pupil in Year 3**

## Consent to COVID-19 testing in school

In the February 2021 wave, parents were asked whether their child's school had asked whether they consented to their child being tested for COVID-19 in school. A quarter (25%) of parents had been asked. This was much higher among secondary parents (54%) than primary parents (3%). This is likely due to the intended policy roll out of testing in secondary schools in early January 2021, before schools closed to the majority of pupils.

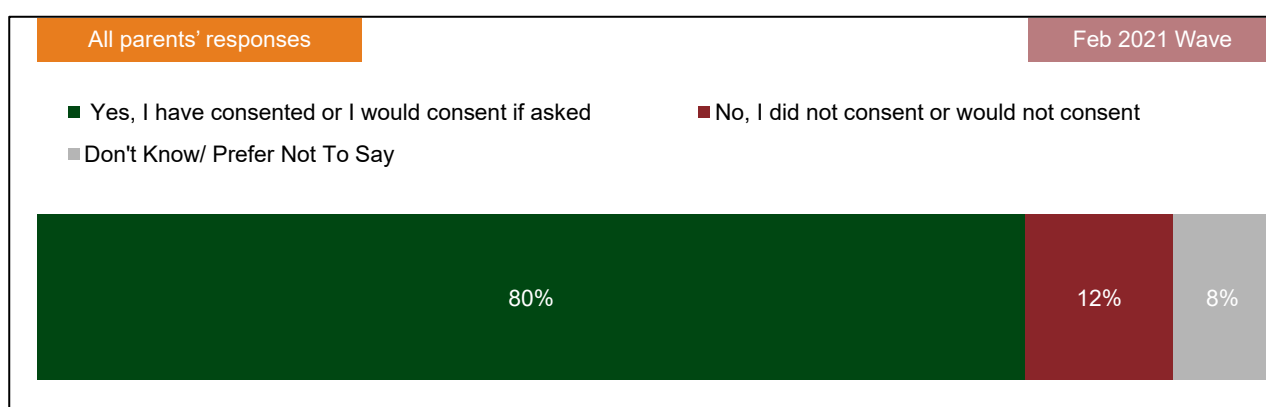
Parents in the following subgroups were more likely to have been asked if they consented:

- White parents vs. BAME parents (27% vs. 17%)
- Parents of SEND pupils vs. parents of non-SEND pupils (30% vs. 24%)
- Parents in rural areas vs. urban areas (29% vs. 24%)
- Parents in the South West vs. the average of all regions (30% vs. 25%)

## Parents level of consent for mass testing in schools

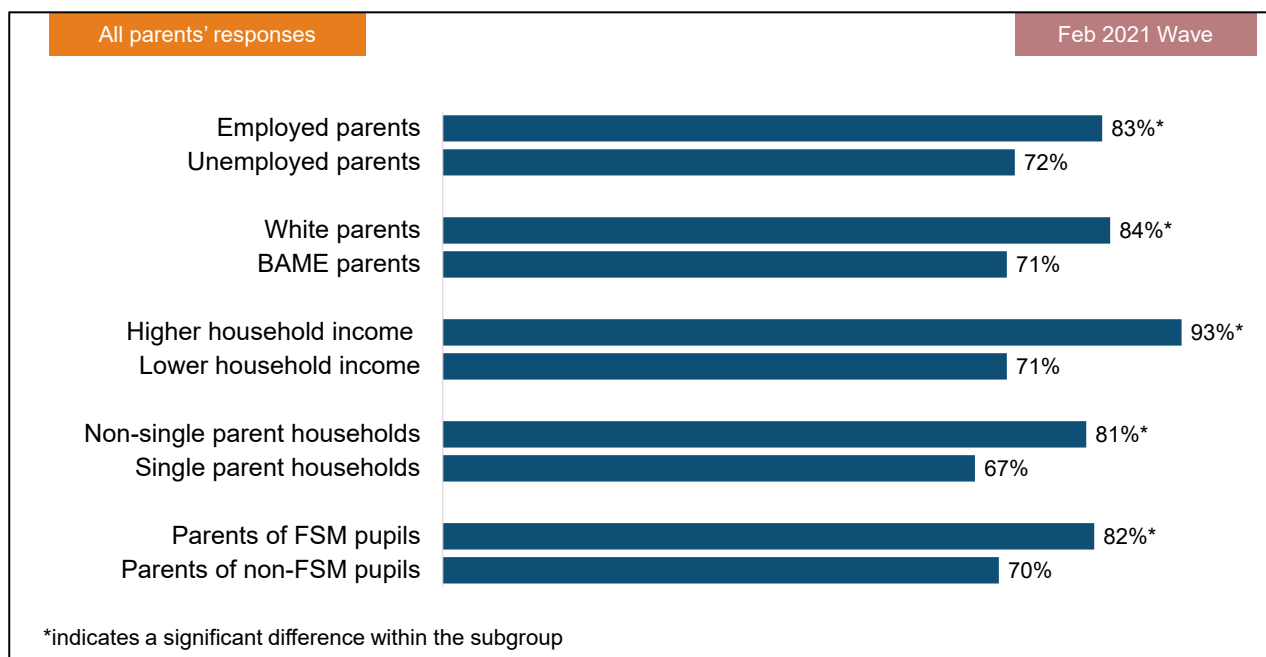
Figure 100 shows the level of consent given by parents who had already been asked to provide consent by their child's school, as well as the speculative consent that parents would or would not give if asked. In total, four-in-five (80%) parents had either already given consent, or would give consent for their child to be tested for COVID-19 in school if they were asked. Just over-in-ten (12%) said they did not or would not consent to this.

**Figure 100. Parents' level of consent for their child to be tested for COVID-19 in school**



Parents of secondary pupils were more likely than primary parents to report consenting/intending to consent to their child being tested for COVID-19 in school (85%) compared to primary parents (76%). As shown in Figure 101, there are high levels of statistically significant differences between subgroups.

**Figure 101. Parents' level of consent for their child to be tested for COVID-19 in school, by subgroup**



<sup>52</sup>. White parents (n=2,568). BAME parents (n=363). Higher income households (n=244). Lower income households (n=352).<sup>53</sup> Non-single parent (n=2,952). Single parent households (n=130). Parents of FSM-eligible pupils (n=498). Parents of non-FSM-eligible pupils (n=2,584)

As well as the subgroups identified in Figure 101, smaller yet still noteworthy subgroup differences existed, with the following parents were more likely to have given consent/or being prepared to give consent if asked:

- Male parents versus female parents (85% vs. 81%)
- Parents in rural areas versus parents in urban areas (86% vs. 79%).
- Parents in the South East (83%) and the South West (86%) vs. parents in the West Midlands (74%) and the North West (77%)

<sup>52</sup> Employment status is based on parents self-reported data in February 2021.

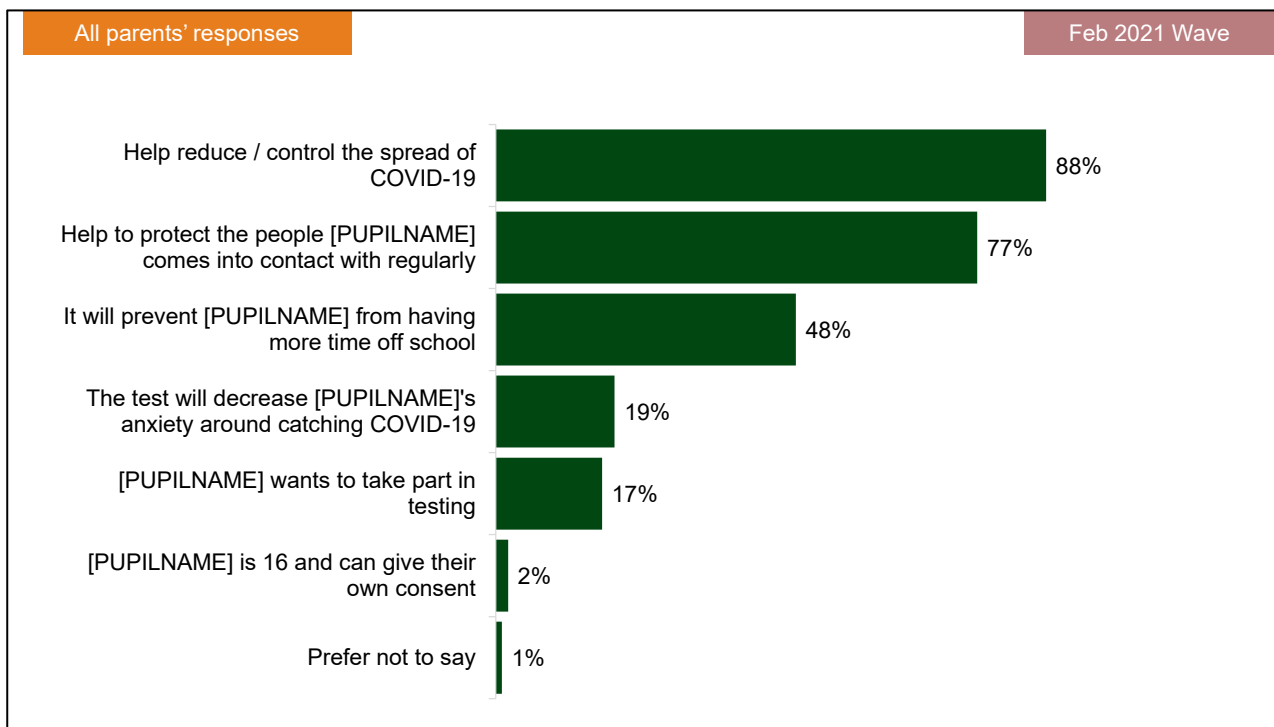
<sup>53</sup> Higher income is households with a year income of over £100,000, lower income households are households with less than £15,000 a year income.

- Parents who are critical / key workers (85% vs. 77% among those not)
- Parents who were worried about COVID-19 in August (82% vs. 74%).

## Reasons for consenting to COVID-19 testing in school

Helping to reduce and control the spread of COVID-19 was the main reason (88%) given by parents for consenting (or being prepared to give consent) to their child being tested for COVID-19 in schools. Parents were motivated to consent to testing because they thought it would help protect people their child comes into contact with regularly (77%) and prevent their child from having more time off school (48%).

**Figure 102. Parents reasons for supporting their child being tested for COVID-19 in school**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 AD8: “Which of the following reasons, if any, are why you gave/you would give consent?” Parents who would consent or who have already consented to their child being tested in schools (n=2,545).

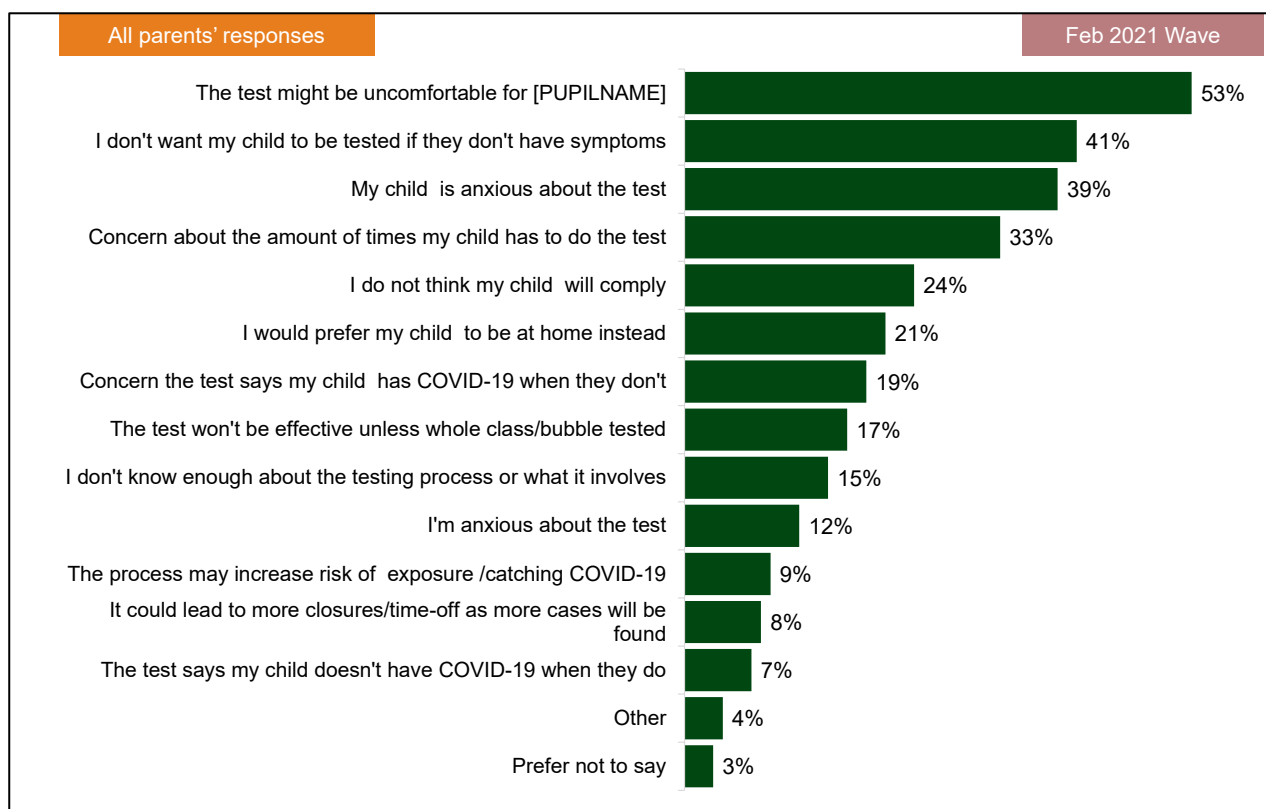
There were only a few substantially significant subgroup differences for this question. BAME parents were less likely than White parents to report helping to control/reduce the spread of COVID-19 (38% vs. 50%) or preventing their child from having more time off school (81% vs. 90%) as reasons for consenting.



## Reasons for not consenting to COVID-19 testing in school

The parents who did not or would not consent to their child being tested for COVID-19 in school were asked why this was. The most common reason given by around half of these parents was concern about the test being uncomfortable for their child (53%). This was followed by not wanting their child to be tested if they did not have symptoms (41%).

**Figure 103. Parents reasons for not supporting their child for being tested for COVID-19 in school**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 AD9: "Which of the following reasons, if any, are why you did not /you would not give consent?" Parents who would not consent or who have already not consented to their child being tested in schools (n=330).

Parents of primary school pupils were almost twice as likely to not consent in case the test might be uncomfortable for their child, compared to secondary parents (59% vs. 35%). They were also more likely to report that they thought their child would not comply with the test (28% vs. 12%) or they did not want their child to be tested if they had no symptoms (46% vs. 29%), compared to secondary parents.

Of parents who would not consent/have already not consented, parents of FSM-eligible pupils were twice as likely to report wanting their child to be at home instead for testing, compared to non-FSM parents (32% vs. 17%), or that the testing process may increase

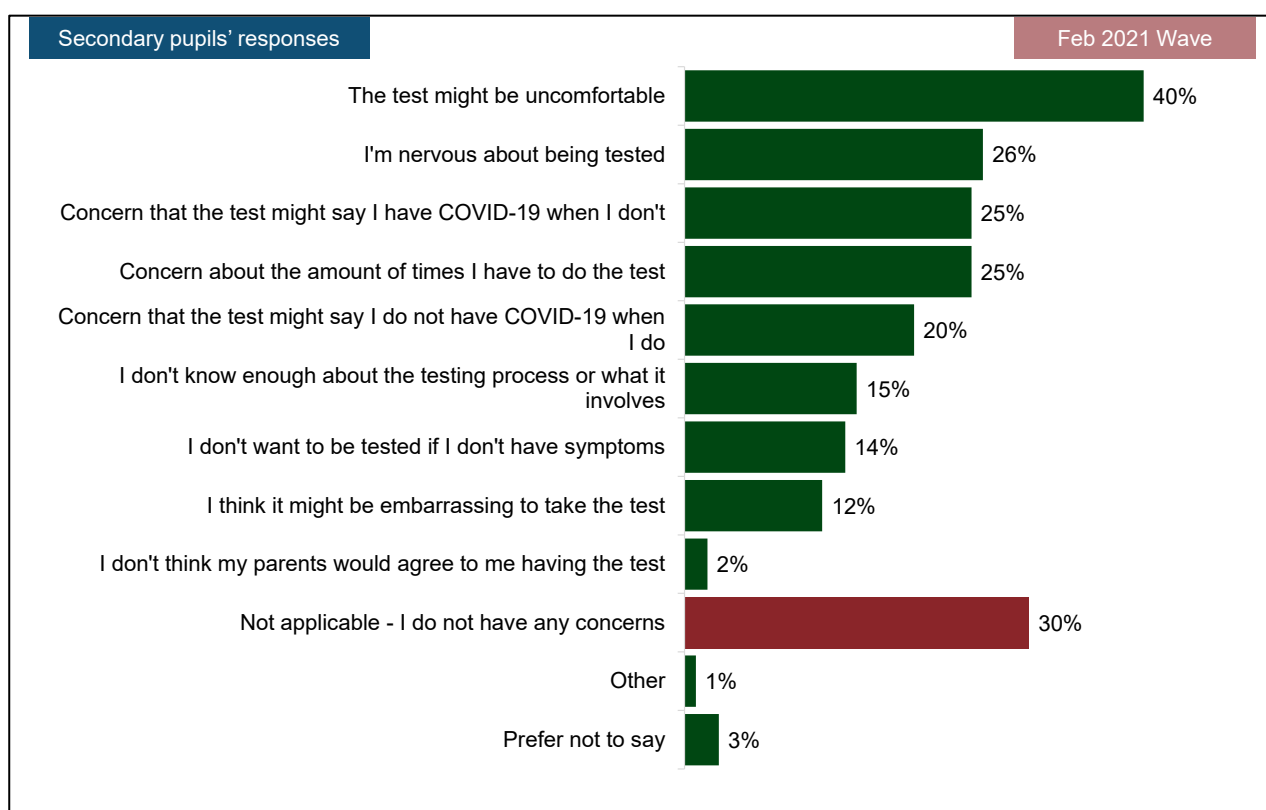
risk of exposure and/or catching COVID-19 (15% vs. 6%), whereas non-FSM parents were more worried about the test being uncomfortable (57% vs. 42%).

## Pupils feeling about mass tasting in schools

In February 2021, all secondary pupils were asked if they had any concerns about taking a COVID-19 test in school.

Three-in-ten (30%) pupils had no concerns about taking a COVID-19 test in school. The most common concern was that the test might be uncomfortable (40%), followed by a concern that the test might not be reliable (30%).<sup>54</sup>

**Figure 104. Pupils concerns about being tested for COVID-19 in school**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave 7 AD10: "Which, if any, of the following concerns do you have around taking a COVID-19 test in school?" All pupils (n=1,537).

Female pupils were more likely to report being concerned by each and every one of these reasons than male pupils. Being nervous for the test, and the test potentially being embarrassing were the reasons in which female pupils were the most concerned,

<sup>54</sup> Combining "the test saying they had COVID-19 when they did not" and "the test saying they did not have COVID-19 when they did"

compared to male pupils (31% vs. 21% and 17% vs. 8%). Male pupils were more likely than female pupils to report having no concerns about being tested for COVID-19 in school (36% vs. 23%).

Older pupils (year 11-13) were slightly more concerned about the reliability of the test than younger pupils (year 7-10) (36% vs. 29%), whilst younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to report being nervous about the test (28% vs. 21%) or being concerned about the number of times they would need to take the test (43% vs. 34%).

White pupils were more likely than BAME pupils to report having the following concerns about taking a COVID-19 test in school:

- Concern about the number of times you have to do a test (27% vs. 20%)
- Being nervous about the test (28% vs. 20%)
- Potentially being embarrassed about taking a test (14% vs. 6%)

## Support package awareness

The Government is aware that extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education and are committed to helping pupils make up learning lost as a result of the pandemic.

In June 2020, the Government announced a £1bn catch-up package:

- A 'Catch Up Premium' worth a total of £650m to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. The expectation is that this funding will be spent on the additional activities required to support children and young people to catch up after a period of disruption to their education.
- A £350 million National Tutoring Programme to reach hundreds of thousands of pupils. The programme was set up to increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers.

In late November 2020, three-in-five parents (61%) were not aware of the Government's £1 billion support package for schools 31% said they were aware of it (7% were not sure).

Primary parents were less likely than secondary parents (30% vs. 33%) to be aware of the support package.

Other parents less aware included:

- Parents with a child eligible for FSM (20% vs. 34% among those not eligible)
- Parents in urban areas (30% vs. 36% among those in rural areas)
- Unemployed parents (17% vs. 34% among those employed)
- BAME parents (24% vs. 34% among White parents)
- Parents in a single parent household (16% vs. 32% among other parents).

## Conclusion

This report sets out findings from three waves of the PPP, covering the second half of the autumn term to February 2021, thus capturing another difficult period for pupils, their parents, and the education system. The first two waves were conducted at a time when schools were open to the majority of pupils, whilst the third wave was conducted during the third national lockdown, when schools were closed to most pupils.

The findings build on the picture shown in the August to October findings report that almost every pupil and parent who shared their views through the panel has had their lives affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in some way. This report captures some of their experiences and the range of ways that young people and their parents have coped and/or adjusted. It shows some progress made to help better support pupils during this time, for example showing increased access to technology for remote education.

One area which is brought into sharp focus in this report is how the pandemic has impacted pupils' mental health and wellbeing over the past six months. In particular, learning remotely from home and the nature of lockdown restrictions combined have negatively impacted pupils' anxiousness, happiness, and loneliness levels.

The report continues to illustrate the fact that the experiences of pupils and parents have not been universal, and that different families have faced different challenges and opportunities. Specifically, around their children's education, findings have shown some pupils have faced more extensive barriers to their learning than others. The report clearly shows the patterns of variation within key subgroups of interest, such as those who have a member of their household at high risk, those with SEND, or pupils who are eligible for FSM. It highlights the significant challenges that the education system faces to enable all young people, but especially those who have been more negatively impacted during this time, to realise their potential.

The COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel Survey will continue into 2021 and the DfE plans to conduct at least three more waves during the remainder of the academic year 2020/21. They will continue to help DfE make evidence-based policy decisions, monitor the impact of the COVID-19 / post-COVID-19 situation, and see how views and experiences of parents and pupils change over time.

## Glossary

**CIN – Children in Need.** This is a broad definition spanning a wide range of children and adolescents, in need of varying types of support and intervention, for a variety of reasons. A child is defined as ‘in need’ under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, where:

- They are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for them of services by a local authority.
- Their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for them of such services; or
- They are disabled

**EHC Plan – Education Health and Care plan.** This is a legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs and explains the extra help that will be given to meet those needs and how that help will support the child or young person,

**FSM – Free School Meal.** Eligibility for FSMs is used as a proxy for socioeconomic status. Pupils eligible for FSMs were considered to be living in greater socioeconomic deprivation than those pupils who were not eligible for FSMs.

**Key worker/critical worker** – Parents whose work is critical to COVID-19 and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the government guidance. Children of critical workers and vulnerable children have been able to still access schools or educational settings during periods when they have been closed to the majority of pupils. The term ‘critical worker’ has also been used to describe these workers. This report uses the term ‘key worker’ throughout as this reflects the wording used within the surveys.

**SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability.** A child or young person has SEND 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.

Many children and young people who have SEND may also have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and

substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision they will also be covered by the SEN definition.

For more detail, please see the [SEND Code of Practice](#).

**BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.** Includes all ethnicities other than White and Unclassified.



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