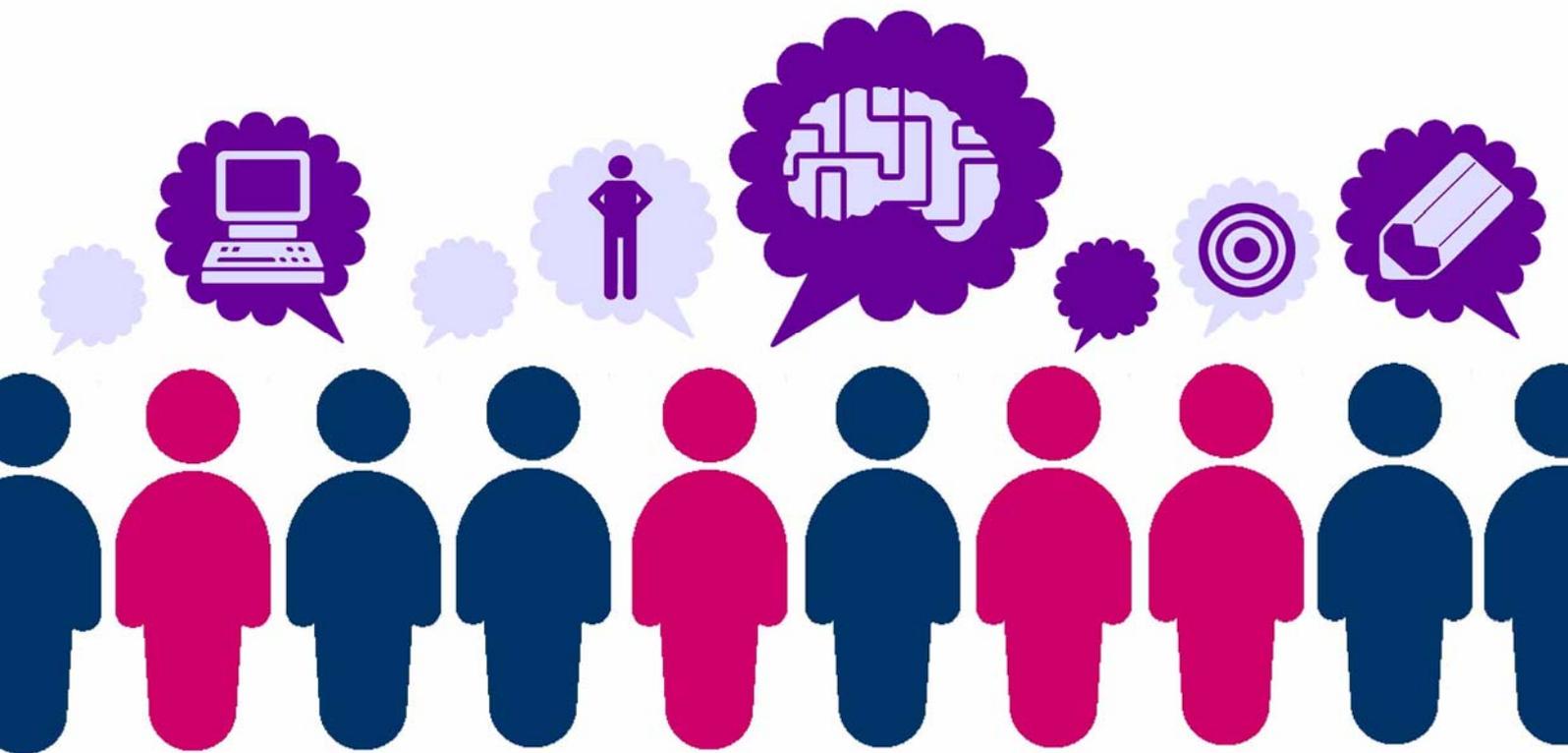




Office of the Children's Commissioner:

# Children and young people's views of education policy

March 2011



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## Foreword from the Children's Commissioner

Children and young people spend around a third of their waking hours at school. They are the end users of education. The quality of education they receive will affect their chances in life more than almost anything else. Given their experiences, they are arguably more knowledgeable about what happens in schools than many in the adult world who are engaged in policy debates about education. Over the course of a school career, children and young people experience several successive sets of school rules, dozens of different teaching styles, and thousands of individual lessons. They experience different versions of the national curriculum, several different behaviour policies, and the end results of multiple policy initiatives and associated funding formulae. They experience, and if we ask them they give us their cogent opinions on what works, what doesn't, and why.

Yet we infrequently ask them for their opinions on or wishes for the system. The debate is dominated by adults, many of whom may not have been into a classroom for many years for more than a fleeting visit.

Under the terms of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a treaty we signed almost 20 years ago, all children under 18 have a right to have their views heard on decisions which affect their lives. Their experiences in school will affect their lives profoundly, usually for the good but sadly sometimes not. This fact alone makes it important that their views are taken seriously.

That is why we commissioned this research. It examines what young people think of their time at school, and what they think the Government and others with influence and power should focus on. As England's Children's Commissioner, I will use this research's findings in my work to ensure children and young people's views are taken seriously by local and central government, governing bodies and others in developing policy.

I would like to thank the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) for carrying out this research, particularly Tamsin Chamberlain, Sarah Golden and Caroline Bergeron. Mostly, however, I would like to thank the almost 2,000 school pupils from across England who told us what they think, and whose voices and views are so richly reported in this research.



**Dr Maggie Atkinson**  
**Children's Commissioner for England**

**March 2011**

**Office of the Children's Commissioner: Children and young people's views of education policy**

**March 2011**

## **About the Office of the Children's Commissioner**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

As the Office of the Children's Commissioner, it is our statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately and in line with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

# Executive summary

## Aims and methods

This research aimed to build, from the point of view of children and young people, a strong evidence base of what works in educational policy and what does not. This research report will support the Children's Commissioner in her work to promote children's rights. More specifically, the research sought to collect children and young people's views on:

- their school experience and what it was like to be a 'consumer' of education in the latter part of 2010
- which issues within education they felt to be most important
- what makes a good teacher
- fairness in the school admissions system
- fairness in the school exclusions system.

The research was carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). It involved both quantitative and qualitative methods:

- a quantitative online survey with a representative sample of children and young people aged between nine and 16 years old (school year groups five to 11) primarily to gauge *what* their views are; and
- qualitative focus groups with children and young people, including under-represented groups whose voice may not be heard through other means, to gauge *why* children and young people hold such views and what they feel works and what does not, based on their own experiences in school.

In total, just over 2,000 children and young people participated in research with 1,957 participating in the online survey and 47 participating in the eight focus groups.

## Key findings

### *What do children and young people think about their schools and teachers?*

- Generally, children and young people recognised the value of school in supporting their learning and achievement. But enjoyment was not quite as widespread with about three in five enjoying school and half finding their lessons interesting. Pressure to achieve was an issue for some, with about half worrying about school work and exams and about a third feeling their school puts too much pressure on them to do well, and a quarter feeling their parents/carers put too much pressure on them to do well at school.
- School councils were considered effective in listening to people's ideas about school in about two in five cases. School councils provide a more formal method of ensuring children's rights to their opinions are taken into account, in accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The evidence therefore suggests that schools may require additional support or advice to develop further the effectiveness of their school councils.
- Children and young people were generally more positive about their teachers' ability to help and support pupils, than about their ability to deal with disruptive behaviour. Children and young people considered there to be many qualities and skills that make a good teacher and it was not dependent on just one or two factors. These included knowledge of the subject being taught, dealing with bullying and supporting pupils.
- Children and young people (particularly those in secondary school) tended to report that they could tell when teachers were not very good, but they were not so likely to report this issue to an adult at school, compared to those in primary school. This suggests that further reporting mechanisms may be needed in schools (and particularly secondary schools) to encourage children and young people to share their concerns about teaching quality in an appropriate way.
- Only about one in five children and young people reported involvement in teacher recruitment, but a majority reported that they would like to be involved.

### *What do children and young people think about the admissions process for secondary schools?*

- About half of the children and young people reported that they understood the secondary school admissions process but this did not seem to differ according to age. In terms of perceptions of the secondary school admissions process, there were some who found it worrying and confusing, but more reported that they did not.

- A large majority of the children and young people felt that all pupils should be able to go to the school of their choice, but less than half felt that there was a real choice of secondary schools within their area.
- Children and young people's perceptions of fairness in the admissions system were mixed but more felt the way secondary schools allocate places was fair compared to those who did not. Overall, children and young people were more in favour of selection criteria that related to an individual's performance (ability and aptitude), rather than criteria that related to their personal circumstances or culture (being in care and religion). While about three in five felt that schools should be able to select pupils by their ability, only one in five children and young people felt that schools should be able to select pupils because of their religion.

### ***What do children and young people think about exclusions?***

- Children and young people's perceptions of school exclusion rates showed a mixed picture. Although about a third of children and young people felt that the number of exclusions in their school was about right, a quarter felt that too many pupils were excluded and about one in eight felt there were too few. Additionally, those who had been excluded from school were more likely to report that their school's exclusion rates were too high, compared to overall.
- Overall, children and young people were more accepting of short-term exclusions than of longer-term or permanent exclusions. Only about one in seven children and young people felt that they were 'always' used fairly. One in nine reported that they felt exclusions were 'never' used fairly and about three in five felt that they were 'sometimes' used fairly in their school.
- Perceptions on reasons why pupils should be excluded varied with rule breaking being considered as a legitimate reason for exclusion, at least 'sometimes', by about three-quarters of children and young people, compared to frequent disruption to lessons being considered as a legitimate reason for exclusion, at least 'sometimes', by half of children and young people. Again, the responses from those who had been excluded themselves were slightly more negative about exclusions with a higher proportion reporting that pupils should 'never' be excluded for these reasons. Overall, the vast majority of all respondents felt that schools should help pupils, at least 'sometimes', with their problems instead of excluding them.
- The survey findings showed that, overall, there was uncertainty over the exclusion appeals process with around two in five children and young people reporting they were unsure about who they can speak to and how to appeal. But there was a greater level of understanding of the appeals process by those who had been excluded from school, compared to overall.

***What are children and young people's main priorities related to their education?***

- The most important priorities for children and young people to improve their school life and education were preventing bullying and having good teachers. Other top priorities focused around the quality of learning opportunities, support to achieve in exams, and secondary school admissions.
- Concerns around bullying decreased with age – it was a concern to a greater proportion of younger children, compared to older young people, whereas older young people (particularly in year groups 10 and 11) were generally more likely to note the importance of having good teachers compared to younger children.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 All children and young people's human rights are recognised under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This international human rights treaty came into force in the UK in 1992. It includes the following Articles<sup>1</sup> that are relevant to this study:
- **Articles 1, 2 and 3** refer to all children and young people having rights, without discrimination, and that adults should always try to do what is best for children and young people.
  - **Article 12** states that children and young people have the right to express their views freely about matters which affect them.
  - **Articles 28 and 29** refer to children and young people's right to an education that enables them to develop individually and understand respect. The articles also stipulate that government must ensure children and young people have information about education and ensure that school discipline protects the dignity of children and young people.
  - **Article 41** sets out that the rights of children and young people through the UNCRC are the minimum standards and that any laws that protect children's rights better than the articles of the Convention should stay in force.
- 1.2 Education is clearly an important part of the lives of children and young people as they spend a significant proportion of their time in school and their experience of educational policies in practice and the quality of teaching are central to this. Children and young people are therefore well-placed to comment on what works well and what does not within the education system.
- 1.3 The importance of collecting sound research evidence was highlighted in Dr John Dunford's independent review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner.<sup>2</sup> One of the recommendations arising from the review focused on the role of the Office of the Children's Commissioner in advising on children's rights issues by collecting evidence through gathering children's views via research or other investigations.

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Rights Alliance for England, 2011. CRAE's summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child [online]. See: <http://www.crae.org.uk/rights/uncrc.html> [accessed 19 January 2011].

<sup>2</sup> 'Review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner (England)' (Cm. 7981), Dunford, 2010. See: <http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Cm-7981.pdf> [accessed 10 December, 2010].

- 1.4 This research is intended to strengthen the evidence base on children and young people's views on aspects of education policy to support the Children's Commissioner in their role of promoting children's rights.

### **Aims**

- 1.5 This research aims to build a strong evidence base of what works and what does not in educational policy from the perspective of children and young people. More specifically, it seeks to collect children and young people's views on:
- their school experience and what it is like to be a 'consumer' of education in the latter part of 2010
  - which issues within education they felt to be most important
  - what makes a good teacher
  - fairness in the school admissions system
  - fairness in the school exclusions system.

### **Research methods**

- 1.6 The research was undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research on behalf of the Office of the Children's Commissioner in autumn 2010. It involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. We undertook a quantitative online survey with a representative sample of children and young people aged between nine and 16 years old (school year groups 5 to 11) primarily to gauge *what* their views were. We also undertook qualitative focus groups with children and young people, including under-represented groups whose voice may not be heard through other means, to gauge *why* children and young people held such views and what they felt works and what does not, based on their own experiences in school. Children aged between nine and 16 years were selected because they were considered to be in a position to comment on the range of education-related issues identified and it was important to include the views of those in years 5 and 6 for whom issues regarding transition from primary to secondary school and school choice would be particularly pertinent.

### **Quantitative survey**

- 1.7 The size of the survey sample was chosen to ensure the data would provide robust and reliable evidence, precise to plus or minus four per cent for the sample as a whole. In order to draw a representative sample of children and young people in school year groups 5 to 11 (ages nine to 16), a separate sample was drawn for primary, secondary and special schools. The schools (all state-funded) were sampled from the National Foundation for Education al

Research's register of schools, using the following three school-level stratifiers to ensure representativeness:

- Government office region
- Free school meals (FSM) eligibility
- school type.

- 1.8 A total of 180 primary and secondary schools (including pupil referral units (PRUs)) were sampled, with the aim of recruiting 54 schools (30% response rate) and achieving responses from 840 children and young people. Separately, we sampled 40 special schools, with the aim of recruiting 12 special schools and achieving responses from 235 children and young people. This sample was not split according to year group, but we asked schools to involve children and young people who they felt were able to complete the online survey. Details of the actual achieved samples are given below.
- 1.9 The online anonymous survey contained a total of 25 closed questions – the same questions were asked to all children and young people who participated. The survey was administered in schools to classes of pupils by school staff, following instructions provided by the research team. Children and young people, their parents/carers and schools were all given the opportunity to decline participation if they so wished and relevant information on the purpose of the survey was provided to these three groups.
- 1.10 In total, 1957 children and young people's responses were included in the cleaned dataset. This was a greater number than the target of 1,075, but represented fewer schools (25) than the target. An analysis of how representative the sample was showed that the survey results were robust enough to give reliable results. The representativeness was further enhanced by weighting the data using propensity score matching to get close agreement across a number of key variables (year group, gender, FSM eligibility, and ethnicity). The table below compares the characteristics of this age group nationally, compared to the unweighted and weighted survey respondents.

**Table 1.1: Comparing the characteristics of the survey respondents with those nationally**

		Population (using the National Pupil Database school years 5 to 11)	Survey respondents (unweighted)		Survey respondents (weighted)
		%	<i>Frequency</i>	%	%
<b>Year Group</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	13.8	139	7.1	13.8
	<b>Year 6</b>	14.2	422	21.6	13.8
	<b>Year 7</b>	14.2	569	29.1	14.0
	<b>Year 8</b>	14.5	407	20.8	14.6
	<b>Year 9</b>	14.3	53	2.7	14.4
	<b>Year 10</b>	14.5	237	12.1	14.5
	<b>Year 11</b>	14.6	130	6.6	14.9
<b>Total</b>		100.0	1,957	100.0	100.0
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	51.1	947	48.8	52.4
	<b>Female</b>	48.9	995	51.2	47.6
<b>Total</b>		100.0	1,942	100.0	100.0
<b>Eligible for free school meals?</b>	<b>Not Eligible</b>	83.6	1,593	83.7	83.0
	<b>Eligible</b>	16.4	311	16.3	17.0
<b>Total</b>		100.0	1,904	100.0	100.0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>White</b>	81.1	1,558	79.6	82.3

	<b>Asian</b>	8.1	160	8.2	6.5
	<b>Black</b>	4.6	67	3.4	4.8
	<b>Mixed</b>	3.7	74	3.8	3.6
	<b>Other ethnic group</b>	1.6	47	2.4	1.8
	<b>Prefer not to say</b>	0.6	44	2.2	0.5
	<b>Information not obtained</b>	0.4	7	0.4	0.5
<b>Total</b>		100.0%	1,957	100.0%	100.0%

Table 1.1 shows that:

- The year group spread of the weighted survey respondents is similar to the proportion nationally to within 0.4%.
- The gender split of the weighted survey respondents is similar to the split nationally to within 1.3%.
- The proportion eligible for FSM within the weighted survey data is similar to the proportion nationally to within 0.6%.
- The spread of ethnic groups across the weighted survey respondents is similar to the proportions nationally to within 1.6%.

The survey data presented in this report uses the weighted dataset.

### ***Qualitative focus groups***

- 1.11 The qualitative focus groups were designed to gain a more in-depth insight into children and young people's views about different aspects of education policy. We visited five different institutions across four different regions – the North of England, the Midlands, the South of England and London. The locations were selected to ensure the overall sample included a cross section of areas with varying levels of deprivation. The five institutions were:

- one primary mainstream school
- one secondary mainstream school
- one youth club
- one pupil referral unit
- one special school (for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties).

1.12 Overall, eight focus groups were conducted with 47 children and young people. As with the survey, all children and young people and their parents/carers were provided with information to enable them to make an informed choice about whether they wished to participate.

1.13 Although the focus groups were designed primarily to collect qualitative data, some quantitative data was also collected through the use of an electronic audience response system (ARS). The ARS was used to engage the children and young people in the focus group discussions and to ensure that all those participating had a voice, particularly those who were less vocal, as individuals anonymously responded to questions on their personal keypad before the group discussion.

### **Content of the report**

1.14 The research evidence collected is presented thematically, broadly drawing on the survey data and then the focus group data under each theme. The main themes are:

- what do children and young people think about their schools and teachers?
- what do children and young people think about the admissions process for secondary schools?
- what do children and young people think about exclusions?
- what are children and young people's main priorities related to their education?

The report concludes with a summary of the key messages and implications for policy.

## 2. What do children and young people think about schools and their teachers?

### What do children and young people think of their school and learning?

- 2.1 This section explores what children and young people feel about their school and their experience of learning, including the way in which they want to learn and the extent to which they feel under pressure.
- 2.2 The survey results showed that almost nine in ten (89%) children and young people felt that their school helps them to learn and three-quarters (75%) felt that school work is worth doing. Three in five considered their school to have sensible rules (60%) and a similar proportion (59%) indicated that they liked being at school most of the time. However, a quarter of children and young people did not agree with each of these two points. In terms of enjoyment, about half (51%) considered their lessons to be interesting (but nearly a third did not) and half (50%) worried about school work and exams (but just over a third did not).
- 2.3 Pressure to achieve at school was a concern to some, with about a third (34%) indicating that their school put too much pressure on them and about a quarter (24%) indicating that their parents/carers placed too much pressure on them. Those in school years 5 and 6 (i.e. primary school) were less likely to feel the pressure from school was too much, compared to those in school years 7 to 11 (i.e. secondary school) with 23% in years 5 and 6 compared to 38% in years 7 to 11 reporting their school put too much pressure on them. Furthermore, boys were less likely to feel the pressure from school was too much (31%) compared to girls (37%).
- 2.4 There were mixed views on school councils and their ability to listen to children and young people's ideas. About two in five (39%) felt their school councils were effective in listening to people's ideas about school but just over a quarter (27%) did not (and about a third were unsure).
- 2.5 Through the focus groups children and young people were asked about their likes and dislikes of school. Unsurprisingly their views depended on their individual experiences of the education system, subjects taught and individual teachers, but overall there were some common themes. Children and young people tended to name specific subjects that they liked, while playtimes, learning, and seeing their friends all featured in the enjoyment of school. With regard to the dislikes, tests and pressure to achieve were mentioned, as shown in this example from a student at a special school:

*“Some people nag you here – they nag you and nag you. They say you need to do this job, you need to do that job, oh you need an A in English to do this job. That just really gets on your nerves.”*

**Boy, Key Stage 4**

Another boy (Year 6) said that teachers pressure the pupils *“telling us, you can do better, you can do better – we’re just tired”*.

- 2.6 Additionally, there were some who had not had such favourable experiences with teachers and learning and these became dislikes. For example, some primary school students disliked their learning being disrupted:

*“The teachers have got to go out and sort them out, and then you have to sit there and you’re not learning. Some people are doing it to get attention, and while the teacher is going over to help them we lose out... When other people are stopping you from learning, sometimes you might not know that little bit but then you’ve got to answer it.”*

**Girl, Year 6**

*“[Other pupils are] talking or messing about and getting told off so it’s less of our time.”*

**Girl, Year 5**

- 2.7 Generally, the children and young people who participated in the focus groups were satisfied with the subjects they were learning and the way they were learning at school. Some mentioned their desire for more wide-ranging, practical-based, or enrichment activities, and also for teachers to use different learning styles. But overall, there was recognition, even from the younger children, that their learning would help them to secure a good job in the future. There were, however, particular subjects or lessons where the learning style did not suit the young people, for example two special school students in Key Stage 4 explained: *“some lessons like English, we have to sit there really quietly and not allowed to speak”* and *“I think we should be allowed to talk to each other as long as we’re quiet”*. Another pupil expressed frustration with the way science lessons were taught in her school:

*“We never do experiments in science. We always learn out of text books. Everyone just talks. We don’t really learn anything, we’re just writing. We don’t really read it before we write it; we just write it because otherwise we’ll get told off.”*

**Girl, Year 8**

- 2.8 When asked about what makes a ‘good’ school, young people in the focus groups mentioned having good teachers, good facilities and good

opportunities to learn. One boy described a good school as a school with both willing teachers and pupils:

*“Everything's got to be working in harmony, because if the teachers are willing to teach but the students aren't willing to learn, then it's not going to work. But if the teachers aren't necessarily interested in teaching, then that's not to be a good school either.”*

**Boy, Year 10**

- 2.9 In terms of pressure to achieve, the focus group respondents held mixed views with half reporting that they did not feel under pressure to do well at school (but half did). Their reasons for feeling pressured were mainly because of tests, for example, as a pupil at a special school described: *“I get pretty nervous over tests... in my science exam I missed out two questions and I am really worried about it”* (boy, Key Stage 4). These concerns related to longer term plans where the children and young people were keen to achieve in order to improve their future job prospects: *“You know that you want to do well and get a good job”* (girl, Year 5). Some felt that teachers put pressure on them and some mentioned parents, where the children and young people felt pressure to achieve or perform highly. For example, one Year 6 boy explained how his teacher would destroy work if it was not up to standard and this put pressure on him:

*“Say if we're blending [colouring], yeah, and it goes out of the line or we make a little mistake, she'll rip it and say 'you can start again'”.*

Another boy from a special school talked about pressure from his school mentor:

*“He tells me if you don't do this and that, you're not going to get your grades, 'you're going to be a failure!’”*

- 2.10 Some secondary-aged students acknowledged that their teachers and parents pressured them,

*“Because they care; at the same time, while you're at school you know what you need to do, so you don't actually always need the pressure.”*

**Girl, Year 10**

- 2.11 The evidence suggests that teachers with high expectations of their students seemed, in some cases, to be having a negative effect on the children and young people's perceptions of their achievement. Young people also reported that the pressure had negative effects on their behaviour and self-esteem:

*“I don't think you should be put under too much pressure because it can affect your behaviour and what you do. It can affect your work.”*

**Boy, Year 10**

*“Sometimes you get home you're still thinking about it [the test]. You are like, ‘I wish I could have done better’. You didn't answer the question and you get home and you think, and you answer it in your head. You just hate yourself for it, because you knew the answer but you couldn't think of it at the time.”*

**Girl, Year 8**

### **What do children and young people think about their teachers?**

- 2.12 This section explores children and young people's views of their teachers, including what they feel makes a good teacher and whether they feel that they can take action when they feel a teacher is not good.

#### ***Teachers' ability to help and support learning***

- 2.13 In terms of helping pupils who are good at something, respecting pupils and making lessons fun and interesting, the survey results showed that children and young people were generally more likely to report their teachers doing these things 'sometimes', rather than 'always'. About two-thirds (64%) felt that their teachers helped pupils who have difficulty with their work 'always' and a further third (30%) felt they 'sometimes' did this. About two in five felt their teachers 'always' treated pupils with respect (43%) and 'always' helped pupils who are good at something (40%), with about a further half (51 and 46% respectively) reporting that they 'sometimes' did. Only one in five children and young people felt their teachers 'always' made their lessons fun and interesting, but a further two-thirds (65%) felt they 'sometimes' did.

#### ***Teachers' ability to deal with poor behaviour***

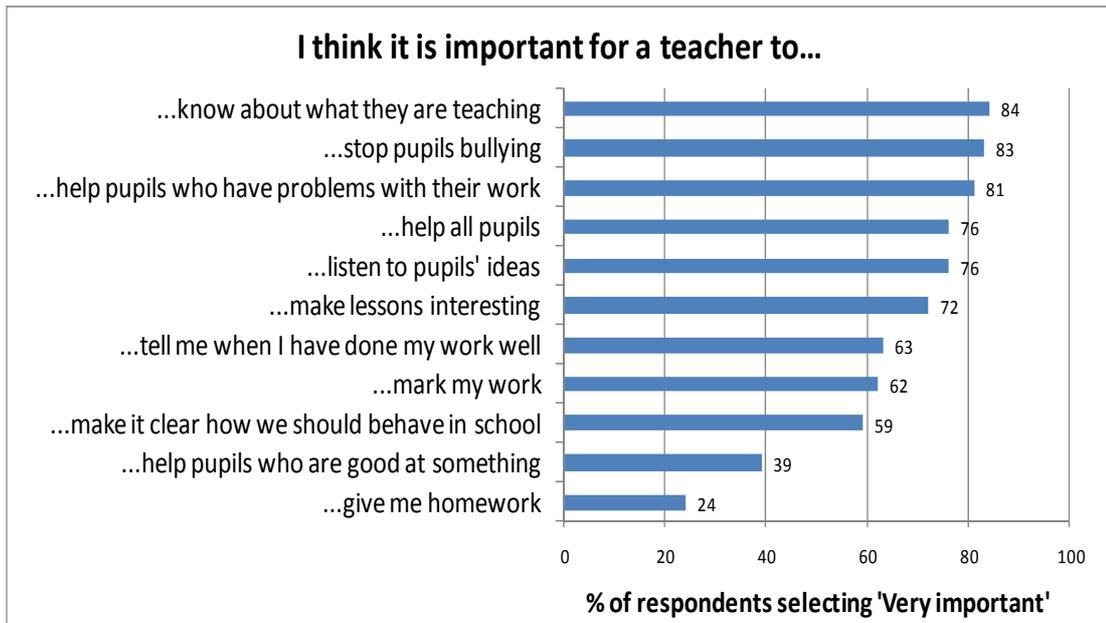
- 2.14 In terms of teachers' ability to deal with poor behaviour, children and young people were again more likely to report their teachers doing this 'sometimes' rather than 'always'. Almost a quarter felt that their teachers were 'always' good at getting their class to behave (23%) and, when pupils do disrupt learning, teachers take action (23%) and about a further half felt they 'sometimes' did these things (55 and 54% respectively). Disruption to learning from other pupils was a concern, at least sometimes, to about four in five (82%) children and young people, reflecting the observations from focus group participants, reported above, that they did not like other pupils disrupting their lessons.

2.15 Similarly, all focus group participants, except those from the pupil referral unit, reported that other pupils had disrupted their learning in class at some point. But those from the pupil referral unit all reported that their learning had not been disrupted by other pupils. The focus group participants had very mixed views as to whether their teachers took action to deal with the disruption appropriately. Some made remarks such as *"teachers do nothing"* (boy, special school) whereas others felt that teachers did take appropriate action.

**Characteristics of a good teacher**

2.16 When children and young people were asked about what makes a good teacher, they recognised that there were a wide range of elements and skills necessary in being a good teacher as they rated many items in the list as ‘very important’ and very few as ‘not important’, as illustrated in the figure below.

**Figure 2.1: Children and young people’s perceptions of what makes a good teacher**



2.17 As Figure 2.1 above shows, at least three-quarters of children and young people felt the following skills in a teacher were ‘very important’: to know about what they are teaching, to stop pupils bullying, to help pupils who have problems with their work, to help all pupils, and to listen to pupils’ ideas.

2.18 The least highly rated was a teacher giving homework, which was only considered ‘very important’ to a quarter (24%) of children and young people and a similar proportion considered this to be ‘not important’.

- 2.19 About half (49%) of the children and young people indicated that they ‘always’ know when a teacher was not very good and a further 38% thought they ‘sometimes’ did. In terms of taking action, children and young people were more likely to ‘always’ inform their parents (57%) than an adult at school (28%) if they felt a teacher was not very good. Furthermore, about a quarter (26%) reported that they would never inform an adult at school if a teacher is not very good.
- 2.20 There were differences in responses from those at primary school and those at secondary school. Children in years 7 to 11 were *more* likely to report that they ‘always’ knew when a teacher is not very good (54%) compared to those in years 5 and 6 (34%). However, those in the secondary phase were also *less* likely to report this to an adult in their school (25%), compared to those in the primary phase (36%).
- 2.21 This suggests that further reporting mechanisms may be needed in schools (and particularly secondary schools) to encourage children and young people to share their concerns about teaching quality in an appropriate way.
- 2.22 Through the focus groups, children and young people’s views of their teachers were explored in greater depth. In line with the survey data, the focus group participants recognised the range of qualities that make up a good teacher. The most frequent responses related to teacher-pupil communication, support, respect and fairness. The following examples show of what children and young people viewed good teachers to do:

*“Someone who listens to the people and understand what the problem is, and also doesn’t like expect things from him but just understands what he is talking about and try to help him and not force him... They give you the chance to talk and they’re open to ideas, and they don’t laugh at you.”*

**Girl, Year 8**

*“Communicates with the children properly, nicely and with a good manner.”*

**Boy, special school**

*“A teacher that is not too strict but is not a pushover. So they know how to have a laugh but they also want you to work.”*

**Boy, Year 10**

*“Teachers that care about the students more, because there are teachers that just teach so they get pay at the end of the month, and there are other teachers that actually show an interest.”*

## Girl, Year 10

Children and young people expressed their views on teachers who lack trust in pupils:

*“Our teacher, she never believes us ever. Let’s say if you’ve done it [your homework] but you accidentally left it at home they always say ‘rubbish!’ They never trust us. When we tell the truth they still think it’s a lie.”*

## Girl, Year 8

*“I had one of my teachers lose my homework, so it went down saying that I hadn’t done it which was really annoying.”*

## Girl, Year 8

- 2.23 Generally the focus group participants thought that they would tell their headteacher if one of their teachers was poor and behaving unkindly towards pupils because *“the headteacher is in charge of him/[her]”*. A few felt that it would be more appropriate to tell their parents in the first instance and let their parents raise the issue with the headteacher. Overall, the young people in the pupil referral unit seemed slightly less positive about teachers than the other groups, perhaps unsurprisingly given their prior experiences of school.

### **Teacher recruitment**

- 2.24 Only a small proportion of the survey respondents (18%) reported that they had been involved in the selection or recruitment of new teachers but about two-thirds (65%) indicated that they would like to do so. Additionally, those in secondary school were more likely to report that they had been involved in teacher recruitment (20%) compared to those in primary school (12%). The survey evidence suggests that children and young people would clearly be interested in having a greater role in teacher recruitment, if schools were able to offer this.
- 2.25 The focus group findings were similar in that the majority felt children and young people’s involvement in teacher recruitment would be positive, but only few had experienced any involvement themselves. For example, some young people in the pupil referral unit were part of *“a student panel”* and explained that they had the opportunity to *“pick which teacher you liked”* (boy, Key Stage 4). We also interviewed a group of Key Stage 3 students who had participated in teacher recruitment by helping to choose their deputy head through a school assembly. The three potential candidates attended and gave a PowerPoint presentation about themselves and how they would help the school. Each pupil had the opportunity to write down their favourite at the end of assembly. The students saw the value in selecting senior school staff, as they felt that it helped them to understand their new teacher, and also thought

that the experience had resulted in the new teacher respecting them more, as they had helped her to get the job.

- 2.26 Whether or not the children and young people had been involved in teacher recruitment, those we interviewed through the focus groups felt that it was something that was important for them to be involved in, as illustrated by the following comments:

*“I know what it’s like [being at school] so I think I would be better than teachers [at selecting teachers].”*

**Boy, Key Stage 4, special school**

*“At the end of the day we are the ones that are working with them. So, the teachers may like them, but the teachers aren’t the ones that are learning things from them - we are.”*

**Boy, Year 10**

## **2.27 Key findings**

- Generally, children and young people recognised the value of school in supporting their learning and achievement. But enjoyment was not quite as widespread with about three in five enjoying school and half finding their lessons interesting. Pressure to achieve was an issue for some, with about half worrying about school work and exams and about a third feeling their school puts too much pressure on them to do well, and a quarter feeling their parents/carers put too much pressure on them to do well at school.
- School councils were considered an effective tool for listening to people’s ideas about school in about two in five cases. As school councils provide a more formal method of ensuring children’s rights to their opinions being taken into account, in accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The evidence therefore suggests that schools may require additional support or advice to further develop the effectiveness of their school councils.
- Children and young people were generally more positive about their teachers’ ability to help and support pupils, than their ability to deal with disruptive behaviour. Children and young people considered there to be many qualities and skills that make a good teacher and it was not dependent on just one factor. These included knowledge of the subject being taught, dealing with bullying and supporting pupils.
- Children and young people (particularly those in secondary school) tended to report that they could tell when teachers were not very good, but they

were not so likely to report this issue to an adult at school, compared to those in primary school. This suggests that further reporting mechanisms may be needed in schools (and particularly secondary schools) to encourage children and young people to share their concerns about teaching quality in an appropriate way.

- Only about one in five children and young people reported involvement in teacher recruitment, but a majority of them reported that they would like to be involved.

### **3. What do children and young people think about the admissions process for secondary schools?**

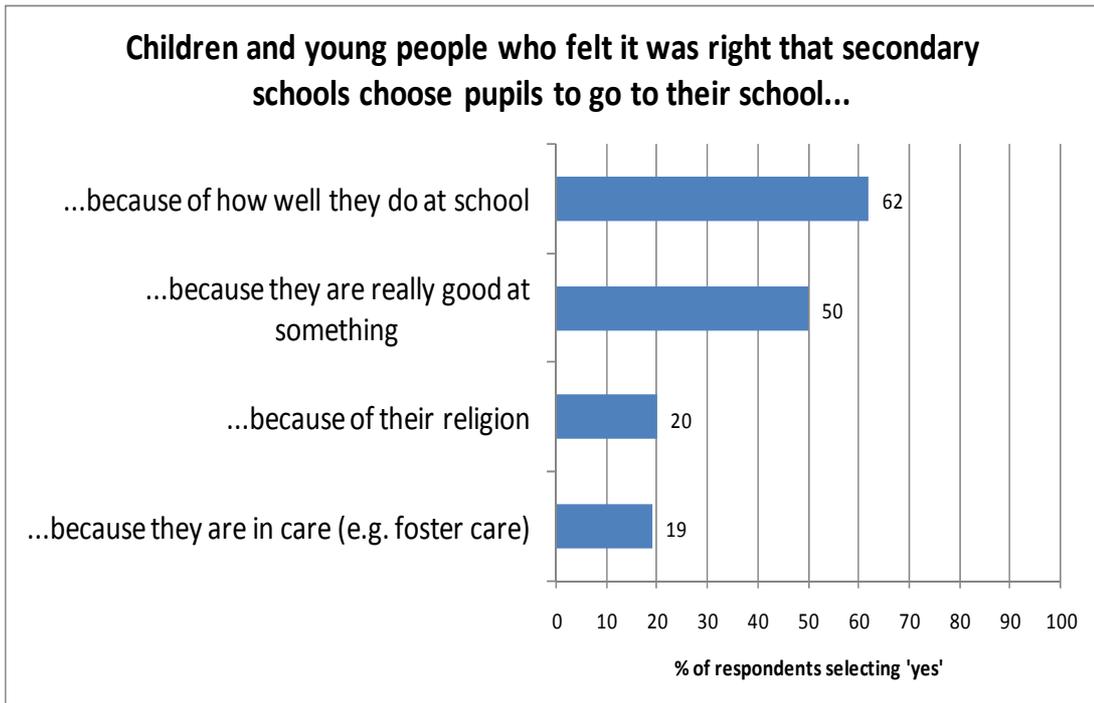
#### **How far do children and young people feel that they understand the process of choosing a secondary school?**

- 3.1 This section reflects children and young people's understanding of the admissions process and explores whether this differs between those in primary and secondary education.
- 3.2 There were differing reports on children and young people's understanding of the secondary school admissions system. About half the children and young people (52%) reported that they understand how the secondary school admissions system selects pupils, but a quarter said they did not understand it and a further quarter were unsure whether they understood it, which would strongly suggest that they do not. Within the group of respondents there were, of course, some who had already been through the admissions system and some who had not, but the proportion who reported that they understood the admissions process did not differ depending on school phase. It is worth noting that all children and young people in the sample were of an age where secondary school admissions issues would be pertinent, either with the process approaching or having been through the process.
- 3.3 Choosing a secondary school was felt to be worrying to about four in ten (38%) children and young people and confusing to about three in ten (30%) children and young people.
- 3.4 A high majority (79%) of the responding children and young people felt that all pupils should be able to go to the school of their preference, but less than half (45%) felt that there was a real choice of secondary schools within their area. The need for choice did not seem to be primarily related to learning, however, as only about one in five (18%) respondents felt that they would learn better at another school. (More than half (55%) thought that they would not learn better at another school and more than a quarter (27%) were unsure.) Issues around school choice are likely to mean different things to different groups of children and young people, particularly dependent on the geographical proximity of schools in their area – in many rural areas there may only be a 'choice' of one school, for example.

## Do children and young people think that the admissions process is fair?

- 3.5 This section focuses on children and young people's perceptions of fairness in the admissions process, including their views on the different criteria for selection that a school might have. This section also examines the extent of any similarities and differences between the responses from those in primary and secondary schools (i.e. pre- and post- experience of admissions).
- 3.6 The survey data showed that children and young people's perceptions of fairness in the admissions system were mixed with 45% reporting that the way secondary schools allocate places was fair but 21% did not (and 34% were unsure). Those who had not yet personally experienced the outcomes of the secondary school admissions process (i.e. those in school years 5 and 6) were slightly more positive than those who had already been through the system, with 50% of those in the primary phase indicating that the allocation process was fair, compared to 43% in the secondary phase although this difference was quite small and not statistically significant.
- 3.7 Through the focus group data, perceptions of fairness in school admissions was further explored. The majority of these participants were positive about the fairness of admissions and felt there was a choice: *"you have loads of choices – if you don't get to the best school you want to go to, you can go to the second best school"* (boy, Year 6). Some, however, were less positive as one primary-aged student explained: *"I would be devastated because all your friends are going into that school, and you're going to a school of strangers"* (girl, Year 6). Secondary-aged students felt that school catchment areas were *"really biased...everyone should get the opportunity [to go to a good school]"* (girl, Year 11); and had resulted in some young people being split from their primary school friends which they had found difficult. Overall, children and young people held the view that *"every child should have a fair chance... [and] be treated equally"* (girl, Year 8).
- 3.8 Children and young people gave their views on some of the criteria for selection that schools use. Overall, children and young people were more in favour of criteria that related to an individual's performance, rather than criteria that related to their personal circumstances or culture, as illustrated in the figure below.

**Figure 3.1: Children and young people’s views on secondary school selection criteria**



- 3.9 About three in five (62%) felt that schools should be able to select pupils by their ability (a proxy for grammar schools) and half (50%) felt that schools should be able to select pupils by their aptitude (a proxy for specialist schools).
- 3.10 However, only one in five (20%) children and young people felt that religion (a proxy for faith schools) should be used in admissions criteria and nearly two-thirds (64%) felt religion should not be part of school’s selection criteria (and 16% were unsure). The focus group participants also tended to hold strong views against selection on religious grounds, as; *“you shouldn’t be judged on your religion, and everyone should be treated equally”* (girl, Year 8). Various participants across the different focus groups described faith-based selection as *“racist”* and another described it as *“discrimination”* (girl, Year 10).
- 3.11 Only about one in five (19%) children and young people felt that schools should be able to select pupils because they are in care. This is noteworthy because being in care is required to be given the highest priority in admissions oversubscription criteria, according to the School Admissions Code.<sup>3</sup> In understanding these findings, we need to recognise however, that

<sup>3</sup> *School Admissions Code*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009 [online]. See: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/sacode/downloads/SchoolAdmissionsCodeWEB060309.pdf> [accessed 10 December, 2010].

not all children and young people would be aware of the issues and disadvantages faced by children in care and the importance of stability in educational placements. It may also be that there was a lack of understanding around school selection favouring children in care as almost a quarter of respondents (24%) said they were unsure. This was corroborated by the focus group participants where one commented that prioritising children in care was unfair because *“they’re the same as any other child, they’ve only got different parents”* (boy, Key Stage 4, PRU) and *“everyone should be equal”* (girl, Year 6) without any acknowledgement of the disadvantages faced by children in care because of their background circumstances. Where young people recognised this, they felt priority for these children was fair: *“because they have a harder time than us”* (boy, Year 6) and *“it’s way worse for them”* (boy, Year 9).

- 3.12 An analysis of the survey data by primary and secondary respondents showed very little difference in their perceptions. The only difference was around whether schools should select pupils because they are in care, where a slightly higher proportion of primary-aged children felt schools should do this (23%) compared to secondary-aged young people (17%) although this difference was also not statistically significant.
- 3.13 We also examined responses from those in secondary schools where the school is the admissions authority compared to those where the local authority is the admissions authority. There were no statistically significant differences.
- 3.14 Through the focus groups we explored children and young people’s reasons for concerns around school admissions. The common theme that emerged from the data was around getting into ‘good’ secondary schools so that children and young people could achieve good GCSE results and have better career chances in the future. A minority, however, felt that if a pupil has the ability they should be able to achieve good grades regardless of school.

### 3.15 Key findings

- About half of the children and young people reported understanding the secondary school admissions process but this did not seem to differ according to age. In terms of perceptions of the secondary school admissions process, there were some who found it worrying and confusing, but there were more who reported that they did not.

- A high majority of the children and young people felt that all pupils should be able to go to the school of their choice, but less than half felt that there was a real choice of secondary schools within their area.
- Children and young people's perceptions of fairness in the admissions system were mixed but more felt the way secondary schools allocate places was fair compared to those who did not. Overall, children and young people were more in favour of selection criteria that related to an individual's performance (ability and aptitude), rather than criteria that related to their personal circumstances or culture (being in care and religion).
- About three in five children and young people felt that schools should be able to select pupils by their ability – a proxy for grammar schools – and half felt that schools should be able to select pupils by their aptitude – a proxy for specialist schools choosing some pupils on aptitude. This compared to only one in five children and young people holding the view that religion should be used in admissions criteria.

## 4. What do children and young people think about exclusions?

### Do children and young people think that exclusions are generally used fairly?

- 4.1 This section investigates children and young people's perceptions of the way in which exclusions are used, in their experience, and their views on whether exclusions are used fairly in different circumstances. It also explores whether the views of children and young people who have been excluded differed from those who have not.
- 4.2 All children and young people who took part in the survey were asked for their perceptions of exclusions and they were also asked to report whether they had ever been excluded from school. Overall, 12% of the survey respondents indicated that they had been excluded (either on a fixed term or permanently) and 2% were not sure whether or not they had. As a broad comparison, in 2008/09 the national permanent exclusion rate was 0.09% of the number of pupils in primary, secondary and all special schools and the fixed term exclusion rate was 4.89%.<sup>4</sup> The overall exclusion rate amongst our respondents is therefore higher, but this is likely to relate to the fact that children aged four to eight years were not included in the survey – a group for which there are very few exclusions which would reduce the national average. Additionally, our research study included a disproportionate number of children and young people in pupil referral units – a group who are more likely to have experienced school exclusions. In analysing the survey findings it is possible to look at responses from those who had been excluded and compare those with the overall responses.

### *Perceptions of exclusion rates*

- 4.3 Children and young people's perceptions of school exclusion rates showed a mixed picture. About a third of children and young people (34%) felt that the number of exclusions in their school was about right, but a quarter (24%) felt that too many pupils were excluded and 12% felt there were too few. In examining the differences in responses from different groups, we found that secondary-aged young people were more likely to feel that their school exclusion rate was too high (30%), compared to primary-aged children (10%).

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<sup>4</sup> The number of fixed term exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of all pupils. Taken from: 'Statistical First Release: Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals in England, 2008/09', Department for Education, 2010. See: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000942/sfr22-2010.pdf> [accessed 19 January 2011].

A higher proportion of primary-aged children also reported that they were unsure (44%) compared to secondary-aged (25%).

Furthermore, those who reported that they had been excluded from school were more likely to report that their school's exclusion rates were too high, with 43% of those excluded indicating that too many pupils in their school were excluded, compared to 24% overall.

### ***Perceptions of exclusion length***

- 4.4 In terms of the fairness of exclusions dependent on length, children and young people were more accepting of short-term exclusions than of longer-term or permanent exclusions. The large majority (83%) felt that exclusions for one or two days were, at least sometimes, fair. However, under half felt that exclusions for more than two weeks were fair (47%) or that permanent exclusions were fair (49%).
- 4.5 In examining the differences in responses from children of primary-age and those of secondary age, the main difference was in their perceptions of permanent exclusions where two in five (39%) primary-aged children noted that this was fair at least sometimes, compared to half (52%) of secondary-aged children. This could perhaps be a reflection of the differences in primary and secondary schools in the nature or frequency of serious offences leading to permanent exclusions.

### ***Fairness of exclusions***

- 4.6 Overall, about three in five children and young people (61%) reported that they felt exclusions were 'sometimes' used fairly in their school, but only 15% felt that they were 'always' used fairly and 11% felt that they were 'never' used fairly.
- 4.7 When looking at the responses from those who reported that they had been excluded from school, the results were similar to the respondents overall, although a slightly higher proportion of those who had been excluded felt that exclusions were 'never' used fairly (17%), compared to overall (11%), perhaps a reflection of their personal experience.
- 4.8 Comments from focus group participants revealed a perceived injustice or lack of fairness in the way that punishments, including exclusion, were given as some reflected that teachers did not always ascertain the full story before punishing individuals or whole classes:

*“Sometimes teachers don’t find out the whole story, they just exclude you. They should ask people, not just hear one story and make your mind up. Obviously you’ve got to listen to everyone who is there.”*

### **Boy, pupil referral unit**

#### ***Perceptions on reasons to exclude***

- 4.9 Perceptions on reasons why pupils should be excluded varied with rule-breaking being considered as a legitimate reason for exclusion, at least ‘sometimes’, by about three-quarters (78%) of children and young people, compared to frequent disruption to lessons being considered as a legitimate reason for exclusion, at least ‘sometimes’, by half (50%) of children and young people. Overall, the vast majority of respondents (87%) felt that schools should, at least sometimes, help pupils with their problems instead of excluding them.
- 4.10 Again, the responses from those who had been excluded themselves were slightly more negative about exclusions, with a higher proportion of these children and young people indicating that pupils who break school rules should ‘never’ be excluded (19%) compared to overall (13%) and pupils who often disrupt lessons should ‘never’ be excluded (50%), compared to overall (37%).
- 4.11 The focus group participants tended to feel that children whose behaviour was bad should be excluded and that exclusion was not used enough by their schools, as reflected by the following comment:

*“Obviously, if they get excluded the teachers will have a good reason to exclude them. I reckon exclusions pretty much lay on what they have done and usually if they are excluded it’s their own fault”*

### **Boy, Year 10**

- 4.12 The main reason children and young people held these views was because they felt exclusion removed pupils who were disrupting them from learning:

*“They should be excluded because they’re stopping the people around them learning because of them, and they have as much right to learn as everybody else.”*

### **Girl, Year 6**

*“If they keep naughty people in the school then they’re just going to keep on bullying us and not letting us learn. So in secondary school we’re going to get bad marks so we won’t be able to get a job because of other people.”*

### **Boy, Year 6**

*“That's making someone's day, or week, or life horrible, for the whole time that they're here they're not going to learn anything, they're just going to think about the person that's bullying them.”*

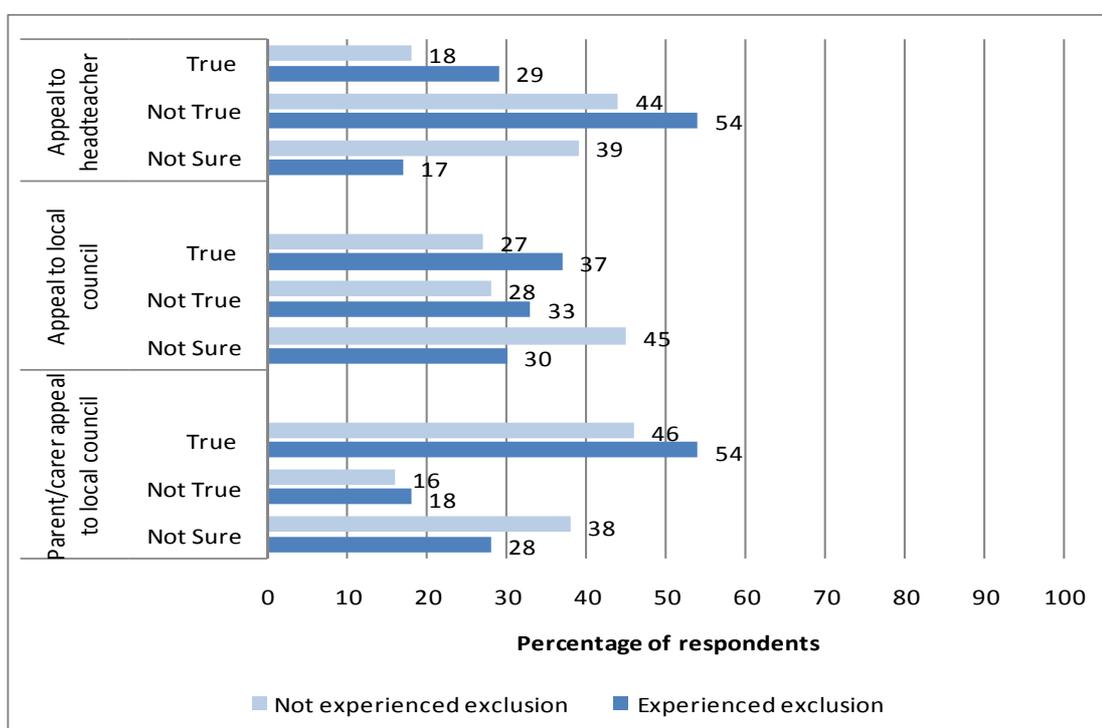
#### **Girl, Year 8**

- 4.13 Overall, however, we found a common theme across the focus groups was that children and young people tended to favour in-school isolation rooms (where pupils could continue learning but without disrupting others) rather than formal exclusions and, in-line with school policies, exclusions only being used as a last resort.

#### **How far are children and young people aware of the appeals process for exclusions?**

- 4.14 This section examines children and young people's awareness and understanding of the different ways in which a pupil could appeal against an exclusion, distinguishing between those who have been excluded and those who have not.
- 4.15 The survey findings showed that, overall, there was uncertainty over the exclusion appeals process with around two in five children and young people reporting they were unsure about who they can speak to and how to appeal. A greater proportion of children and young people thought they could ask their parent/carer to appeal to their local council (47%) than those who thought they themselves could appeal to their local council (29%). Furthermore, only one in five (20%) children and young people thought they could appeal to their headteacher.
- 4.16 When comparing the responses from those who had experienced exclusion compared to all the children and young people we spoke to, the survey findings showed that there was a greater level of understanding of the appeals process by those who had been excluded from school, compared to overall. More than half of those who had been excluded (54%) noted that they could ask their parent/carer to appeal to their local council and nearly two in five (37%) noted that they could appeal to their local council themselves. However, within this group, there were still only 29% who thought they could appeal to their headteacher about their exclusion.

**Figure 4.1: Comparing children and young people’s understanding of the exclusion appeals options, dependent on whether or not they had experienced exclusion**



#### 4.17 Key findings

- Children and young people’s perceptions of school exclusion rates showed a mixed picture. Although about a third of children and young people felt that the number of exclusions in their school was about right, a quarter felt that too many pupils were excluded and about one in eight felt there were too few. Additionally, those who had been excluded from school were more likely to report that their school’s exclusion rates were too high, compared to overall.
- There was an overall perception of unfairness in exclusions with only about one in seven children and young people reporting that exclusions were ‘always’ used fairly in their school. One in nine felt exclusions were ‘never’ used fairly and about three in five felt that they were ‘sometimes’ used fairly in their school. Overall, children and young people were more accepting of short-term exclusions than of longer-term or permanent exclusions.
- Perceptions on reasons why pupils should be excluded varied with rule-breaking being considered as a legitimate reason for exclusion, at least ‘sometimes’, by about three-quarters of children and young people, compared to frequent disruption to lessons being considered as a legitimate

reason for exclusion, at least 'sometimes', by half of children and young people. Again, the responses from those who had been excluded themselves were slightly more negative about exclusions with a higher proportion reporting that pupils should 'never' be excluded for these reasons. Overall, the vast majority of all respondents felt that schools should help pupils, at least 'sometimes', with their problems instead of excluding them.

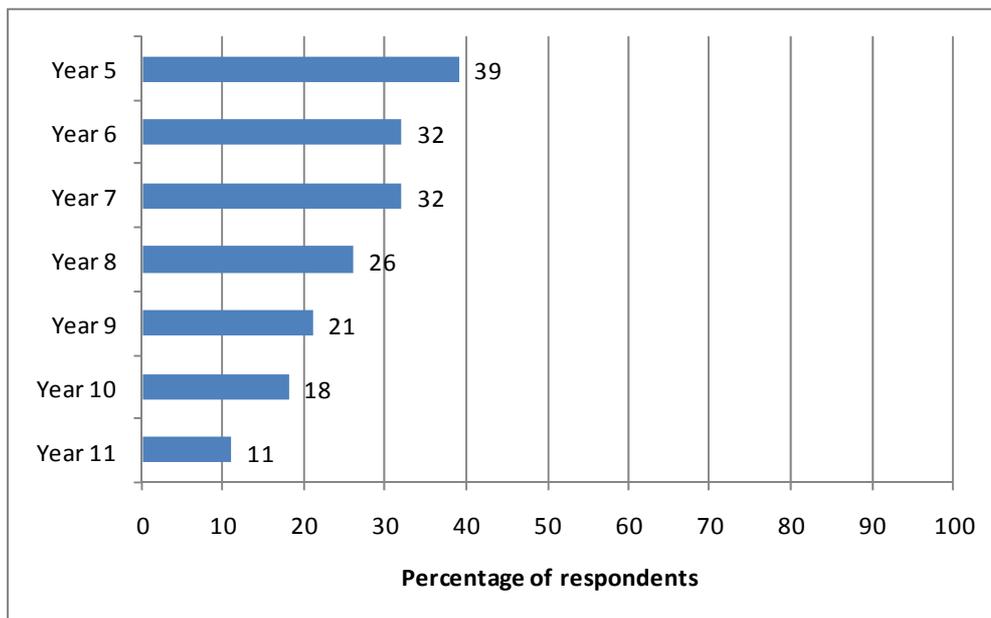
- The survey findings showed that, overall, there was uncertainty over the exclusion appeals process with around two in five children and young people reporting they were unsure about who they can speak to and how to appeal. But there was a greater level of understanding of the appeals process by those who had been excluded from school, compared to overall.

## 5. What are children and young people's highest priorities related to their education?

- 5.1 This section presents the evidence of the main issues of concern to children and young people related to their education.
- 5.2 In the survey, children and young people were able to select up to three issues – covering school, teachers, admissions and exclusions – that were most important to them. The findings showed that having a good teacher was the top priority, rated as important by half (49%) of the responding children and young people. The next highest priorities were stopping bullying (46%), schools helping pupils to do well in their exams (45%), and getting in to a good secondary school (41%). About one in four rated good opportunities to learn at school (26%) and about one in five (21%) rated a good choice of subjects as top priorities. The least popular choices were schools asking and listening to what pupils think (16%), having a school uniform that children and young people like (14%) and having a good choice of school dinners (8%).
- 5.3 There were some differences in responses from different groups. Females were *more* likely to indicate that the following were priorities: their school helping them to do well in their exams (50%) and schools asking and listening to what pupils think (22%), compared to males (40% and 11% respectively). Additionally, those who reported that they had been excluded from school were *more* likely to choose making exclusions fair as a priority (20%), compared to overall (10%).
- 5.4 There were also different views on the priority areas from children and young people in primary and secondary schools. Those in the primary phase were more likely to view getting into a good secondary school (60%) and stopping bullying (57%) as priorities, compared to those in the secondary phase (33% and 41% respectively). Secondary school admissions is an issue of more pertinence to those in year groups 5 and 6 who were making, or were soon to make, their school choices. A more unexpected finding was that bullying was a top concern to a greater proportion of children in the primary phase. The top priorities for those in the secondary school phase were consistent with expected concerns: those in secondary school were more likely to view their school as helping them to do well in exams (52%), having a good choice of subjects (23%) and a school uniform they liked (16%), compared to those in the primary phase (28%, 14% and 8% respectively).

5.5 Children and young people were also given the opportunity to select (from the same list of priorities) the one issue that they felt the Government should improve first to make school better. The findings showed a similar picture to the top concerns with stopping bullying being the most popular response (25%). Again, concerns regarding bullying decreased with age with about four in ten year 5s (39%) choosing this as the Government’s priority, compared to about one in ten year 11s (11%), as illustrated in the graph below.

**Figure 5.1: The percentage of children and young people selecting ‘stopping bullying’ as the issue of most importance, by year group**



5.6 The next most popular priorities for government were ensuring pupils have good teachers (17%), ensuring pupils have good opportunities to learn at school (12%), helping pupils to get into good secondary schools (12%), and ensuring schools help pupils to do well in exams (11%).

5.7 The focus groups provided an opportunity to explore the reasons for children and young people rating particular issues as priorities for government. Although some of the priorities varied slightly from the survey findings, the reasons seemed consistent across the issues. The main priorities this group identified were ensuring good opportunities for learning and ensuring schools ask and listen to what pupils think:

*“If you don’t have a good opportunity to learn at school then you’re not going to learn nothing.”*

**Girl, Year 6**

*“Sometimes students just don't think that their voice is heard. It's alright having things like student councils and stuff, but that's not everyone because you can't get around everyone. So if the teachers passed on thoughts and opinions from each individual student then students would feel more satisfied that their voice is being heard, and that they are more a part of what happens at the school - more than just a pupil.”*

**Boy, Year 10**

- 5.8 Children and young people tended to choose their priority based on the issue that they felt would give them the best outcome in the future – to ensure they learn well at a good school and are able to get a good job or have good opportunities in the future. This was exemplified by one primary-aged child:

*“If you don't get into good secondary schools you won't have a good job, as teachers might be poor, and if the teachers are poor then we don't learn much like we should.”*

**Girl, Year 5**

## **5.9 Key findings**

- The most important priorities for children and young people to improve their school life and education were preventing bullying and having good teachers. Other top priorities focused around the quality of learning opportunities, support to achieve in exams, and secondary school admissions.
- Concerns around bullying decreased with age – it was a concern to a greater proportion of younger children, compared to older young people, whereas older young people (particularly in years 10 and 11) were generally more likely to note the importance of having good teachers compared to younger children.

## 6 Conclusions

- 6.1 This section summarises the main conclusions emerging from the survey and focus group evidence.

### **What do children and young people think about school and learning?**

- 6.2 While most children and young people felt that school helped them to learn and that school work was worth doing, they were less likely to say that they enjoyed being at school or that the lessons were interesting.
- 6.3 Half of the children and young people surveyed said that they worried about tests and examinations and around one in three felt that their school put them under too much pressure while one in four felt their parents did so. This was particularly the case among secondary school students and females.

#### **Implications for policy and practice**

It is important that children and young people are aware that the choices and actions they take when young can have wider and long-term implications for their future. It is equally important that parents/carers and teachers have high expectations of children and young people. However, the challenge is to find a way of communicating effectively with children and young people, balancing the need for these important messages to be conveyed, with the risk of placing undue pressure on children and young people.

- 6.4 About a quarter of young people did not think that school councils were effective in listening to people's ideas about school while about two-fifths did. It appears, therefore, that there is variation in the views of pupils as to how well their school councils provide an effective mechanism for being heard. In addition, as around a third were unsure whether schools councils were effective, it may be that children and young people do not perceive schools councils as a priority means of their views being heard.

#### **Implications for policy and practice**

School councils provide formal mechanisms for ensuring children's rights to their opinions are taken into account, in accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As there is variation in how this is implemented, there may be value in improving guidance and support for schools in further developing their school councils to ensure they enable children and young people to feel that their opinions are heard.

## What do children and young people think about their teachers?

- 6.5 Although most children and young people believed that their teachers helped pupils who were good at their work and those that needed help, made lessons fun and interesting and respected pupils at least sometimes, fewer than half said that their teachers always did these things.
- 6.6 Pupils generally felt that they knew what made a good teacher and, in addition to knowing their subject and helping pupils who were having difficulties with their work, a majority felt that stopping bullying was a key role of a teacher. While nearly half of pupils felt that they always knew if a teacher was not good, and a further third sometimes did, they tended to tell their parents of any concerns, if they told an adult at all, rather than telling someone in their school. This was particularly the case among secondary pupils.

### Implications for policy and practice

Part of the right to an education is the right to good teaching. The findings that many children and young people feel that they can identify a less good teacher, but only a minority will tell an adult at school about this, suggests that they may not always be able to take action where they feel the education they are receiving could be improved. This suggests that a reporting mechanism is needed, especially in secondary schools to enable the consumers of education to highlight any concerns they have about the teaching they receive in an appropriate way that also ensures that the issue is fairly managed.

- 6.7 Although most children and young people had not been involved in recruiting teachers, most would like to have some involvement, seeing themselves as well placed to recruit a teacher as the main participants with teachers in education.

### Implications for policy and practice

As more children and young people would like to have a role in teacher recruitment than currently do so, there would be value in promoting best practice in involving children and young people, in a productive way, in recruitment of teachers. Such best practice would include ensuring that children and young people discuss and understand that the process of consultation may or may not lead to their preferred outcome.

## What do children and young people think about the admissions process?

- 6.8 Children and young people did not necessarily understand the admissions process. Regardless of whether they were in primary school or secondary school, around half said that they did understand the process while a quarter said they did not and a further quarter were unsure, which suggests that they also did not have a good understanding of the process. Moreover, just under a third said the process was confusing and about two in five were worried about school admissions. In addition, around a fifth of children and young people did not perceive the process as fair and this was more the case among secondary age pupils, who had been through this process, than those of primary age. However, only about one in five (18%) respondents felt that they would learn better at another school while more than half (55%) thought that they would not learn better at another school.

### Implications for policy and practice

As many children and young people do not feel that they understand admissions, find it confusing and worry about it, there may be value in providing accessible easily understood advice for children and young people to enhance their understanding and assist them in expressing the most appropriate preference for them.

- 6.9 Young people were more accepting of the use of ability or aptitude as criteria for selection to secondary schools (62% and 50% of young people respectively agreed with this) than they were of selection based on religion (20%).

### Implications for policy and practice

Selection on the basis of religion appears to be a concern to many young people. There may therefore be value in exploring further why young people feel this is the case and ensuring that their views on this issue are conveyed as part of the review of the School Admissions Code.

## What are children and young people's views of exclusions?

- 6.10 Overall, children and young people tended to feel that exclusions were used fairly, in particular short-term exclusions of one or two days duration, and the extent of their use in their own schools was acceptable. They were more inclined to regard exclusion as acceptable when a pupil had broken the rules than for where they had been disruptive and, in the majority of cases, thought

that schools should help pupils before considering exclusion. Nevertheless, a notable minority felt that exclusions were used too much and a smaller minority said that they were never used fairly. In addition, most young people were not aware that they could appeal to their headteacher although it was evident that those who had been excluded were more likely to be aware of the appeals process.

#### **Implications for policy and practice**

Views of exclusions were mixed with some children and young people viewing its use as appropriate while others felt it was over-used and unfair. Ensuring that headteachers and governing bodies are always mindful of the impact of exclusions on children and young people and that they ensure that they always give due consideration to the balance of evidence before excluding a pupil, would help ensure that the rights of children and young people to access an education are not removed without careful thought.

#### **What do children and young people think are the priorities for them and for the Government?**

- 6.11 Children and young people identified having a good teacher, stopping bullying, schools helping pupils to do well in their examinations and getting into a good school as their main priorities and the main priorities, in their view, for the Government. Bullying in particular emerged as a priority and stopping bullying was also one of the main roles of a teacher, in the view of those surveyed.

#### **Implications for policy and practice**

The responses of children and young people endorse a continued focus on the priorities already identified by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Namely, those of teaching quality and exclusions.

## Appendix A: Survey results for all pupils

### Basic frequencies (valid %)

Background section (Qs 1-6) are unweighted

<b>Table Q1</b>	
Are you:	%
Male	49
Female	51
N =	1942
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q2</b>	
Which year group are you in?	%
Year 5	7
Year 6	22
Year 7	29
Year 8	21
Year 9	3
Year 10	12
Year 11	7
N =	1957
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q3</b>	
Do you have a disability?	%
Yes	6
No	87
Don't know	7
N =	1940
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q4</b>	
Do you get extra help at school from a person like a Teaching Assistant?	%
Yes, I often get extra help with school work and learning	19
Yes, I often get extra help with getting about	2
Yes, I often get extra help with communicating	2
Yes, I often get extra help to stay calm	4
Yes, I often get extra help with taking my medicine	1
No, I do not get any extra help	71
Don't know / Don't want to say	6
N =	1866
<i>More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100. A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q5</b>	
Do you have free school meals?	%
Yes	16
No	82
Don't know	2
N =	1942
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q6</b>	
Which one of these best describes you?	%
White - British	76
White - Irish	2
White - Traveller of Irish heritage	0
White - Romany or Gypsy	0
White - any other white background	2
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1
Mixed - White and Black African	1
Mixed - White and Asian	1
Mixed - any other mixed race background	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	5
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	1
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1
Black or Black British - African	2
Black or Black British - any other Black background	1
Chinese	1
Any other ethnic background	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say	2
N =	1950
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

## Basic frequencies (valid %)

## Q7 onwards weighted

Table Q7 weighted by pupil background characteristics					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
Most of the time I like being at school	59	25	16	100	1939
My school helps me to learn	89	5	6	100	1931
Most of the time my lessons are interesting	51	30	19	100	1923
School work is worth doing	75	12	13	100	1915
My school has sensible rules	60	25	15	100	1917
I worry about school work and exams	50	36	14	100	1925
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

Table Q8 weighted by pupil background characteristics					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
I think my school puts too much pressure on me to do well at school	34	50	16	100	1937
I think my parents/carers put too much pressure on me to do well at school	24	64	12	100	1920
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

<b>Table Q9 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think my school council is good at listening to people's ideas about school	%
Yes	39
No	27
Not sure	31
Don't have a school council	3
N =	1920
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

<b>Table Q10 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
My teachers treat pupils with respect	43	51	5	2	100	1951
My teachers help pupils who are good at something	40	46	5	9	100	1929
My teachers help pupils who have difficulty with their work	64	30	4	3	100	1931
My teachers make my lessons fun and interesting	20	65	11	4	100	1929
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

## Appendix A: Survey results for all pupils

<b>Table Q11 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
I think I know when a teacher is not very good	49	38	4	9	100	1937
I would tell an adult at school if a teacher is not very good	28	30	26	15	100	1927
I would tell my parents/carers if a teacher is not very good	57	27	9	6	100	1930

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.*

<b>Table Q12 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...I have helped to choose a new teacher	18	71	11	100	1917
...I would like to help choose people to be new teachers	65	22	13	100	1933

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.*

## Appendix A: Survey results for all pupils

<b>Table Q13 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Very important	Quite important	Not important	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
...give me homework	24	49	24	3	100	1942
...tell me when I have done my work well	63	29	6	2	100	1937
...listen to pupils' ideas	76	20	3	1	100	1936
...help pupils who are good at something	39	43	12	6	100	1926
...help pupils who have problems with their work	81	14	3	2	100	1936
...help all pupils	76	18	3	3	100	1933
...make it clear how we should behave in school	59	31	8	2	100	1932
...mark my work	62	30	6	2	100	1932
...know about what they are teaching	84	12	3	1	100	1928
...make lessons interesting	72	23	3	2	100	1928
...stop pupils bullying	83	12	3	2	100	1929
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

**Table Q14 weighted by pupil background characteristics**

	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
I understand how secondary schools choose pupils to go to them	52	25	23	100	1942
I think choosing a secondary school is confusing	30	59	12	100	1932
I think choosing a secondary school is worrying	38	50	11	100	1930
I think I would learn better at another school	18	55	27	100	1929
I think there is a real choice in my area about which secondary school you can go to	45	34	21	100	1932
I think all pupils should be able to go to the school they want to	79	10	11	100	1926
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

**Table Q15 weighted by pupil background characteristics**

I think the way secondary schools give places to pupils is fair	%
Yes	45
No	21
Not sure	34
N =	1797
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

Appendix A: Survey results for all pupils

<b>Table Q16 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...because of how well they do at school	62	24	14	100	1945
...because they are really good at something	50	34	16	100	1930
...because of their religion	20	64	16	100	1925
...because they are in care (e.g. foster care)	19	57	24	100	1926

*A series of single response questions.  
The percentages in this table are weighted.  
Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.  
A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.*

<b>Table Q17 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Have you ever been excluded from school?	%
Yes	12
No	85
Not sure	2
N =	1931

*The percentages in this table are weighted.  
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.  
A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.*

<b>Table Q18 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think the number of pupils excluded in my school is...	%
Too many	24
About right	34
Not enough	12
Not sure	30
N =	1938

*The percentages in this table are weighted.  
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.  
A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.*

<b>Table Q19 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school for 1 or 2 days	28	55	10	6	100	1942
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school for more than 2 weeks	11	36	39	14	100	1930
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school, and not allow them back	13	36	37	14	100	1928

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.*

<b>Table Q20 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
In my school I think it is fair when pupils are excluded	%
Always	15
Sometimes	61
Never	11
Not sure	12
N =	1892

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.*

<b>Table Q21 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	True	Not true	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...they can ask their head teacher to change their mind	20	44	36	100	1936
...they can complain to their local council if they think they should not be excluded	29	29	43	100	1926
...their parent/carer can complain to their local council if they think they should not be excluded	47	16	37	100	1924
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

<b>Table Q22 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
Pupils who break the school rules should be excluded	13	65	13	8	100	1942
Pupils who often disrupt my lessons should be excluded from school	11	39	37	14	100	1933
Schools should help pupils with their problems instead of excluding them	51	36	6	7	100	1931
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q23 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
Other pupils make it difficult for me to learn	17	65	12	6	100	1935
When other pupils make it difficult for me to learn, the teachers do something about it	23	54	15	8	100	1931
My teachers are good at getting my class to behave	23	55	17	5	100	1930
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q24 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Thinking about all of the questions asked, which of these are most important to you...	%
...getting into a good secondary school	41
...having a good teacher	49
...making sure exclusions are fair	10
...stopping bullying	46
...having good opportunities to learn at school	26
...my school helping me to do well in my exams	45
...schools asking and listening to what pupils think	16
...having a good choice of subjects	21
...having a school uniform I like	14
...having a good choice of school dinners	8
N =	1931
<p><i>More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

<b>Table Q25 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Thinking about all of these things, which one do you think the government needs to do first to make school better?	%
...help pupils get into good secondary schools	12
...make sure we have good teachers	17
...make sure exclusions are fair	3
...stop bullying	25
...make sure we have good opportunities to learn at school	12
...make sure schools help pupils to do well in exams	11
...make sure schools ask and listen to what pupils think	6
...make sure there is a good choice of subjects	4
...have a school uniform I like	5
...have a good choice of school dinners	3
N =	1918
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1957 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

## Appendix B: Survey results for primary pupils

### Background section (Qs 1-6) are unweighted

<b>Table Q1</b>	
Are you:	%
Male	53
Female	47
N =	553
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q2</b>	
Which year group are you in?	%
Year 5	25
Year 6	75
N =	561
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q3</b>	
Do you have a disability?	%
Yes	8
No	83
Don't know	9
N =	557
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q4</b>	
Do you get extra help at school from a person like a Teaching Assistant?	%
Yes, I often get extra help with school work and learning	32
Yes, I often get extra help with getting about	3
Yes, I often get extra help with communicating	3
Yes, I often get extra help to stay calm	6
Yes, I often get extra help with taking my medicine	1
No, I do not get any extra help	55
Don't know / Don't want to say	8
N =	535
<i>More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q5</b>	
Do you have free school meals?	%
Yes	17
No	81
Don't know	2
N =	555
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q6</b>	
Which one of these best describes you?	%
White - British	83
White - Traveller of Irish heritage	0
White - any other white background	2
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1
Mixed - White and Black African	1
Mixed - White and Asian	1
Mixed - any other mixed race background	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	1
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0
Black or Black British - African	1
Black or Black British - any other Black background	1
Chinese	1
Any other ethnic background	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say	4
N =	560
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

## Basic frequencies Primary Age Children (valid %)

## Q7 onwards weighted

<b>Table Q7 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
Most of the time I like being at school	73	12	14	100	551
My school helps me to learn	95	1	3	100	544
Most of the time my lessons are interesting	70	14	17	100	539
School work is worth doing	81	6	13	100	538
My school has sensible rules	81	6	13	100	538
I worry about school work and exams	40	44	16	100	543
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

<b>Table Q8 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
I think my school puts too much pressure on me to do well at school	23	61	16	100	555
I think my parents/carers put too much pressure on me to do well at school	22	64	15	100	542
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions..</i></p>					

## Appendix B: Survey results for primary pupils

<b>Table Q9 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think my school council is good at listening to people's ideas about school	%
Yes	65
No	14
Not sure	21
Don't have a school council	0
N =	543
<i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>	
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question..</i>	

<b>Table Q10 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
My teachers treat pupils with respect	69	27	2	2	100	558
My teachers help pupils who are good at something	38	47	6	9	100	542
My teachers help pupils who have difficulty with their work	79	18	1	1	100	543
My teachers make my lessons fun and interesting	46	48	5	1	100	541
<i>A series of single response questions.</i>						
<i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>						
<i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>						
<i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions..</i>						

## Appendix B: Survey results for primary pupils

<b>Table Q11 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
I think I know when a teacher is not very good	34	44	8	13	100	547
I would tell an adult at school if a teacher is not very good	36	21	26	17	100	540
I would tell my parents/carers if a teacher is not very good	56	23	12	9	100	544

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions..*

<b>Table Q12 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...I have helped to choose a new teacher	12	70	18	100	542
...I would like to help choose people to be new teachers	64	18	17	100	553

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions..*

Table Q13 weighted by pupil background characteristics						
	Very important	Quite important	Not important	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
...give me homework	41	44	13	2	100	553
...tell me when I have done my work well	70	23	5	3	100	550
...listen to pupils' ideas	81	17	1	1	100	549
...help pupils who are good at something	42	37	12	10	100	544
...help pupils who have problems with their work	86	10	3	1	100	548
...help all pupils	79	16	3	2	100	546
...make it clear how we should behave in school	79	16	3	2	100	546
...mark my work	61	30	6	3	100	548
...know about what they are teaching	86	9	3	2	100	542
...make lessons interesting	76	20	2	2	100	544
...stop pupils bullying	91	4	3	1	100	544
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions..</i></p>						

<b>Table Q14 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
I understand how secondary schools choose pupils to go to them	52	19	29	100	554
I think choosing a secondary school is confusing	43	45	13	100	547
I think choosing a secondary school is worrying	43	43	14	100	546
I think I would learn better at another school	17	55	28	100	545
I think there is a real choice in my area about which secondary school you can go to	54	22	24	100	546
I think all pupils should be able to go to the school they want to	79	9	12	100	543
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions..</i></p>					

<b>Table Q15 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think the way secondary schools give places to pupils is fair	%
Yes	50
No	18
Not sure	32
N =	503
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

## Appendix B: Survey results for primary pupils

<b>Table Q16 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...because of how well they do at school	60	23	17	100	557
...because they are really good at something	48	35	17	100	549
...because of their religion	20	64	16	100	549
...because they are in care (e.g. foster care)	23	54	23	100	547

*A series of single response questions.  
The percentages in this table are weighted.  
Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.  
A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions.*

<b>Table Q17 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Have you ever been excluded from school?	%
Yes	5
No	92
Not sure	3
N =	556

*The percentages in this table are weighted.  
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.  
A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.*

<b>Table Q18 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think the number of pupils excluded in my school is...	%
Too many	10
About right	33
Not enough	14
Not sure	44
N =	554

*The percentages in this table are weighted.  
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.  
A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.*

<b>Table Q19 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school for 1 or 2 days	29	47	13	10	100	556
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school for more than 2 weeks	10	36	39	16	100	549
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school, and not allow them back	12	27	44	17	100	550
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q20 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
In my school I think it is fair when pupils are excluded	%
Always	19
Sometimes	52
Never	14
Not sure	15
N =	542
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

<b>Table Q21 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	True	Not true	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...they can ask their head teacher to change their mind	24	37	40	100	551
...they can complain to their local council if they think they should not be excluded	33	29	38	100	547
...their parent/carer can complain to their local council if they think they should not be excluded	47	19	35	100	548
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

<b>Table Q22 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
Pupils who break the school rules should be excluded	14	61	17	8	100	557
Pupils who often disrupt my lessons should be excluded from school	11	33	44	12	100	552
Schools should help pupils with their problems instead of excluding them	54	31	4	10	100	550
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q23 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
Other pupils make it difficult for me to learn	16	66	12	6	100	553
When other pupils make it difficult for me to learn, the teachers do something about it	40	44	8	8	100	553
My teachers are good at getting my class to behave	50	40	5	5	100	551
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q24 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Thinking about all of the questions asked, which of these are most important to you...	%
...getting into a good secondary school	60
...having a good teacher	49
...making sure exclusions are fair	12
...stopping bullying	57
...having good opportunities to learn at school	23
...my school helping me to do well in my exams	28
...schools asking and listening to what pupils think	13
...having a good choice of subjects	14
...having a school uniform I like	8
...having a good choice of school dinners	8
<b>N =</b>	<b>557</b>
<p><i>More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

## Appendix B: Survey results for primary pupils

<b>Table Q25 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Thinking about all of these things, which one do you think the government needs to do first to make school better?	%
...help pupils get into good secondary schools	19
...make sure we have good teachers	14
...make sure exclusions are fair	2
...stop bullying	36
...make sure we have good opportunities to learn at school	8
...make sure schools help pupils to do well in exams	8
...make sure schools ask and listen to what pupils think	5
...make sure there is a good choice of subjects	2
...have a school uniform I like	2
...have a good choice of school dinners	3
<b>N =</b>	<b>553</b>
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 561 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

## Appendix C: Survey results for secondary pupils

### Basic frequencies Secondary Age Children (valid %)

Background section (Qs 1-6) are unweighted

<b>Table Q1</b>	
Are you:	%
Male	47
Female	53
N =	1389
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q2</b>	
Which year group are you in?	%
Year 7	41
Year 8	29
Year 9	4
Year 10	17
Year 11	9
N =	1396
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question..</i>	

<b>Table Q3</b>	
Do you have a disability?	%
Yes	5
No	88
Don't know	7
N =	1383
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q4</b>	
Do you get extra help at school from a person like a Teaching Assistant?	%
Yes, I often get extra help with school work and learning	14
Yes, I often get extra help with getting about	1
Yes, I often get extra help with communicating	1
Yes, I often get extra help to stay calm	3
Yes, I often get extra help with taking my medicine	1
No, I do not get any extra help	77
Don't know / Don't want to say	6
N =	1331
<i>More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q5</b>	
Do you have free school meals?	%
Yes	16
No	83
Don't know	2
N =	1387
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question</i>	

<b>Table Q6</b>	
Which one of these best describes you?	%
White - British	73
White - Irish	2
White - Traveller of Irish heritage	0
White - Romany or Gypsy	1
White - any other white background	2
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1
Mixed - White and Black African	1
Mixed - White and Asian	2
Mixed - any other mixed race background	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	7
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	1
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1
Black or Black British - African	3
Black or Black British - any other Black background	0
Chinese	1
Any other ethnic background	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say	2
N =	1390
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question..</i>	

## Basic frequencies Secondary Age Children (valid %)

## Q7 onwards weighted

Table Q7 weighted by pupil background characteristics					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
Most of the time I like being at school	54	30	16	100	1388
My school helps me to learn	87	7	6	100	1387
Most of the time my lessons are interesting	44	36	20	100	1384
School work is worth doing	73	14	13	100	1377
My school has sensible rules	53	32	16	100	1379
I worry about school work and exams	53	33	14	100	1382
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

Table Q8 weighted by pupil background characteristics					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
I think my school puts too much pressure on me to do well at school	38	46	17	100	1382
I think my parents/carers put too much pressure on me to do well at school	25	63	11	100	1378
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

<b>Table Q9 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think my school council is good at listening to people's ideas about school	%
Yes	29
No	33
Not sure	35
Don't have a school council	4
N =	1377
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

<b>Table Q10 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
My teachers treat pupils with respect	33	60	6	2	100	1393
My teachers help pupils who are good at something	40	45	5	10	100	1387
My teachers help pupils who have difficulty with their work	58	34	4	4	100	1388
My teachers make my lessons fun and interesting	10	72	14	5	100	1388
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

Appendix C: Survey results for secondary pupils

<b>Table Q11 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
I think I know when a teacher is not very good	54	36	3	7	100	1390
I would tell an adult at school if a teacher is not very good	25	34	26	15	100	1387
I would tell my parents/carers if a teacher is not very good	58	29	8	5	100	1386

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.*

<b>Table Q12 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...I have helped to choose a new teacher	20	71	9	100	1375
...I would like to help choose people to be new teachers	66	23	11	100	1380

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.*

Table Q13 weighted by pupil background characteristics						
	Very important	Quite important	Not important	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
...give me homework	17	50	29	4	100	1389
...tell me when I have done my work well	60	32	6	2	100	1387
...listen to pupils' ideas	73	21	4	2	100	1387
...help pupils who are good at something	38	45	12	5	100	1382
...help pupils who have problems with their work	79	15	4	2	100	1388
...help all pupils	75	19	3	3	100	1387
...make it clear how we should behave in school	52	36	9	2	100	1386
...mark my work	62	30	6	2	100	1384
...know about what they are teaching	84	13	2	1	100	1386
...make lessons interesting	71	24	3	2	100	1384
...stop pupils bullying	80	15	3	2	100	1385
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q14 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
I understand how secondary schools choose pupils to go to them	52	27	21	100	1388
I think choosing a secondary school is confusing	25	64	11	100	1385
I think choosing a secondary school is worrying	36	53	10	100	1384
I think I would learn better at another school	19	55	26	100	1384
I think there is a real choice in my area about which secondary school you can go to	42	38	20	100	1386
I think all pupils should be able to go to the school they want to	79	11	10	100	1383
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i>  <i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>					

<b>Table Q15 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think the way secondary schools give places to pupils is fair	%
Yes	43
No	22
Not sure	34
N =	1294
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>  <i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>  <i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

<b>Table Q16 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...because of how well they do at school	63	24	13	100	1388
...because they are really good at something	50	34	16	100	1381
...because of their religion	20	64	17	100	1376
...because they are in care (e.g. foster care)	17	59	24	100	1379

*A series of single response questions.*

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.*

<b>Table Q17 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Have you ever been excluded from school?	%
Yes	15
No	83
Not sure	2
N =	1375

*The percentages in this table are weighted.*

*Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.*

*A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.*

<b>Table Q18 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
I think the number of pupils excluded in my school is...	%
Too many	30
About right	34
Not enough	12
Not sure	25
N =	1384
<i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>	
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q19 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school for 1 or 2 days	27	58	9	5	100	1386
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school for more than 2 weeks	11	37	40	13	100	1381
I think it is fair to exclude pupils from school, and not allow them back	13	39	34	14	100	1378
<i>A series of single response questions.</i>						
<i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>						
<i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>						
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i>						

<b>Table Q20 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
In my school I think it is fair when pupils are excluded	%
Always	14
Sometimes	64
Never	10
Not sure	11
N =	1350
<i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>	
<i>Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.</i>	
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i>	

<b>Table Q21 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>					
	True	Not true	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	
...they can ask their head teacher to change their mind	19	47	34	100	1385
...they can complain to their local council if they think they should not be excluded	27	28	44	100	1379
...their parent/carer can complain to their local council if they think they should not be excluded	47	15	38	100	1376
<i>A series of single response questions.</i>					
<i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i>					
<i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i>					
<i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i>					

<b>Table Q22 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
Pupils who break the school rules should be excluded	13	67	12	8	100	1385
Pupils who often disrupt my lessons should be excluded from school	11	41	34	14	100	1381
Schools should help pupils with their problems instead of excluding them	50	37	6	6	100	1381
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q23 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>						
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	
Other pupils make it difficult for me to learn	17	65	13	6	100	1382
When other pupils make it difficult for me to learn, the teachers do something about it	16	57	18	8	100	1378
My teachers are good at getting my class to behave	13	61	21	5	100	1379
<p><i>A series of single response questions.</i></p> <p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted.</i></p> <p><i>Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.</i></p> <p><i>A total of 1396 respondents could have answered these questions.</i></p>						

<b>Table Q24 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Thinking about all of the questions asked, which of these are most important to you...	%
...getting into a good secondary school	33
...having a good teacher	49
...making sure exclusions are fair	9
...stopping bullying	41
...having good opportunities to learn at school	27
...my school helping me to do well in my exams	52
...schools asking and listening to what pupils think	18
...having a good choice of subjects	23
...having a school uniform I like	16
...having a good choice of school dinners	9
N =	1374
<p><i>More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100. The percentages in this table are weighted. A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

<b>Table Q25 weighted by pupil background characteristics</b>	
Thinking about all of these things, which one do you think the government needs to do first to make school better?	%
...help pupils get into good secondary schools	9
...make sure we have good teachers	19
...make sure exclusions are fair	3
...stop bullying	21
...make sure we have good opportunities to learn at school	14
...make sure schools help pupils to do well in exams	12
...make sure schools ask and listen to what pupils think	7
...make sure there is a good choice of subjects	5
...have a school uniform I like	6
...have a good choice of school dinners	4
N =	1365
<p><i>The percentages in this table are weighted. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. A total of 1396 respondents could have answered this question.</i></p>	

## For more information

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