Parent Power?

Using money and information to boost children's chances of educational success

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Foreword

Every parent wants to do the best for their child. But for those parents who have the money, it is easier than for others. This new report by Becky Francis and Merryn Hutchings presents a fascinating insight into the extent to which professional parents are able to gain an advantage over other families in the school system.

The report confirms the extent to which an independent education is the preserve of the well-off. The Sutton Trust has the support of 90 leading independent day schools for our Open Access scheme which would democratise the best independent schools so that entry to them is based on ability rather than ability to pay. However, there is an equally important gap in access to good state schools. This research shows the extent to which those who can afford to do so choose to live in the right catchment areas, employ tutors and ensure their children have extra lessons and enrichment activities that are often too expensive for other families.

The report shows how some parents cheat the system. But far more significant is the degree to which well off families are able to buy a house near a good school or pay for private tutors to help with admissions tests in those schools that have them.

It is not just about school admissions. After-school music and drama lessons, and trips to the theatre or concerts, provide access to a cultural capital that can matter as much as academic achievement in getting on later in life. While free museums and galleries give access to all, many of these activities are only available to those who can pay for them. Education is about more than what happens at school, and providing a more level playing field in out-of-school activities is essential if every child is to achieve his or her potential.

The Sutton Trust has published other research this year highlighting aspects of this school gap. Our report on the top 500 comprehensives showed the extent to which the best state schools are more socially selective than others, as their catchments have fewer children from less privileged homes. Our annual survey of private tuition showed the extent to which children have extra coaching after school, something confirmed in this report. And our recent report on grammar schools highlighted how few children on free school meals – an indicator of social exclusivity – are admitted.

As with those reports, we believe there are important changes that could be made to provide a more level playing field. School admissions need to be fairer so that the best schools aren't just for those who can afford to live nearby. This means more use of ballots and banding so that schools have a fairer intake than if they simply recruited on the basis of those who live closest to the school. Monitoring the social background of those applying and being admitted would provide useful additional data.

But it is not enough to change admissions criteria or publish data. Parents need to know that their child is welcome at a school that is not their neighbourhood school. Professional parents often consult more information in choosing schools than working class parents, as this report shows. So it is important that every parent knows all their choices, and that those entitled to free transport to a choice of schools are made aware of that entitlement.

The pupil premium is an important way for schools to try to level the playing field within schools, and help to improve results for those from the least advantaged homes. But we need to do more to narrow the educational and cultural gap out of school. Means-tested vouchers could enable working class parents to provide the extra lessons and cultural activities that many of better off families take for granted. Improving social mobility and reducing educational inequality are vital if we are to make the most of the talents of all our children. I am very grateful to Becky Francis and Merryn Hutchings for this report and I hope that its findings and recommendations resonate with policymakers.

Sir Peter Lampl
Chairman
The Sutton Trust and The Education Endowment Foundation

Summary and Key Findings

Social class and income distribution remain the strongest predictors of both educational achievement and life outcomes. Despite government hopes, education does not generally promote social mobility; children from low income families tend to have lower attainment than their more affluent peers when they begin school[1], and the gap widens as they progress through the education system[2].

Recent UK governments have sought to improve educational outcomes for all pupils, through greater school diversification, competition and parental choice. There is debate about the effectiveness of this strategy, and especially its potential impact on social segregation.[3]

This research sought to establish the strategies used by parents to aid their children's educational outcomes, and to what extent this varies across social class groups. The research is based on analysis of data from a YouGov poll of 1173 parents of children aged 5-16 years, conducted in November 2012.[4]

Key Findings

1.   Parents' evenings or discussions with other parents were used to inform parental choice of school more often than league tables or Ofsted reports. A higher proportion of middle class than working class parents reported using multiple information sources to choose a school. Sources included school visits or open days; talking to other parents at the school; Ofsted reports; league tables and attainment data; school prospectuses; local authority websites and advisers; other websites; other sources.

2.   The report identifies different types of parent, according to the extent to which they use different sources of information to choose a school:

-      *Limited choosers* used only one or none of the listed sources of information.[5] This group were mainly, but not exclusively, working class, ranging from 10% of social group B to over 40% of social group E.[6]

-      *Partially informed choosers* used more sources than the previous group, but did not generally use independent documentary sources.

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[1] See e.g. EPPE, 2004; EPPSE, 2012; Feinstein, 2003; Sullivan, 2013

[2] See e.g. DfE, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a; Cabinet Office, 2012. Moreover, Lindley and Machin (2012) show that, it is the most affluent who have taken advantage of opportunities to upgrade their education over the last 30 years, and this has reinforced existing inequalities.

[3] See e.g. Allen, 2010; Levin and Fullan, 2008; Ainscow et al, 2012; OECD, 2007, 2013; Angel Alegre and Ferrer, 2010; Francis and Wong, 2013 for review. Social segregation is detrimental to the outcomes of some social groups, as it results in patterns whereby pupils from more affluent families access better quality educational provision (see e.g. Lupton, 2010; Francis, 2011; Ainscow et al, 2012; Lindley and Machin, 2012); and negatively impacts overall attainment (Douglas Willms, 2006; Levin & Fullan, 2008; OECD, 2010b).

[4] The sample of social group A parents was boosted to allow effective comparisons across groups.

[5] We suggest that this included both parents in rural areas who had no realistic choice of schools, and some parents whose choice is guided mainly by their child's preferences.

[6] The research used a social grading scale A-E where A is upper middle class; B is middle class C1 is lower middle class; C2 is skilled working class; D is working class; E is those at the lowest levels of subsistence (including casual workers, unemployed).

- ***Informed choosers*** – those who used at least one independent documentary source of information and one experiential source; this group made up over 60% of middle class parents, and just under half the working class parents.

- ***Hyper choosers*** – a sub-group within the informed choosers; those who used five or more sources of information. A higher percentage of middle class than of working class respondents were found in this group (ranging from 38% of group A to 13% of group D).

3.   13% of respondents from professional social group A sent their eldest child to a private/independent school,[7] compared with less than 2% of those from C2 (the skilled working class). Those who did so cited teaching quality, small class sizes and social networks as their reasons. A third of parents sending their children to a private school also paid for additional private tuition. Almost half of those who had sent their children to state schools indicated that they would have preferred private education if they could have afforded it. However, almost as many indicated that they would not want to send their child to a private school.

4.   Parents were asked if they had employed particular strategies to get into a good school. The strategies most frequently used were moving to live in an area thought to have good schools (21%); moving into the catchment area of a specific school (14%); and appealing against the decision to allocate the child to a specific school (13%). Other strategies included employing a private tutor (10%); attending church services to gain entry to a church school (6%); and using an address other than their main residence (either a second home or a relative's address) to gain access to a school (ranging between 7% of social group A, to 2% of social group D).[8] Middle class parents were significantly more likely to spend money to back their choice, such as moving into the catchment area of a specific school, or employing a tutor. 'Informed' and 'hyper' choosers were significantly more likely to use strategies such as moving house, employing a tutor and attending church than partially informed and limited choosers.

5.   The majority of parents reported that their child was supported with their school work either by family members or by a private tutor. However, a minority reported no support from either source: ranging from 11% of social group A respondents to 28% of those in social group E. Over half the parents in all social groups said that they supported their child at least once a week. 34% of social group A parents said that their child had received private tuition, compared to 12% of group E. Around 40% of the parents in groups C1, C2, D and E who had not provided their children with private tuition said that they would do so if they could afford it. More parents that sent their eldest child to private school had paid for additional private tuition than had state school parents: around a third (35%) of those parents paying for private education had paid for additional tuition, compared with a fifth (20%) of those with children at state schools.

6.   Middle class parents were more engaged in their children's school and more likely than working class parents to feel that the school listened to their concerns. Most parents said that they always attended parents' evenings. Over half said that what they heard there had changed the way they supported their child at home. Middle class parents were more likely than working class parents to believe that the conversation with teachers at those evenings had resulted in the *school* changing the way they worked with the child. Middle class parents were also more likely than working class parents to have contacted the school

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[7] A school not funded by the state. Where we refer to survey responses, we have referred to 'private/independent schools', but in other instances we use 'private schools', for simplicity.
[8] Note that these are percentages of the sample, and cannot be taken as representative of the whole population because some groups were over-represented in the sample – see Section3.

to discuss their child's progress, and to do so more frequently. They were also more likely to have become a governor or to have joined the Parent Teacher Association.

7.   Middle class parents were significantly more likely have provided enrichment activities, such as attending plays and concerts, museum and gallery visits, and regular out of school classes (including sports, music and drama). However, the differences across social groups were greater for activities that cost money and smaller for activities that are free.

Implications

These findings have important implications for Government policies, particularly in relation to choice, information and enrichment activities.

The assumption underpinning 'parental choice' is that parents are all equally informed and engaged in active choice-making – equipped with the requisite information and knowledge, and actively desiring to apply this information. However, this research shows that those who adopt the choice behaviours anticipated by government policy – the 'informed choosers' and 'hyper choosers'[9] – are disproportionately, though by no means exclusively, middle class.

But the findings also demonstrate the extent to which some working class parents are enacting 'informed choice', and policymakers may also learn from the practices of these parents. An additional concern for the Government is the number of parents – more than half in each social group – who had not made direct use of school attainment data in choosing schools.

The findings highlight the advantages that financial resources secure, and therefore the inequalities facing families in their ability to adopt strategies that will benefit their children's education (with implications for equality of opportunity and social mobility).

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[9] Those who used at least one independent documentary source and one experiential source to inform their choice of school.

Recommendations

The Government should improve the range and quality of information available to working class parents.

The Government needs to find ways to improve the information about schools available to all parents, and its accessibility. When choosing a school for their child to attend, parents in all social groups are more likely to use sources such as school visits and conversation with other parents than they are to use Ofsted reports and league tables. But a higher proportion of middle class parents than of working class parents use each source. The Government should find ways – working with community groups, consumer agencies and businesses that are successful in working class communities - to make it easier for all parents to access as rich a range of information to facilitate informed choice-making over their children's education. It is particularly important that parents are aware not just of the school choices available, but of their rights to free transport to a choice of three schools within six miles of their home (or up to 15 miles for faith schools) if their child is eligible for free school meals.[10]

Means-tested vouchers should be available to working class parents that can be spent on extra tuition, books and cultural activities for their children.

The Government has introduced the pupil premium to provide schools with extra resources to improve teaching for pupils on free school meals. While this is welcome, research suggests that the sums of money allocated are insufficient to close the attainment gap (Sibieta, 2009[11]), and (as our research also illustrates), issues of inequality and attainment gaps relate to social class beyond free school meals. Moreover, there is still a big gap in resources spent outside school. Government should introduce a means-tested voucher by which families could purchase additional educational support. This recommendation – also supported by the headteachers' association ASCL[12] - would empower families to take ownership of their children's developmental and educational opportunities, and support the home learning environment that research shows to be vital in giving children the right start.

Schools should be expected to publish socio-economic data on who applies and who is admitted, to encourage inclusive practice.

Social segregation impedes the achievement of our education system and undermines social mobility. All schools have an important moral mission in education. It is important that they have the means to demonstrate this publicly. So schools should be expected to publish socio-economic data on who applies and who is admitted, to reveal any trends to segregation and encourage inclusive practice. The publication of this data should also be monitored by the Schools Adjudicator.

Government, Local Authorities and groups of schools should instigate admissions systems that avoid bias.

Schools and organisations responsible for education locally should take steps to implement systems not subject to bias at school level, such as ballots (or random allocation), or fair banding.[13] This should be coupled with promotion of information on the availability of free transport for those families requiring this in order to access a school.

The Government should take action to address the differences between state and private schools in information available to parents

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[10] http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/g/2007%20h%20to%20s%20travel%20and%20transport%20guidance.pdf
[11] See also Sutton Trust, 2012
[12] ASCL, 2013
[13] Ideally this should be area-based.

Our findings show that it is difficult for parents to make straightforward comparisons between state and private schools because the information available to parents is not comparable. To remedy this, *all* schools should be represented in league tables, and subject to the same scrutiny and inspection criteria. Socio-economic data on admissions, 'spend per pupil' data, and data on the value added by the school, should be published by both state and private schools.

More attention should be given to progress and value-added measures in school league tables, so that schools are encouraged to focus on all their students.

The Government has removed earlier value added measures from the league tables, and is currently consulting on new measures that will apply from 2015. While we welcome a system where students gain credits for all their achievements, it is important that progress is credited as strongly as raw results, based on attainment at entry to the school. The Government needs to find an effective way of recording the socio-economic background of all children, to enable meaningful publication of the extent to which students from different backgrounds make, and exceed, expected progress, in addition to any raw data based on English and Maths, or the best eight subjects at GCSE. These measures should be applied to *all* schools.

Introduction

Social class[14] continues to be the strongest single predictor of educational achievement, and social mobility is very limited.[15] Blanden et al (2005) found that social mobility – how someone's adult outcomes relate to their circumstances as a child – had declined in Britain between children born in 1958 and those born in 1970. It also showed that it was lower than in Canada, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, and on a par with the United States. This social immobility is a concern for Government: social mobility is central to its vision of a meritocratic society (wherein rewards are distributed on merit rather than family background; Milburn [2012][16]), and is considered vital both to economic productivity and to democracy. As such, all three main political parties are committed to addressing Britain's poor record for social mobility.

Education is a central issue for social mobility, as it is the education system which is supposed to realise young people's potential via provision of the knowledge and skills they need to secure successful futures as workers and citizens. For these reasons, education is often seen as a driver of social mobility. Hinds et al (2012) observe that education has the potential to 'break the cycle' of disadvantage. Yet social class remains the strongest predictor of life outcomes, including for educational achievement, where the UK's socio-economic gap for educational achievement is one of the most significant in the developed world[17]. In the UK education tends to replicate, and at worst exacerbate, existing inequality. Statistics highlight that British children's educational attainment is overwhelmingly linked to parental occupation, income, and qualifications (EPPE, 2004; Lupton et al, 2009; National Equality Panel, 2010; EPPSE, 2012). And, while children from low income families tend to be disadvantaged when they begin school[18], rather than the socio-economic gap for achievement shrinking as young people progress through the education system, the gap widens[19]. Lindley and Machin's (2012) recent work shows that, over the last thirty years, it is the most affluent people who have taken advantage of opportunities to upgrade their education, and this has reinforced existing inequalities.

36.3 % of young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieved 5 A*-C including Maths and English at GCSE in 2012, compared to 62.6 % not eligible for FSM (DfE, 2013). This gap of 26.3 percentage points has remained broadly stable.

Young people from the richest fifth of families are nearly three times more likely to go to university than the poorest fifth (Anders, 2012). Only 7% of children attend private schools, but 17% of Russell group university entrants and over 40% of Oxbridge entrants have been privately educated.

The highest-performing 15 year olds from poor backgrounds are, on average, two years behind the highest-performing pupils from privileged backgrounds for reading ability (Jerrim, 2012).

(Box taken from Francis and Wong, 2013 and updated)
The especially wide socio-economic gap for achievement in the UK comprises a serious block to meritocracy and social mobility. Furthermore, in spite of the policy focus on those

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[14] As characterised by income and educational background, see e.g. EPPE, 2009. It is recognised that the notion of social 'class', and especially the term 'working class', is contested, and that many of those who meet criteria for such categories do not identify with them. However, we adopt reference to social class (rather than, e.g. socio-economic background) as it better encapsulates the cultural, as well as financial, elements of social distinction and inequality.

[15] See e.g. OECD, 2010b; Cabinet Office, 2011; Hinds et al, 2012.

[16] Albeit there are of course problems with the reliance on education credentials as direct indicators of 'merit', see e.g. Illich, 1971; Young, 2013.

[17] See OECD, 2010a, 2010b.

[18] EPPE, 2004; Waldfogel and Washbrook, 2011; EPPSE, 2012.

[19] See e.g. DfE, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a; Cabinet Office, 2012.

eligible for free school meals (FSM), analysis shows that, in fact, England educational achievement is still directly correlated with socio-economic background – the higher the socio-economic group, the higher the achievement (Lupton et al, 2009; Sullivan et al, 2013). There are of course schools that manage to buck this trend (see e.g. Blanden, 2006; Allen, 2012). But the direct correlation between attainment and socio-economic background reveals the issue is not simply about poverty (as expressed by FSM), but about social class inequality more generally (Clifton and Cook, 2012; Sullivan et al, 2013). Of course, other social factors also have a strong impact on educational outcomes. A raft of research shows how gender, ethnicity and other variables intersect with social class in particular ways in achievement patterns; and it is important these are not overlooked. However, socio-economic background remains the strongest single predictor of attainment, and this is especially the case for the White majority population.

Two key elements to social and educational inequality are material capital and social capital. By material capital we mean financial (to be able to pay for private schooling or private tuition, to be able to pay for school trips and educational resources or experiences, to be able to afford to move into the catchment of a good school); as well as the provision of facilities conducive to learning. By social capital we mean the networks, understandings and experiences that can support social progress. For middle class parents this often includes, for example, experience of university-level education; understanding of the education system and the confidence to negotiate it; connections to others with expertise and information; connections to those who can offer high-quality support (such as professional work experience placements and internships). Of course there are different aspects of social capital, with certain knowledge and understandings held by those from low socio-economic groups; however in terms of *educational* social capital a raft of research demonstrates the advantage held by the middle classes on a range of fronts.[20] Much of this work has also focused on our highly socially segregated education system, in which working class young people tend to access poorer quality schooling and pedagogy, hence reproducing inequality (see Francis and Wong, 2013). Reay (2006: 294) concludes that economic and social inequalities contribute to the lack of educational equity in this country, observing, 'it is still a question of the level of material and cultural resources that families can bring to their engagement with education.' In this report we show how some parents use their financial and social (or cultural) resources to ensure their children's educational success, and the extent to which this takes place.

Recent UK governments have placed faith in a quasi-marketisation of schooling, premised on school diversification and parental choice, as a means to secure improvement across the school system as schools compete for students. This competition between schools is expected to drive up quality overall. Similar policies premised on these assumptions have been adopted in other countries too (Sahlgren, 2013). There is debate on their effectiveness, and a tension between improvement by some measures and the increased social segregation that such competition can promote.[21] The focus on school performance measures for pupil attainment, provided to facilitate parental 'choice' (and as an accountability measure), incentivises schools to exercise care in choosing children as much as the other way around (see Ainscow et al, 2012).[22] Resulting social segregation and its detrimental impact on attainment overall can limit the success of these policy measures, although there is continued debate as to the conditions by which such negative side-products could be mitigated (e.g. Sahlgren, 2013).

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[20] See e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979), for the seminal work here; or Vincent and Ball (2007) for recent exemplars.
[21] See, e.g. Allen (2010), Levin and Fullan (2008), Ainscow et al (2012), OECD (2007; 2013), Angel Alegre and Ferrer (2010); Sahlgren (2013) for debate. See Francis and Wong (2013) for review.
[22] It is to be hoped that the new league table performance indicators recently announced by the DfE may work to interrupt some of these tendencies.

However, while schools choosing pupils may be one reason for the patterns of social distinction and school hierarchy emerging, parental choice may be equally important. Of course, the idea of 'parental choice' is popular with many parents, including those from disadvantaged and/or Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups (e.g. Kleitz et al, 2000). Nevertheless, some parents are better able to exercise and effect choice than others. This point has been demonstrated by a body of research on school choice practices according to socio-economic background, which shows how middle class families are able to use their financial and social capital to secure their choices in a way that working class families often cannot. Examples of such practices include the financial resources to buy private tutoring to support entrance exams, move house to access the catchment of a high-performing school, or pay for additional travel costs. Cultural capital resources include experience of elite educational routes and higher education, professional networks and so on, which provide middle-class families with knowledge of how the system works and the hierarchies therein (Reay, 1998; Crozier, 2000; Crozier and Reay, 2005). By contrast, some working-class parents may be less aware or concerned, or may just have little option but to send their children to schools with poor reputations and results (Reay and Wiliam, 1999; Burgess et al, 2009), though those with children eligible for free school meals are now entitled to free travel to a choice of schools. These practices further the social segregation already so prevalent in the English education system.

Previous research has demonstrated a number of ways in which middle class parents try to secure their children's educational success (e.g. Reay and Ball, 1997; Ball 2003, Vincent, 2001; Ball and Vincent, 2007). They have explored in detail the various strategies that are used, focusing particularly on choice of school and on extra-curricular activities. This research has tended to be qualitative or to focus on particular strategies. Such studies have paid less attention to the use of strategies by different social groups. We wanted to build on this research by undertaking a quantitative study that asked parents directly about a range of established strategies, comparing the responses according socio-economic background, to establish what strategies and resources are used by middle-class parents to secure their children's educational achievement, and to what extent these are drawn on by working class parents. We also sought to identify what information such decisions are based upon.
Our findings highlight the advantages that financial and cultural capital secures, and therefore the inequalities facing families in their ability to secure beneficial outcomes for their children. This includes the ability to effect 'choice'. Governments face a challenge maintaining the careful balance between individual rights and freedoms, and the good of society overall. Our research shows just how far aspirations for equality of opportunity are being undermined by the greater purchasing power of some parents: the ability for some parents but not others to use financial resources to secure their children's achievement poses real impediments for social mobility, which need to be recognised and addressed as detrimental to society. However, our findings also demonstrate how some parents across social groups engage in 'informed' school choice-making (as well as a finding that not all middle class parents are enacting 'informed choice'). Their approaches may also have important implications for policymakers.

Research aims

Building on previous research findings about the different strategies used by middle-class parents to secure their children's educational and future success, the research set out to investigate:

- the extent to which middle class parents say they have adopted these strategies;
- the extent to which working class parents say they have adopted similar strategies;
- the extent to which those who do not adopt such strategies say they would do so if they could afford to.

The following section sets out our methods and findings, and the final section considers the implications of our findings for the education system, and makes recommendations accordingly.

Research design

The findings presented here are based on an online survey of 1173 parents of children aged 5-16 years who attended school, conducted in November 2012 by the polling organisation YouGov. Analysis was conducted by the authors.

Only parents who resided with their children were invited to take part.[23] Half the respondents were male and half female. Responses were analysed by social grade or group.[24] Parents from group A were deliberately over-sampled in order to secure a sufficiently large number of responses from middle class parents to be able to analyse by sub-group within this group. Table 1 shows the percentages of each social group among the respondents, and compares this with a breakdown of the English population by social group. However, it should be noted that there are no national figures for the proportions of *parents of school age children* in each social group, so it is not possible to weight the data to produce findings for the whole population.[25]

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[23] The questions generally referred to actions taken or decisions made by the respondent or by their children's 'other main carer'.

[24] The social group of a family is based on the work of the main income earner. A: higher managerial administrative or professional; B: intermediate higher managerial administrative or professional; C1: supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional; C2: skilled manual workers; D: semi and unskilled manual workers; E: State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only. Social groups A, B and C1are generally seen as middle class, C2 and D as working class, and E are those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

[25] See Appendix A for further discussion of the sample and methods.

Table 1: Breakdown of sample by social group (N = 1173)		
Social grade	Respondents %	English Population %
A	19.3	4
B	23.0	23
C1	18.5	29
C2	16.9	21
D	12.0	15
E	10.3	8

Where questions referred to only one child, we asked for responses relating to the oldest child in the family within the 5-16 age range. There were two reasons for this. First, parents tend to make more decisions in relation to their first child's education (subsequent children may simply attend the same school as their older sibling). Secondly, this strategy ensured that we would obtain more responses relating to the secondary school age group (11-16); this was desirable because many of the strategies that previous research has documented would be used particularly during the process of transfer from primary to secondary school. In the findings section, 'child' in the singular always refers to the oldest school-age child. The majority of the survey questions asked respondents to select from a range of options, including, where relevant, Likert scales.[26]

Questions covered the range of strategies that middle class parents have been found to adopt to ensure their children's educational success. The survey data were analysed by the authors using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Differences between groups were identified using chi-squared, and are reported as significant when $p<0.05$ (i.e. when there is less than a 5% probability that this result could occur by from random variation).

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[26] A Likert scale is designed to assess the degree of agreement with a given statement. An example of a Likert scale is: strongly agree, slightly agree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly disagree, strongly disagree.

Our data demonstrates that more middle class than working class parents actively seek a variety of information to help choose their child's school - and demonstrates the extent to which they are financially and culturally resourcing their children's education. Our research provides new insights into: a) the extent of these activities and investments; and b) the proportion of middle-class parents who are not well-informed. It also identifies a group of 'hyper' choosers that extends across social classes (though disproportionately middle class) who seek multiple sources of information. These findings have considerable implications for education policy-making, social mobility and social justice. This section is organised by the various strategies that middle class parents have been found to use to try to ensure their children's educational success.

1   School choice

Since the 1988 Education Act introduced an element of the market to the school system, with the publication of league tables to inform parents on levels of pupil attainment at different schools, the policies of successive governments have emphasised the importance of parental choice. For example, the 2010 Schools White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010) stressed the importance of increasing 'parents' ability to make meaningful choices about where to send their children to school' by making more information available and ensuring that it is in a standardised form (para.6.2). This exercise of 'choice' is seen as driving up standards via competition among schools having to attract pupils.
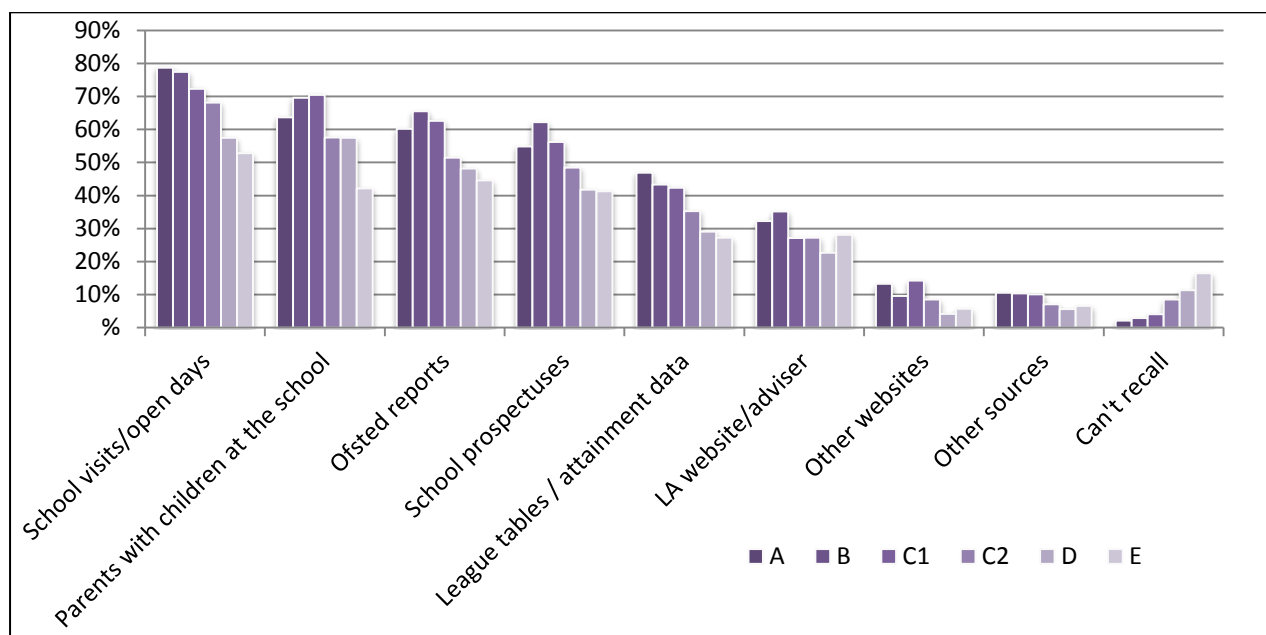
However, research has also highlighted consequences for equality as some parents are more financially and culturally equipped to exercise 'choice' to secure effective outcomes for their children (Ainscow et al, 2012; Exley, 2012; Reay, 2012). Previous research has characterised the middle classes as gaining educational advantages for their children by being more effective choosers than the working classes. Reay (2012: 6-7) wrote:

> Parental choice has become the main policy that the upper and middle classes have very successfully mobilised in their strategy of keeping ahead. … The working class predominantly constitute those people who are not able to exercise 'choice'.

She argued that this is the case both because working class parents cannot afford to live in the catchment areas of 'good' schools, and because they lack the knowledge and the resources which are needed to make the best use of the information available about schools.

Our survey was designed to explore the information that parents used in choosing schools. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had used a range of sources including documents such as prospectuses, Ofsted reports and league tables, and experiential sources such as visiting the school or finding out about other parents' experiences. Inevitably some of these sources potentially overlap; school prospectuses may include both attainment data and Ofsted judgements, and local authority websites also often include attainment data. The responses showed that the experiential resources were used more often than documentary resources (see Figure 1). Ball and Vincent (1998) similarly showed that all groups of parents used 'hot' or 'grapevine' knowledge (based on their own experience or the experience of others), while use of 'cold' official and formal knowledge was more limited.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents using various sources of information in choosing schools, by social group (N = 1173)

Responses in relation to the majority of the information sources differed significantly by social group, with higher percentages of the middle class groups A, B and C1 stating that they had used most sources; the exceptions to this were use of the local authority website or advisor, and 'other sources' (Figure 1).

What is perhaps surprising, in the light of government policy to make more information about schools available to parents, is the limited use made of key documentary sources, with 57% of the respondents indicating that they had used Ofsted reports and only 39% indicating that they had used league tables/attainment data from national test or exams.[27] (The majority of those who used league tables also read Ofsted reports.) This limited use of documentary sources could suggest that the documentary evidence is not sufficiently accessible or comprehensible. Equally, it may suggest that parents of all social groups are less likely to base their decisions on such information than government policy would suggest, reflecting Ball and Vincent's finding of the widespread use of 'hot' knowledge.

We have reviewed the number and type (documentary or experiential) of different sources that each respondent indicated that they had used to inform their school choices to characterise 'chooser types'. First we divided the sample into two groups: the first group was made up of those who used information sources in the way that government policy would suggest (which we defined as using at least one independent documentary source, such as Ofsted reports or league tables[28]) and one experiential source (such as visiting schools or talking to parents whose children attended them) – and the second group was made up of those who did not use both documentary and experiential sources. These two groups (those who behaved in line with government policy and those who did not) were then sub-divided in relation to the number of the sources listed in the survey that they indicated using:

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[27] Note that figures for the total parent population in England are likely to be lower than the ones given here because the survey sample included a disproportionate number of social group A, who, as Figure 6 shows, are more likely to make use of such sources.
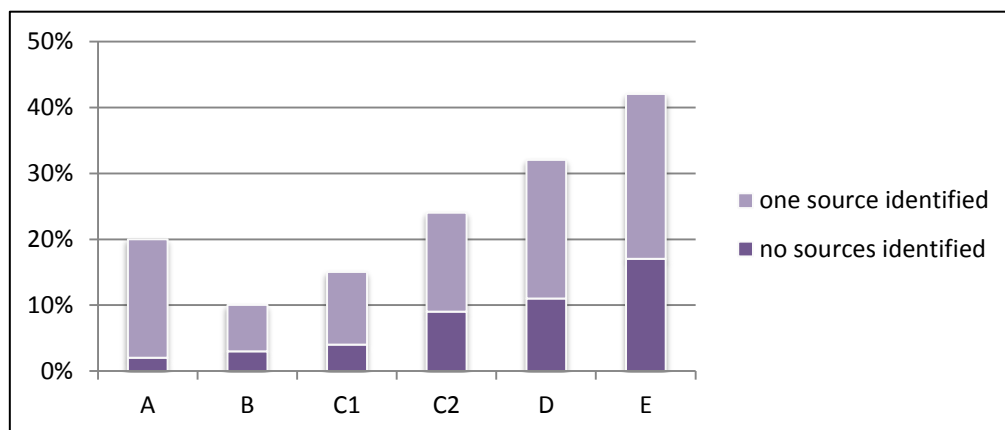
[28] School prospectuses have been excluded from this category because they could be viewed as marketing material rather than dispassionate independent information.

- Used *either* experiential *or* independent documentary sources (but not both), or did not use any of the listed sources:

    - *Limited choosers* (used only one or none of the listed sources)

    - *Partially informed choosers* (used more than one of the listed sources)

- Used both independent documentary and experiential sources of information:

    - *Informed choosers* (used less than five of the listed sources)

    - *Hyper choosers* (used five or more of the listed sources)

First we consider those who did *not* behave in line with government policy i.e. did not use both independent documentary sources and experiential sources.

Limited choosers are those individuals who did not indicate using any of the listed sources (6% of the whole sample), or indicated that they had used only one source (15%). We have chosen this term to reflect the fact that their choice was apparently based on limited information. Limited choosers were found in all social groups, but were significantly more common among the working class groups (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of 'limited choosers' by social group (i.e. respondents who indicated using either one or none of the listed sources of information) (N=1173)

It seems surprising that 18% of group A respondents reported using just one information source (and a further 2% used none). We have reviewed whether a disproportionate number of this group sent their children to private schools, but this was not the case.

Previous research suggests possible explanations for the behaviour of limited choosers; Reay and Ball (1998) drew attention to the importance that some parents accorded to their child's educational preferences, with some leaving the choice entirely to the child. In other cases (and particularly in rural areas), there may be no realistic choice of accessible schools, so there may be little point in parents doing any research.

Significantly more of those outside London were 'limited choosers' (23% v 10% in London); this probably reflects the fact that parents in London have a greater choice of accessible schools, and therefore feel they need to gather more information.

Of the respondents who used only one source, more than half had used only a 'hot' source of knowledge, while only 13% had used independent documentary sources (Ofsted reports and league tables) (Table 2).

Table 2: Parents who indicated that they had used only one listed source of information: percentage indicating each source (N = 173)

Source	%
Attended school visits/ open days	32
Opinions from parents/ carers whose children already attend schools I was/ we were considering	24
My Local Authority website or Local Authority advisor	14
Ofsted reports	10
School prospectuses	6
League tables/ attainment data from national tests and exams	3
Other websites	1
Other sources	10

Ball (2003) pointed out that, within families, there is often a gender divide in who deals with school issues. It is, he says, typically the mothers who gather information about prospective schools. This was borne out in our data; male respondents were significantly more likely to be among the 'limited choosers' (reporting using none or only one source of information) (26% male v 17% female). This may mean their female partners had done more research, so the figures above may understate the extent to which families (rather than individuals) draw on various information sources.

'Partially informed choosers' made use of more sources of information than the 'limited choosers', but were not 'informed choosers' because they did not use both independent document *and* experiential sources. Only one fifth of this group used any independent documentary source (league table or Ofsted report).

We turn now to the respondents who appeared to have behaved in line with government policy, making use of a range of information – and specifically, of *at least* one independent documentary source (e.g. league tables, Ofsted reports) and one experiential source (visiting the school or asking other parents about it). Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents in each social group that did this.

Figure 3: Percentage of parents who used at least one independent documentary and one experiential source of information, by social group) (N = 1173)
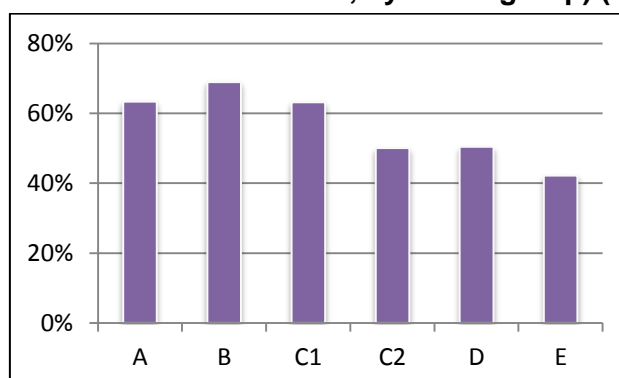
Figure 3 shows that only just over half of the whole sample fell into this category. This behaviour was significantly more common among the middle classes (around two-thirds falling in this group) compared with about half of the working classes. However, these data do not suggest a clear-cut distinction between the behaviour of middle class and working class parents in the way that some previous research has suggested.

We have created two chooser groups among the respondents shown on Figure 3, depending on the number of sources they consulted. Some used a wide range of different sources of information to support their school choice. This would include the parents described by Ball (2003) as spending years considering their choices of school, and reviewing large amounts of information. The importance of the choice in terms of the child's future chances, the schools available, the range of information, and the uncertainty about which information can be trusted, all combine to heighten anxiety and insecurity (Vincent & Ball, 2006). Thus this group might be characterised by their anxiety to make the right choices, as well as by their extensive research. We have referred to them as 'hyper choosers', and distinguished them from those in this group who used fewer sources, who we refer to as 'informed choosers'.

While aware of the limitations of quantitative data, we have attempted to explore how many 'hyper choosers' there may be, and what social groups they fall in, by reviewing the number of respondents who indicated that they had used five or more of the listed sources of information. Figure 4 shows that 'hyper choosers' can be found in all social groups, but most commonly in A, B and C1 – the middle classes. They comprise 38% of 'the most affluent group' (As) and only 13% of the 'semi and unskilled manual workers' (Ds). However, they do not represent a majority in any social group.

Figure 4: Percentage of hyper choosers (respondents who indicated that they used five or more of the listed sources of information in choosing schools), by social group (N = 1173)
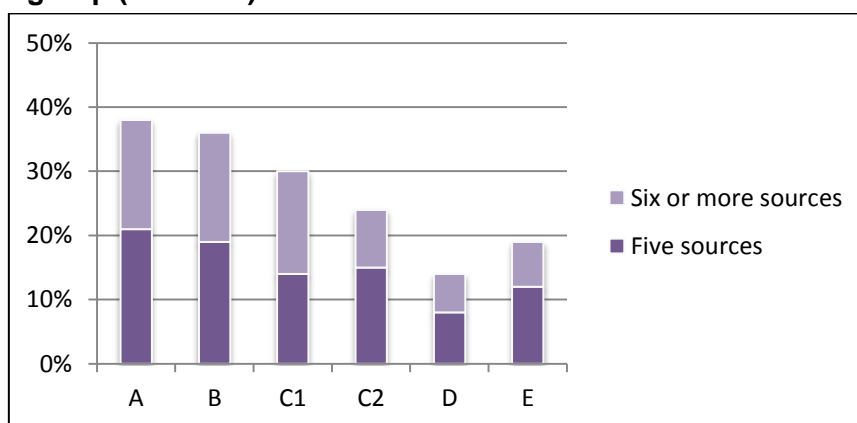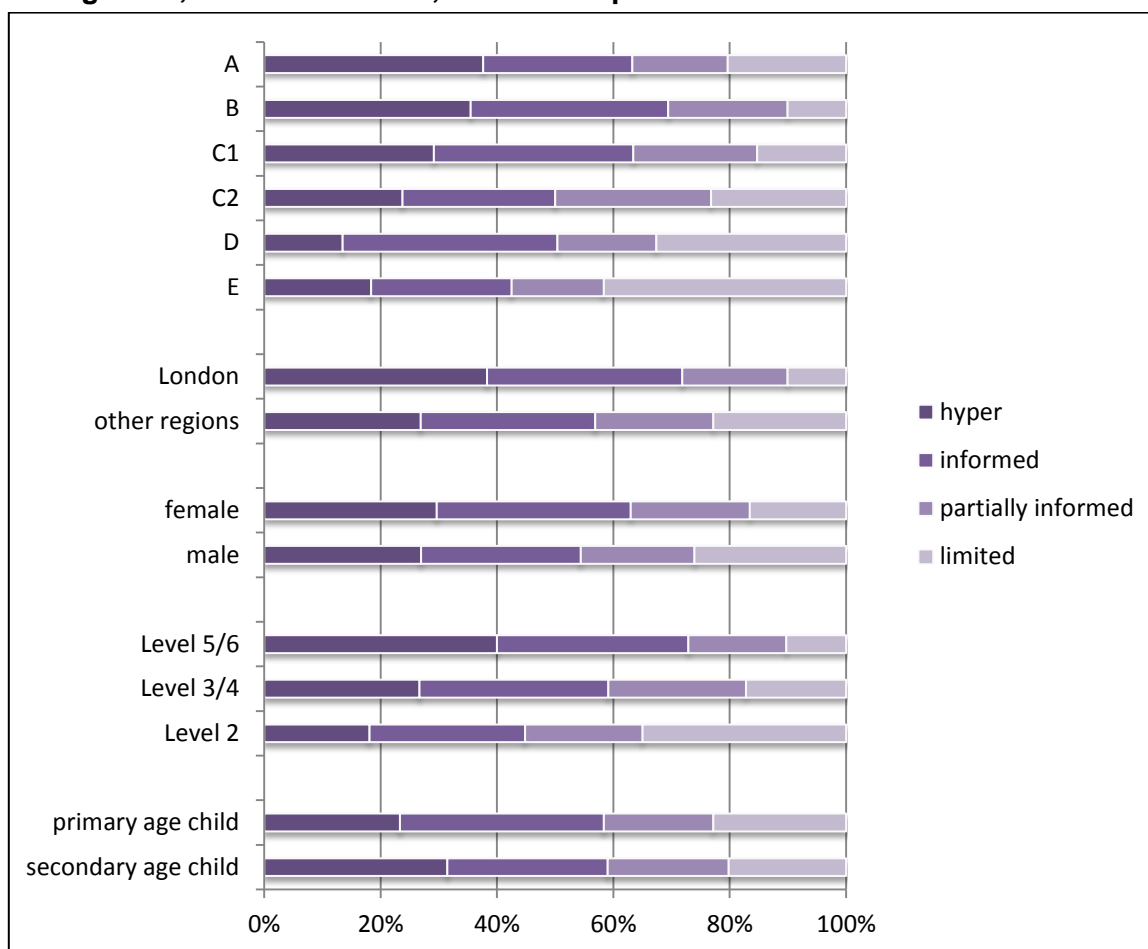

Figure 5 summarises the distribution of the sample across these four chooser groups by social group, gender, region, educational level of respondent[29] and school phase.

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[29] Levels refer to the highest educational achievement. Levels 1-2: below or at GCSE level; Levels 3-4: A level or Foundation degree; Levels 5-6: degree, postgraduate qualification and above.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents in each chooser group, by social group, region, gender, educational level, and school phase of child

As we have already indicated, about two thirds of the middle class respondents were in the 'informed' and 'hyper' chooser groups, while this was the case for only half the working class respondents. 'Partially informed' and 'limited' choosers were more common among the working class social groups, but were in the majority only in social group E.

Figure 5 shows that respondents in London were significantly more likely than those elsewhere to be to be 'hyper choosers' (39% v 27%), and less likely to be 'limited choosers' (10% v 23%). This probably reflects the greater choice of schools in London, and the perceived risk of sending one's child to a poor school (see e.g. Robinson, 2012).

It is perhaps not surprising, in the light of Ball's finding that women tend to do more of the research about schools, that the groups choosing in line with government policy (using both independent documentary and experiential sources) included significantly more female respondents than male (63% v 54%). However, male and female respondents were equally likely to be hyper choosers. This suggests that while some men tend to leave issues around school choice to their partners, there are a small group who get heavily involved in researching potential schools.

The educational level of the respondent produced similar patterns to social group, with the most highly educated most likely to use multiple sources of information.[30] Those whose

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[30] Analysis of the survey data by the educational level of the respondents produced very similar patterns to social group analysis, with those with higher levels of education making the most use of strategies to further their children's education. Because of this similarity, educational level differences have not always been noted.

oldest school age child was of secondary school age were significantly more likely than those whose children were younger to be 'hyper choosers' (32% v 23%). The difference between Black and minority ethnic (BME) and White parents was not statistically significant, though more BME than White respondents were in the 'limited chooser' group (28% v 21%)[31]. There was no significant difference between those with children at state and private schools

There were a number of other significant differences in these data, listed below:

- As we would expect, sources used depended on their relevance and availability: Those sending their children to private schools were significantly more likely than those with children at state schools to say that they had used league tables/attainment data (51% v 38%), and 'other websites' (19% v 9%). Those with children at state schools were significantly more likely to have used Local Authority (LA) websites and advisors (31% v 17%)[32].
- Those whose responses related to a child in the secondary age range (11-16) were significantly more likely than those responding about younger children to indicate that they had visited schools (76% v 61%), used league tables (44% v 31%) and read school prospectuses (60% v 42%). This may reflect a greater anxiety at secondary school level about attainment outcomes, contrasting perhaps with the desire of parents for their primary school child to feel happy and secure at school.
- London respondents were more likely than those elsewhere to indicate that they had used prospectuses (69% v 50%), Ofsted reports (65% v 56%), league tables (55% v 37%) and other websites (20% v 9%).
- BME respondents were significantly more likely than their White counterparts to have used league tables (53% v 38%) and Local Authority websites or advisors (40% v 29%), but *less* likely to have used Ofsted reports (48% v 58%), visited schools (59% v 72%) or sought opinions from other parents (51% v 63%).

This section has explored the sources that parents indicated that they had used to inform their choice of shools. What is striking is the number from all social classes who are *not* making use of the various sources of information that are available. Some 10% of social group B indicated that they had used only one or none of the information sources listed, rising to 41% of social group E. Only just over half of all the respondents were well-informed, in the sense that they drew on at least one experiential source and one independent documentary source. And even fewer were 'hyper choosers' making use of five or more of the listed sources of information. The 'informed' and 'hyper' choosers were found across the social spectrum. However, a significantly higher percentage of middle class respondents than of working class were found in these groups. For example, 38% of social group A were 'hyper choosers', but only 13% of social group D.

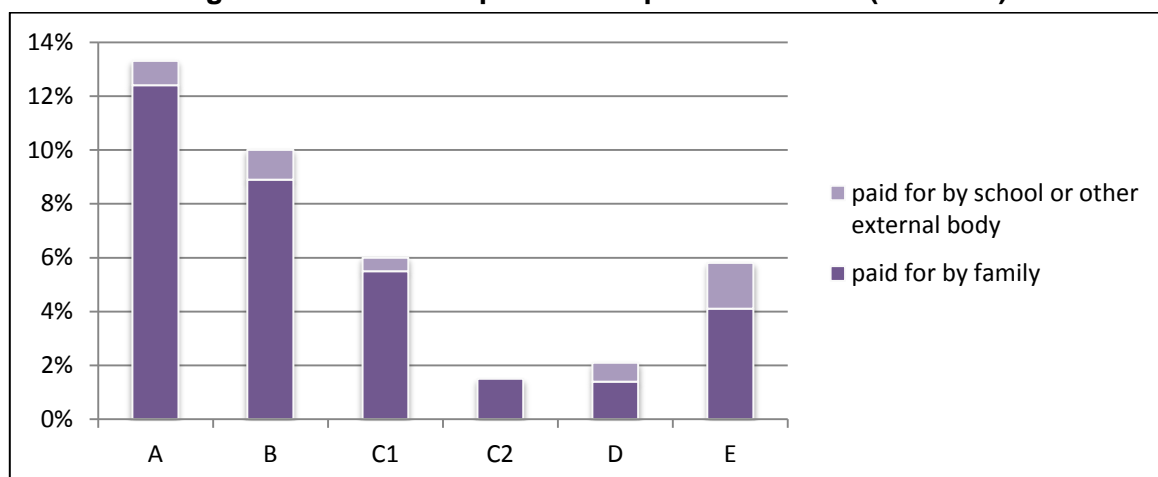## 2   State school or private/independent school?

A key choice that parents make about schooling is whether to send their child to a state school or a private school. Some parents in each social group stated that their child attended a private/independent school (Figure 6).

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[31] Note that throughout the report we have compared responses from BME parents with those from White parents, including the White Other category within the White group.

[32] Likewise, the LA provides information only on state schools.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents in each social group indicating that their oldest school age child attended a private/independent school (N = 1173)
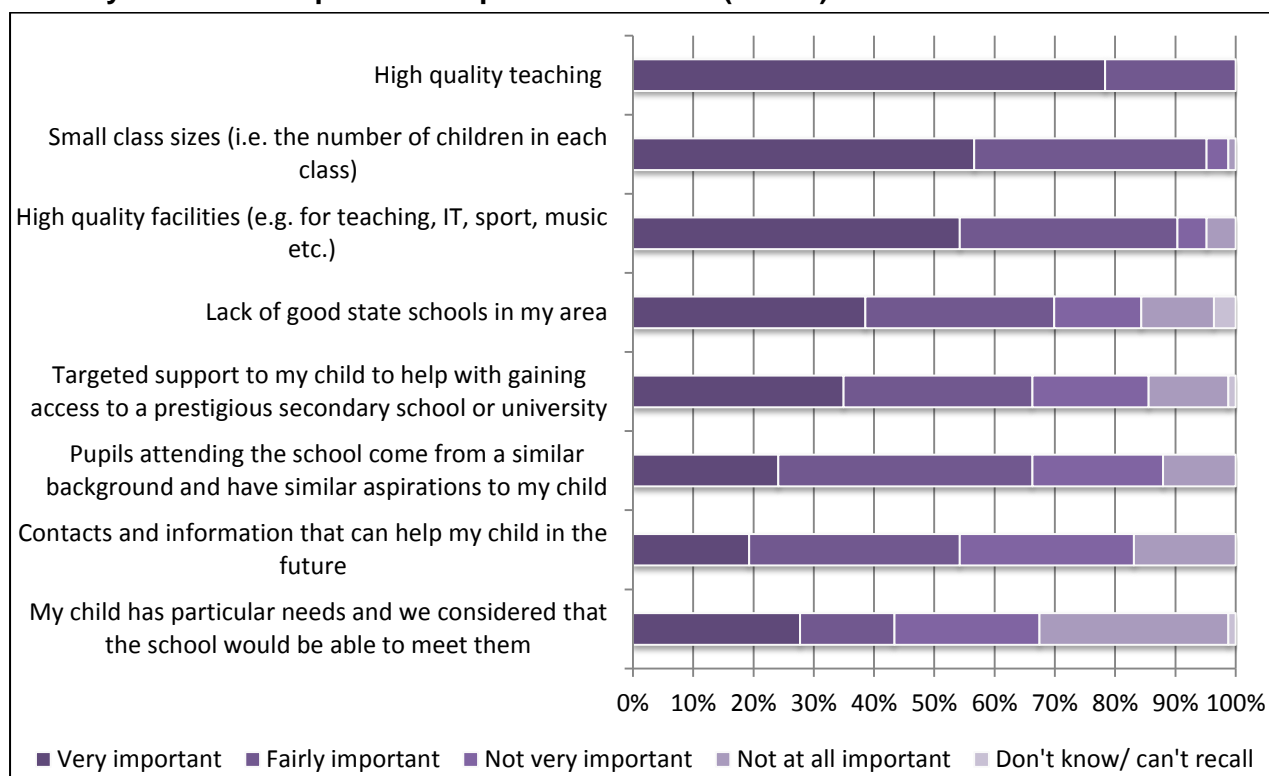

As we might expect, attendance at private school is strongly related to socio-economic background (corresponding with ability to pay), even among the middle class group (A-C1). In response to this question, and throughout these findings, a higher proportion of those in social group E than of those in groups C2 or D reported typically middle class behaviours. This is presumably because social group E indicates that the main earner is unemployed, and some of those who are unemployed would formerly have had jobs and income that would have placed them in the middle classes. There is also a possibility that, as this was an on-line survey, social group E respondents may under-represent families with very low incomes who are less likely to have internet access.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of those in social group E reported that the fees were paid for by the school or an external body, reflecting perhaps both their meeting of criteria around poverty, and their awareness of access to such bursary schemes. However, respondents across the social groups reported having places paid for by the school or an external body; it was not limited to those in the lower social groups who presumably had the greatest financial needs. This may reflect the common practice in some private schools of subsidising places for their highest attaining pupils, many of whom will be from affluent backgrounds.[33]

Respondents in London were significantly more likely to send their child to a private school than those elsewhere in the country (13% v 6%), reflecting DfE (2012a) data. Parents sending their child to private school were asked to indicate how important listed factors had been in their choice of private education (Figure 7), and to write in other factors that had been important in their choice.

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[33] This practice appears specifically designed to incentivise the most high-attaining pupils to remain at the school, irrespective of their ability to pay.

Figure 7: How important was each of the following factors in your decision to send your child to a private/independent school? (N = 83)

The most frequently selected factor (identified as 'very important' or 'fairly important' by every respondent) was 'high quality teaching'; this was also selected by 34% of respondents as the single most important factor in their choice. This is intriguing given the limited evidence about the quality of teaching in private schools,[34] and anecdotal evidence of significant variation in teacher quality both between and within private schools. Clearly it is possible that parents assume that the level of attainment relates to the teaching quality, rather than recognising that the main predictor of any school's attainment is the characteristics of the pupil intake.

Next most frequently selected were 'small class sizes' (95% indicating that this was 'very' or 'fairly important') and 'high quality facilities' (90%).[35] These responses illustrate the advantages that parents are able to purchase for their children, as do the numbers indicating the importance of targeted support (66%) and contacts that will help their children in the future (54%).

Two thirds of the respondents (66%) indicated that it was important that the other pupils came from similar backgrounds. Ball (2003) showed that there are two elements in such views: first, there is a recognition of others 'like us', but there is also a sense of an active preference for social segregation, and of alienation and differentiation from 'others' who are 'not like us'. Such views were evident in the additional comments written in:

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[34] Ofsted inspections of independent schools showed that while much of the teaching is 'competent', not enough is 'outstanding' (Ofsted, 2012). However, Ofsted is responsible for inspecting less than half of all private/independent schools, because those belonging to the Independent Schools Association are not included.

[35] However, these factors were less frequently selected as the single most important factor in their decision (by 8% and 7% respectively). The factors most frequently identified as the single most important were 'high quality teaching' (34%); 'lack of good state schools in my area' (20%); and 'my child has particular needs and we considered that the school would be able to meet them' (17%).

Avoiding naughty pupils and influence of low aspirational pupils in state system.

Share value base, i.e. discipline and manners.

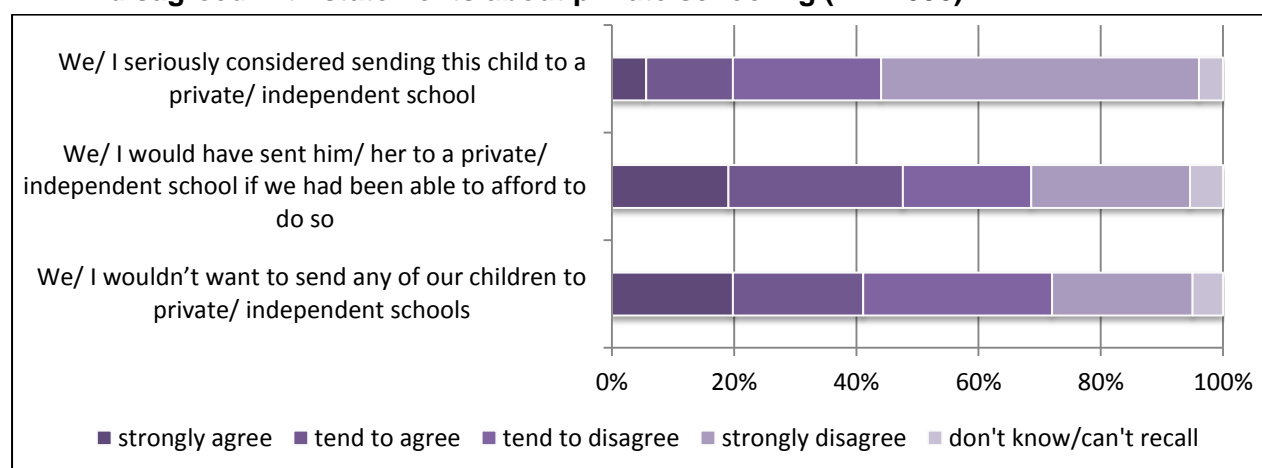*My child is below average in size so may well have been 'bullied' at another school.*

These comments, and similar views reported by Ball from respondents in his study, amount to denigration of state school pupils. The assumption that bullying is restricted to state schools is obviously highly questionable.

Almost half the respondents with children at private school wrote in reasons for choosing private education. Some of these simply reinforced the views above. Additional reasons identified by more than one response related to specific subjects available; catering for special educational needs; the ethos of the school; and the value of boarding schools for those living abroad or moving regularly. Some comments reinforced the strength of the feelings that had resulted in the child attending private school:

The alternative arrangement, which was my ex-wife's idea, would have been a disaster.
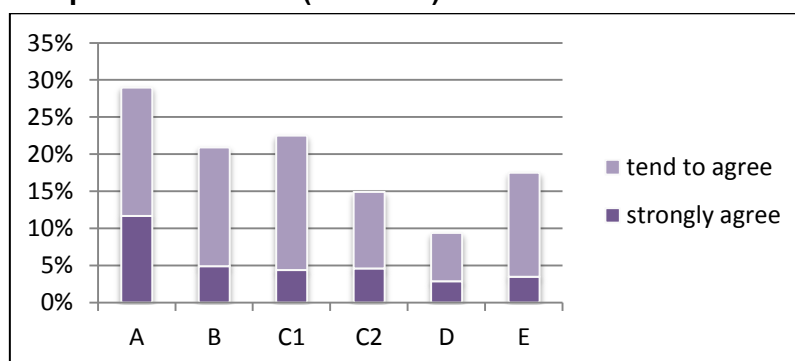
Those who sent their child to a state school were also asked their views about private schooling (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Extent to which respondents with children in state schools agreed or disagreed with statements about private schooling (N = 1090)
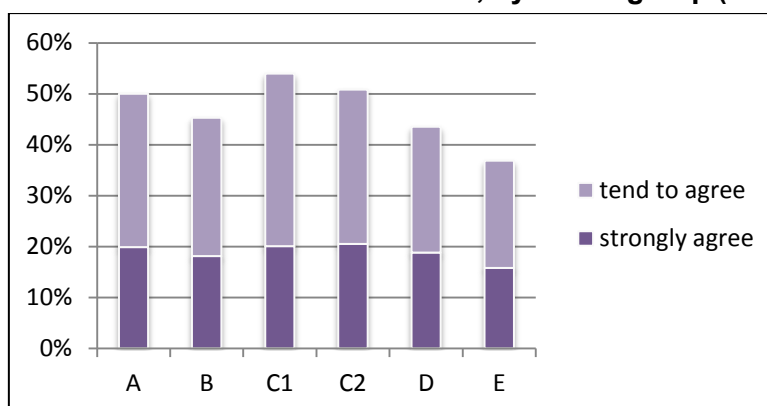

Overall, one in five of the respondents agreed ('strongly agreed' or 'tended to agree') that they had seriously considered sending their child to a private/independent school. This varied by social group, with those in social group A the most likely to agree (29%) and those in group D the least likely (9%) (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents whose child was at a state school who agreed with the statement 'We/I seriously considered sending this child to a private/independent school' (N = 1090)

A higher percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) parents (38% v 18% White) and parents in London (27% v 19% elsewhere) agreed that they had seriously considered sending their child to a private/independent school. The greater interest in private education among parents in London is unsurprising in the light of the many negative comments about London schools made by the media and politicians (at least until very recently), though London pupil attainment has in fact been higher than that in any other region since 2009. Respondents were asked whether they would have sent the child to a private/independent school if they could have afforded to do so (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents whose child was at state school who agreed with the statement 'We/I would have sent him/her to private/independent school if we could have afforded to do so', by social group (N=1090)
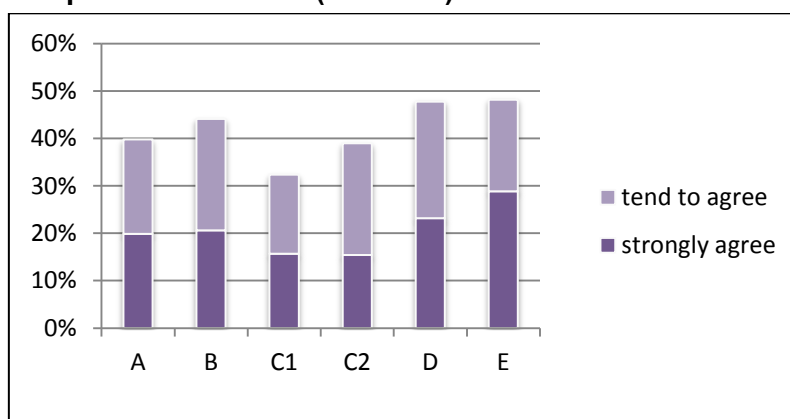

Almost half the respondents (48%) either strongly agreed or tended to agree. This is slightly lower than the 57% who reported in a survey conducted for the Independent Schools Council in 2012 that they would send their child to an independent school if they could afford to do so. However, their survey was of all parents, and their sample presumably included approximately 7% whose children were already at private schools; if this is taken into account the findings from our survey are very close to theirs. Figure 10 shows the pattern of responses by social group; social group E respondents were significantly less likely to agree. The other significant difference in our data related to BME respondents, who were much more likely to agree (73% BME v 46% White).

The final question in this section was whether respondents would *not* want to send their children to private/independent schools. Of the state school parents, 41% agreed (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents whose child was at a state school who agreed with the statement 'We/I wouldn't want to send any of our children to private/independent schools' (N = 1090)

The differences between social groups shown on Figure 11 were not statistically significant; however, the middle class groups (ABC1) were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement, while the working class groups were more likely to select 'neither agree nor disagree'. There was also a difference between White and BME respondents, with agreement much higher among White than BME parents (43% v 26%).

Overall, then, the survey showed that the class differences related more to the feasibility of affording to pay private school fees than to the principle of private education; middle class parents were more likely than working class to have *seriously considered* sending their child to a private/independent school. But the pattern of responses to the other questions was less clear-cut. However, there was significantly more enthusiasm for private schooling among BME than White respondents.

3   Strategies to gain entry to the preferred school

Having selected a preferred school, the next step is to ensure that the child gains a place. It is widely accepted that parents can use a variety of strategies ranging from those that are legal (albeit potentially very costly), such as moving into the catchment area of their preferred school, or purchasing tuition to access entry to selective schools; to those that are ethically dubious (such as attending church services for a few months to gain entry to an over-subscribed church school) or possibly illegal (such as using a false address).[36] Accounts of such strategies are common in the press.
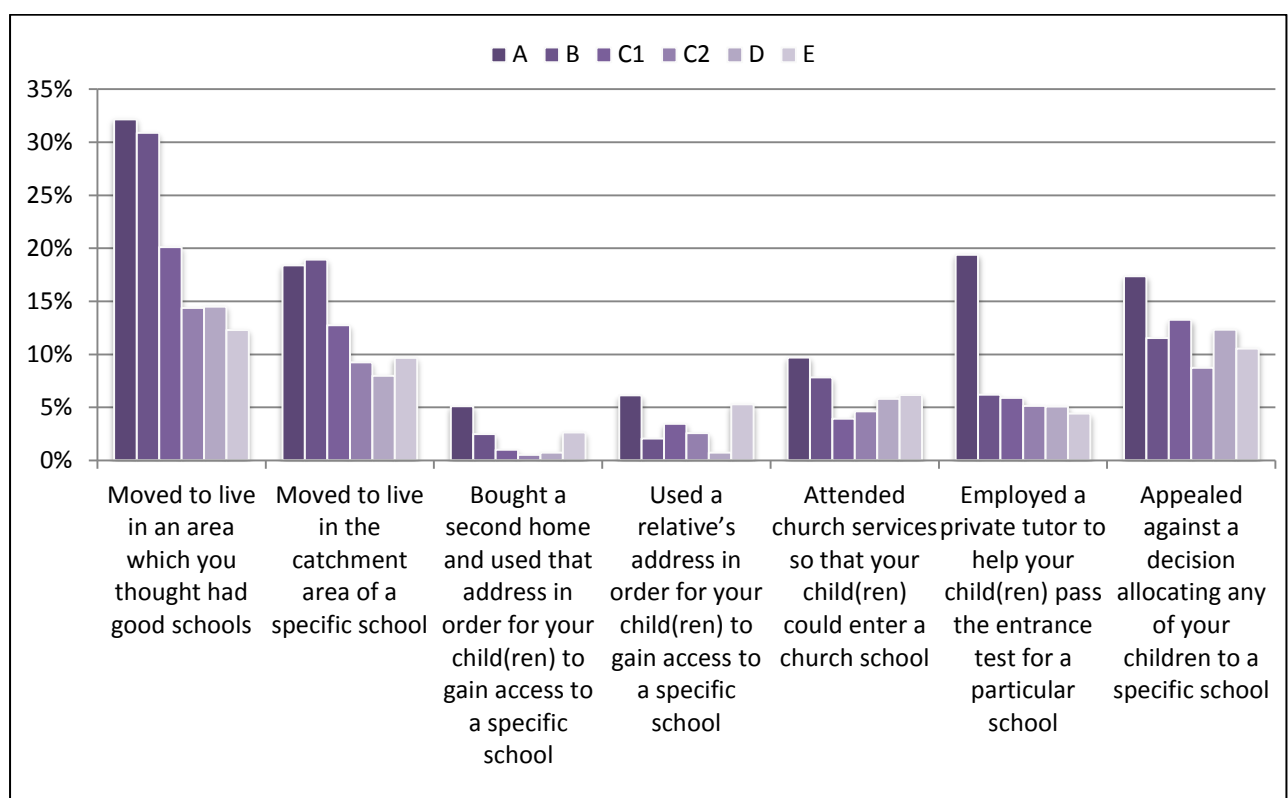
In 2004, more than a quarter of respondents to a YouGov survey said that they would consider 'at least one dishonest measure' to ensure that their child gained entry to a specific school; one in five said that they would lie or exaggerate their religious beliefs; and 15% that they would falsify their address (BBC News website, 2004). Similarly, a Teachers TV poll in 2006 reported that 44% of parents would consider 'underhand tactics' to get their child into their first choice school. The *Daily Mail* reported a significant rise in fraudulent practices by parents, with council probes into suspicious applications rising almost 11-fold in the last five years (Harris, 2013). However, the 2011 British Social Attitudes Survey (Park et al, 2011) reported that such tactics generally attracted disapproval; just 16% of their respondents approved of 'starting to get involved in local religious activities to help get their children into a high-performing school', and only 6% approved of using a relative's address or renting a second home in order to have an address in the catchment area of a good school.

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[36] In 2009, Harrow Council used the Fraud Act to prosecute a parent who had used a false address, but had to withdraw the case when they were advised that the Act did not apply in such circumstances (BBC News website, 3 July 2009).

The percentage of parents who indicated in the YouGov poll that they would consider specific actions is consistently higher than the percentage who indicated in the British Social Attitudes Survey that they approved of the same action. For example, the YouGov poll identified moving into the catchment area of the preferred school as a strategy that a majority of parents would consider (60%). But this was approved of by only 36% in the British Social Attitudes Survey. This is clearly a costly strategy through which those who can afford to do so can obtain a 'better' education by spending money. The property website PrimeLocation.com reported in 2012 that parents face a 'premium' of around £91k to buy a house near a 'top' state primary school, and £77k to live near one of 'the best' secondary schools (*The Independent*, 26 March 2012).

Our survey differed from earlier polls in that it asked respondents to indicate whether they had ever *used* various strategies (whereas the surveys above asked hypothetical questions). It is inevitably the case that we cannot know the extent to which the responses given are truthful.[37] The majority of the strategies listed apply to state rather than private schools; thus we consider responses from parents of children in state schools first. Figure 12 shows the percentage in each social group that indicated they had used listed strategies.

Figure 12: Percentage of respondents with a child at a state school in each social group indicating that they have used listed strategies (N = 1090)

The differences by social group that relate to strategies that cost money (moving house, employing a tutor) are all statistically significant, but where strategies cost nothing (using a relative's address, attending church services, appealing against the school allocated), the differences across social groups are not significant (though in each case a higher proportion of social group A parents reported using the strategy).

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[37] Jordan et al. (1994) pointed out that the interview situation requires parents to give a morally adequate account of themselves. This may not be so impactful in an online survey where respondents may feel more anonymous.

Social group A respondents were very much the most likely to report employing a private tutor to help their child pass the entrance test to a particular school (19% of social group A compared with 5% of the other groups) (see Figure 12). This difference was found only among those whose children attended state schools. Social group A were also the most likely to have appealed against a decision allocating any of their children to a particular school. However, their appeals were no more likely to have been successful than those of other groups.

BME parents with children at state schools were significantly more likely than White parents to say they had used each of the listed strategies (with the exception of appealing against decisions allocating their child to a particular school). London respondents with a child at state school were significantly more likely to report that they had attended church in order that their child could enter a church school (11% v 6% of those outside London), and that they had employed a tutor to help their child pass an entrance test (18% v 7%).

We now consider those parents whose child was at a private school. Their responses were generally similar to those of state school parents. However, significantly more of them indicated that they had employed a private tutor to help their child pass the entrance test to a specific school (20% v 8% state school parents). This reflects the preponderance of selective entrance tests for private schools, and parents' awareness of the need to prepare their children for these. The more general use of tutors is further explored in the next section. Finally, we compare responses about strategies to gain entry to the preferred school with those about choice and sources of information. The 'hyper choosers' and 'informed choosers' were more likely than the other groups to say they had moved house to an area with good schools (26% v 17%), and attended church services so that their child could secure entry to a particular school (8% v 4%). 'Hyper choosers' were also more likely than all other groups to report moving into the catchment area of a specific school (18% v 12%), and employing a tutor to help their child pass an entrance test (13% v 6%). Thus their drive to ensure that their children were in the best schools included both conducting research and then taking action to secure entry.

However, 'hyper choosers' were significantly *less* likely than other groups to say that they had used the strategies that might be considered to be ethically dubious – using a relative's address or acquiring a second home. Interestingly, these strategies were acknowledged mainly by the 'limited choosers' (respondents who said they used only one or two sources of information). In the light of media reports of extensive use of such strategies, one might question whether the 'hyper choosers' and 'informed choosers' were more aware of the law or worried about how their answers might look, and less willing to acknowledge that they had used dubious strategies. In-depth research would be needed to explore this.
This section has illustrated the strategic work to gain entry to a particular school is indeed strongly patterned by social class. However, fewer parents actually reported using these strategies than the number that had indicated in previous research that they were prepared to do so. Some respondents in all social groups reported using the various strategies listed, but the middle classes were more likely to adopt them, and were significantly more likely to report using those strategies that cost money.

4   Additional academic support

Another strategy that parents can use to promote the educational success of their child is to provide additional support with the child's school work, either supporting the child themselves, or paying for private individual or group tuition. (The previous section considered use of private tuition to secure entry to a particular school; this section considers all uses.)
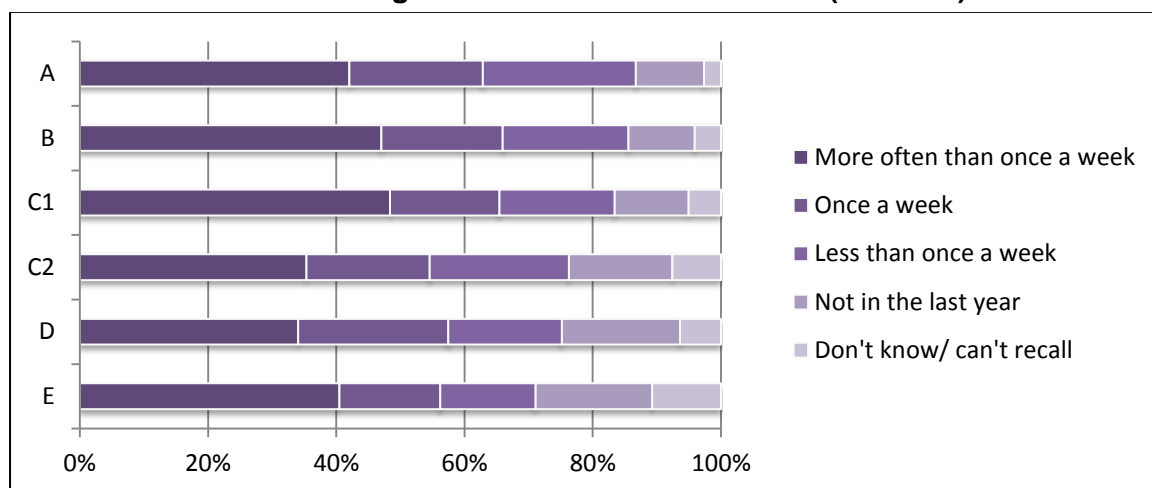
4.1. Academic support from family members

We asked how often the respondent or other family members had supported their oldest school age child with their school work in the last year.
Over half those in each social group indicated that they had supported their child with his or her school work at least once a week; there were no statistically significant differences in this relating to social group or ethnicity. However, those respondents whose own level of education was Level 2 or below were less likely to say they had supported their child in this way (53% v 66% of all those with higher educational levels). This, then, suggests that some members of this group felt (or were) less able to support their children's education. A recent report from Save the Children (2013) sheds some light on this. They found that there was no significant difference between high-income and low-income parents in their views about the importance of providing support at home for their children's reading and other school work. However, they also reported that the recession has put extra pressure on parents' ability to support their children's learning, in that many low-income parents are working longer hours to earn enough to get by.

There was a significant difference by social group in relation to the percentage of respondents who indicated that they and other family members had *not* supported their child in the last year or could not remember. This ranged from 13% of social group A to 29% of those in social group E (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Frequency with which respondents or other family members supported their oldest school age child with their school work (N = 1173)

The 'hyper choosers' were significantly more likely to say that they supported their child with their school work at least once a week, and the 'limited choosers' the least likely (68% of hyper choosers, 49% limited choosers).

4.2. Private tuition

The extent of private tuition or 'shadow education' varies in different countries; it is most prevalent in the Far East (e.g. in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong) where up to 70% of parents of secondary school pupils pay for additional tuition for their children (Bray, 2006). In Europe, it is far more prevalent in the south, and occurs very little in Nordic states. This appears to reflect the place of public examinations in school systems; Bray (2011) commented that the greater the importance of public examinations and tests, the more prevalent private tuition becomes. Thus, he argued:

… shadow education is much less about pupils who are in real need of learning support that they cannot find at school, and a lot more about maintaining the competitive advantages within school for students who are already successful and privileged. (2011: 33)

Previous research data on private tuition shows that it is most frequently used before a change of educational institution and in the period leading up to national tests and examinations (e.g. Peters et al, 2009). Inevitably, then, the data that have been collected show different figures for the percentage of pupils receiving tuition depending on the precise target group and questions asked (see Table 3).

Table 3: The prevalence of private tuition: results from various surveys

	Ireson and Rushforth 2005 (based on 2003 data)	Sutton Trust 2005	Peters 2009	Sutton Trust 2011	Sutton Trust 2013
respondents	Y6, Y11, Y13	11-6 year olds	parents re 5-16 year olds	11-16 year olds	11-16 year olds
ever received private tuition	27%	18% (higher in London 34%)		23% (higher in London 38%)	24% (higher in London 40%)
had private tuition in last year		6%	11% (of which almost 70% was 1:1 tuition)	7%	

Peters et al (2009) found that the proportion of parents paying for private tuition varied by social group, income, and educational level of parents.
Our survey asked whether individual or group private tuition had taken place in the last year or at any previous date. Figure 14 combines the results for private and group tuition.

Figure 14: Has your child been supported in their education through individual or group private tuition in the last year or previously? Responses by social group (N = 1173)
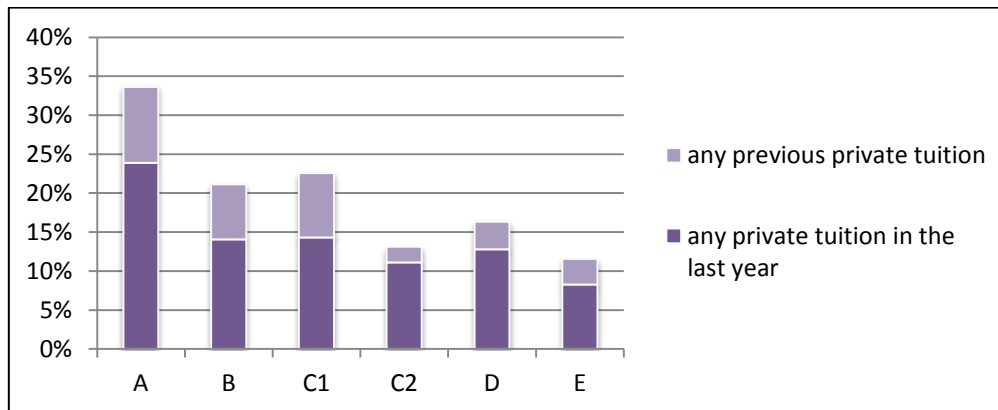

Figure 14 shows clear differences by social group. The figures for private tuition in the last year are compared with the finding of Peters et al (2009) on Table 4. Percentages are generally higher in our survey, particularly in social groups C1 and D. This may well indicate an increase in private tuition in line with the Sutton Trust's findings.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents indicating that a specified child has had individual or group private tuition in the last year, by social group

	Peters et al 2009 %	This survey 2012 %
A	21	24
B	14	14
C1	9	14
C2	10	11
D	6	13
E	6	8

The Sutton Trust (2011) found that 25% of children from the most affluent families had had private tuition at some point in their education, compared to 15% of those from the least affluent families. Our survey showed that 34% of social group A parents reported their child had had private tuition at some point, compared with 12% of social group E.
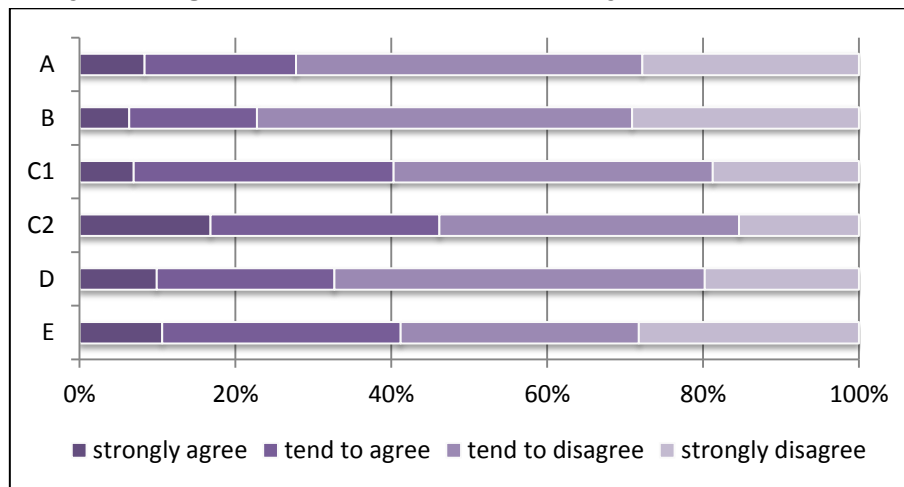
Our findings also echo those of the Sutton Trust in finding higher levels of private tuition among Black and minority ethnic (BME) respondents and those in London:

- BME respondents were more likely than White to indicate that their child had had private tuition in the last year (31% v 13%) and that they had ever had private tuition (38% v 19%). One possible reason for this might be that BME children are more likely than White children to attend supplementary schools. However, while significantly more BME parents reported group private tuition in the last year (27% v 8%), the same was also true of individual private tuition (25% v 10%).
- A higher proportion of respondents in London indicated that their child had had private tuition in the last year (London 23% v rest of country 13%), and that they had ever had private tuition (38% v 19%). This did not simply reflect the greater BME population of London; if we only consider White parents, significantly more in London reported private tuition in the last year than their counterparts elsewhere (20% v 13%).

It is interesting to note that a higher proportion of respondents whose child attended private school reported paying for private out-of-school tuition both in the last year (27% private school v 14% state school) and ever (35% v 20%). This illuminates their readiness to invest financially in their children's education, and the *extent* of additional investment being made. It highlights issues of affordability, and the extent to which some of the parents who can afford to do so are investing in what they perceive to be added educational benefits for their children. That some parents are willing to pay both private school fees and pay for private tuition on top of that perhaps may also suggest that those who sent their child to a private school were not as confident of the high quality of the teaching as was suggested in their earlier response.

There were no significant differences in private tuition provision relating to chooser group. We asked those who had *not* paid for private tuition whether, if they could afford to do so, they would pay for their child to have a private tutor. Those in social group C2 were the most likely to agree, followed by the Es and C1s (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Responses to 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'If we/I could afford to do so, I would pay for my child to have a tutor', by social group (parents who did not pay for private tuition, N=806)

Those with the lowest levels of education were significantly more likely to agree than those with higher levels (43% of those with Level 2 and below v 22% of those with degrees). These are arguably the families that most need additional tuition, but for whom disposable income precludes it.

4.3. Parents who did not provide any support with their child's school work

In this section we have discussed the provision of support with school work by family members or paid for private tuition. Finally, we consider how these related to each other. The figures at the start of this section showed that some respondents indicated that they and other family members had *not* supported their child with their school work in the last year or could not remember. Had these parents paid for private tuition rather than supporting their child themselves? Figure 16 shows the percentage of respondents in each social group who had *neither* paid for tuition *nor* provided educational support for the child themselves. There is a significant difference between social groups, with figures ranging from 11% of social group A to 28% of social group E. Thus significantly more middle class children received support with their school work, from either a tutor or a family member. There were no differences between those with children at state and private schools.

Figure 16: Percentage of respondents who indicated that their child had had *no* support with their school work in the last year *either* from family members *or* through private tuition (N = 1173)
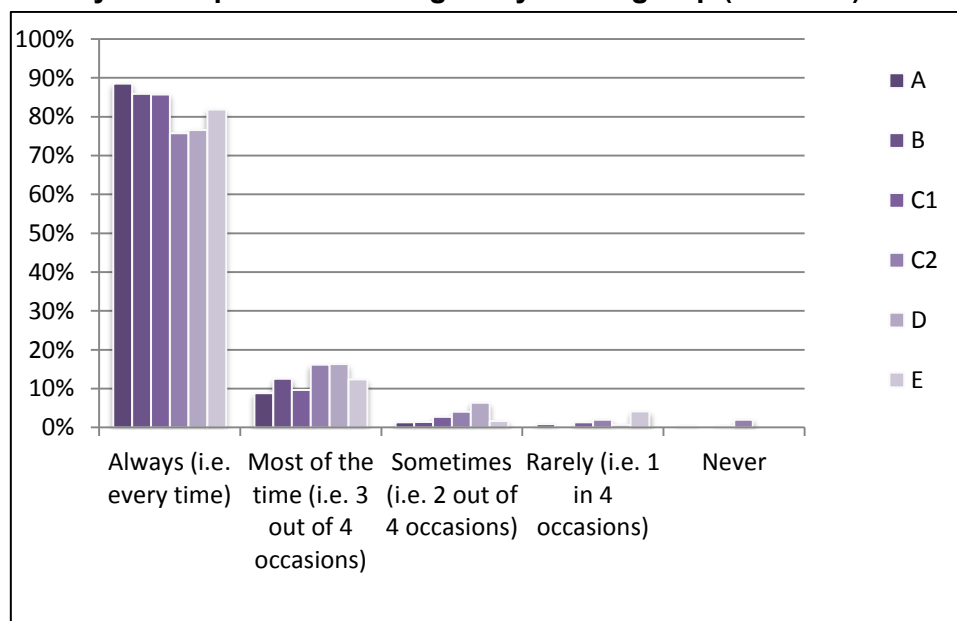
5   Intervening in the child's school

We have seen that one strategy for intervening in the child's education is to provide additional tuition at home (from family members or a private tutor). However, Ball (2003) argues that some middle class parents also aim to intervene in the school by pushing for or opposing specific practices such as setting or streaming, or pressing for their child to be included in a particular group. The intervention strategies used include developing active communication channels with the child's teachers and taking representative or supportive roles in the school. Both strategies were explored in the survey.

5.1.   Communicating with teachers about the child's educational progress

Vincent (2001:349) identified three levels of parental intervention through contacting school staff. The 'high' intervention group, typically White highly educated public sector professionals, contacted the school regularly about the child's achievement and welfare. Our survey aimed to explore whether similar patterns existed among our sample. The survey asked respondents about two forms of communication with the school: regular parents' evenings, and additional communication initiated by the parent. Three quarters of respondents in all social groups said that they or the child's other main carer 'always' attended parents' evenings, and the majority of the rest, that they attended 'most of the time (i.e. three out of four occasions)' (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Responses to, 'Thinking about your oldest child aged 5 to 16 who attends school…How often, if at all, do you and/ or the child's other main carer normally attend parents' evenings?' by social group (N = 1173)
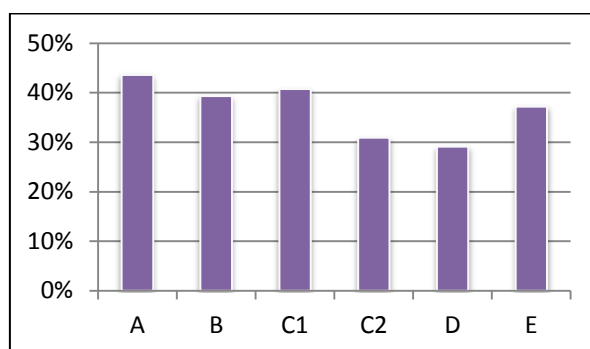

The main point here, then, is that the vast majority of both middle class and working class respondents are diligent about attending parents' evenings. However, there was a statistically significant, though small, social group difference; the middle class respondents (ABC1) were more likely to say they 'always' attended. And of the small group who indicated they attended 'most of the time' or 'sometimes', more were working class. A more striking difference related to chooser group; 93% of 'hyper choosers' said they always attended parents' evenings, while 'limited choosers' were least likely to 'always' attend (73%). Parents whose oldest school age child was of primary school age were more likely to say that they always attended than those with secondary-aged children (87% v 81%).

Respondents were asked about the outcomes of attending parents' evenings. The survey asked whether the conversation they had had with teachers at a parents' evening had resulted in *either* the school changing the way they worked with the child (which might be seen as a desirable outcome for parents who want to ensure that the school provides the maximum support for their child), *or* the parents providing additional support (which might be seen as one of the school's aims).

Overall, 38% of respondents said that conversation with teachers at parents' evenings had resulted in **school staff changing the way they worked with the child.** This varied across groups. Responses by social group are shown on Figure 18.

Figure 18: Percentage of parents who indicated that attending parents' evenings had resulted in the school staff changing the way they worked with the child (N = 1167)

While a higher percentage of middle class (ABC1) parents said that this had occurred, this was also the case for social group E; we have previously noted that some of their responses resembled those of the middle classes. These findings resound with existing research showing the cultural capital of middle class parents can be influential in securing respect and productive engagement with the school, for the benefit of their children (Reay, 1998; Crozier and Reay, 2005). Other groups who were more likely to agree that the school had changed their practices were:

- respondents whose child was at private school (54% v 36% state school);
- those with a higher level of education (Level 5 and 6, 42%; Level 2 and below, 32%);
- 'hyper choosers' (46%).

Respondents were also asked whether, as an outcome of attending a parents' evening, **they had provided greater educational support for their child at home**. There were no significant differences in these responses by social group; between 50% and 59% of each group agreed that this had been the case. Nor were there any differences relating to chooser group or education.

As well as asking about attendance at regular parents' evenings, we asked respondents whether they or the child's other main carer had **initiated contact with the school** in the last year to discuss their child's progress. They were asked both how often they had done this and what means of communication they used.

There were some differences in frequency of contact relating to social group. Around one in five parents in each social group said that they had never initiated contact; this was significantly higher among the group D respondents (32% had never done so). About 30% of respondents had initiated contact at least six times in the last year; this was significantly higher among social group A (39%) and lower among social group D respondents (22%). This suggests a greater confidence among social group A about contacting the school. The

high attendance at parents' evenings demonstrated that all groups cared about their children's education, but some working class parents, and those with low levels of educational achievement, may have felt more reticent about initiating contact.

Of the chooser groups, the 'hyper choosers' were the most likely to initiate any contact with the school (81% had done so), and the most likely to have initiated at least six contacts in the last year (37%). Those who had not used any of the listed sources of information in choosing a school (a subset of the limited choosers) were the least likely to either initiate contact with the school (only 60% of them had done so) and the least likely to initiate contact more than six times a year (21%).

Some other significant differences were found in these data: a higher percentage of parents of secondary aged children said they had never initiated contact with the school (26% secondary v 18% primary).[38] There were also a number of differences relating to **mode of communication**:

- Use of email was more often reported by those in the higher social groups; they also made more frequent email contacts.
- Secondary school parents made greater use of email and telephone, while contacts with primary school staff were more often face to face.

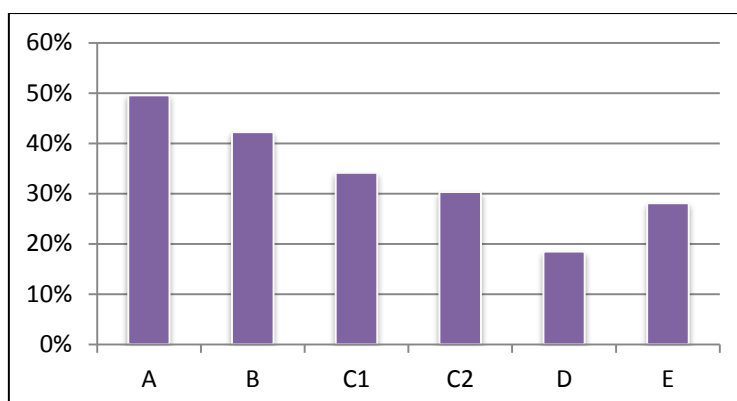### 5.2. Taking representative or supportive roles in the school

Deem et al (1995) drew attention to the ways in which governance, representative or supportive roles in schools have tended to be disproportionately taken up by middle class parents. The involvement of parents is, of course, encouraged by schools, and those with professional skills provide assets in terms of expertise and capacity. However, it is also noted that, in roles such as member of the governing body or active involvement in the parents' association, parents can achieve 'privileged influence over, or access to, school personnel' (Ball, 2003: 96). Ball quotes one mother saying, 'You have to be the one that keeps the finger on the pulse, and a very good way of doing that is if you're on the PTA.' As such, taking a voluntary role at their child's school can provide a potential way to gain additional information about the school and their child's progress, build relationships, and to have influence with the school.

In our survey, respondents were asked whether they, or the child's other main carer, had ever taken on the role of governor, class representative or committee member of the parents' association or parent teacher association in a school attended by any of their children. Figure 19 shows the percentage of respondents in each social group who indicated that either they or the child's other main carer had done so.

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[38] One reason for this may be that there is an obvious contact point in primary schools: the child's class teacher – but it is probably harder to identify who to contact in a secondary school. Another reason could be that parents of primary age children are more anxious and protective about their children whereas parents of secondary aged children may respect their growing independence.

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents in each social group who indicated that either they or the child's other main carer had taken on the roles of governor, committee member of parents' association/PTA, or class representative (N = 1173)

As Figure 19 shows, our findings support previous research showing that middle class parents were significantly more likely to indicate taking on the various roles. However, it is also interesting to note that respondents in all social groups had done so: this was certainly not an exclusively middle class practice.

There were a number of other differences in these data.

- 'Hyper choosers' were significantly more likely to take on these roles (48%), in line with their drive to ensure the quality of their children's education. At the other end of the scale, only 21% of those who had not used any of the listed sources of information in choosing a school had taken on roles such as governor, committee member of class representative.

- BME respondents were significantly more likely than White respondents to take on the roles of governor (29% v 15% White) and class representative (22% v 11%).

- Significantly more of the parents who had a child at private school had taken on one of these roles (51% v 35%) suggesting that there are more such roles in private schools. This provides a further example of the amount and diversity of additional modes of investment that parents who send their children to private school contribute to their children's education.

6   Cultural capital

Another way in which middle class parents are said to secure educational advantages for their children is through providing them with 'educational enrichment' and support. This may be providing appropriate educational tools (such as a books and a computer) and/or by engaging them in a wide range of cultural activities, as well as providing information and support via networks and professional knowledge. Thus 'cultural capital' supports educational progression (Bourdieu, 2004), and is in turn supported by both financial and social capital. For example, Vincent and Ball (2007) chart how middle class parents appeared to embark on projects to turn their offspring into 'Renaissance Children', via the purchase of a range of (often daily) extra-curricular clubs and activities such as learning musical instruments, sports, arts and so on.
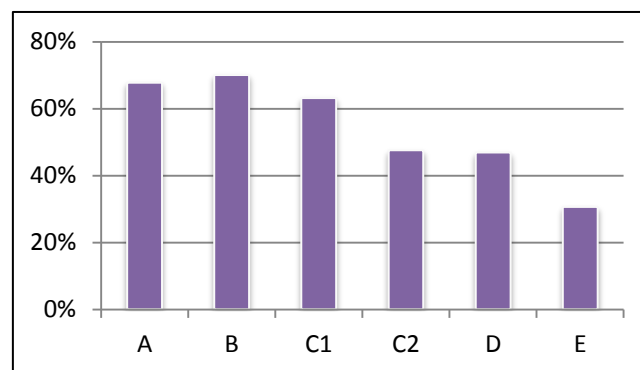
There was not space in the survey to explore such issues in great depth, but we asked a small number of questions around these themes, exploring:

- regular music, dance or drama lesson, sporting activities etc.
- visits to museums, galleries, plays, concerts, historical buildings etc.
- provision of facilities for computing and accessing the internet.

6.1. <u>Paying for regular music, dance or drama classes or sporting activities</u>

Respondents were asked whether they or the child's other main carer paid for their oldest school age child to attend any regular weekly classes (e.g. music, dance, drama lessons, lessons, sporting activities etc.). Responses differed significantly by social group, with the middle classes (ABC1) much more likely to pay for classes (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Percentage of respondents indicating that they/the child's other main carer paid for the oldest school age child to attend regular weekly classes (e.g. music, dance, drama lessons, lessons, sporting activities etc.), by social group (N = 1173)
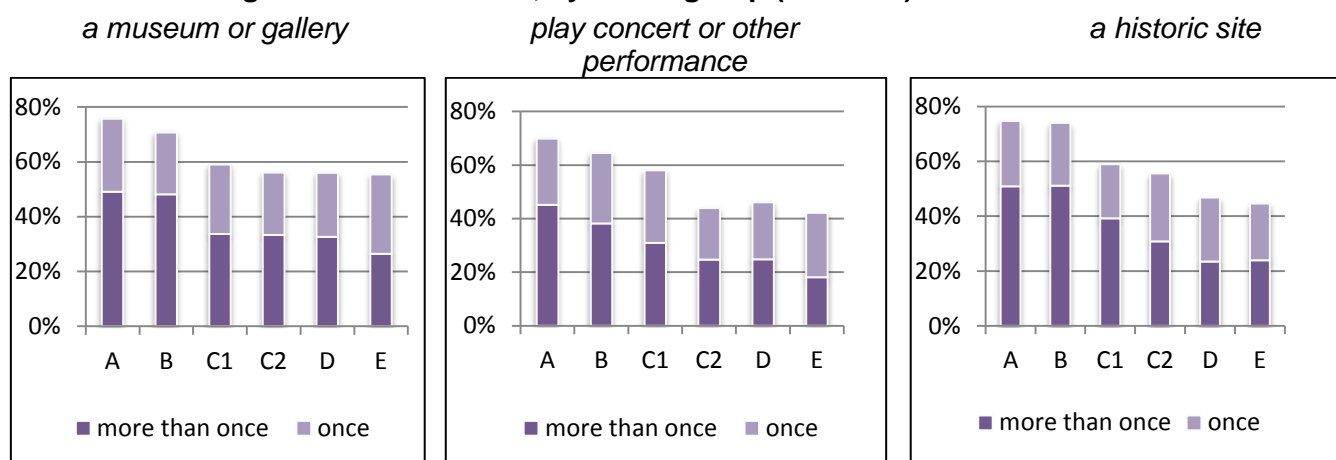

There were two other significant differences in these data:

- 'Hyper choosers' were more likely to pay for classes (70%, compared with just 41% of 'limited choosers').
- Respondents with children at private schools were more likely to pay for classes (70% v 57% of state school parents). This further demonstrates the level of their financial investment in their children's education.
- Respondents whose oldest school age child was in the primary school age range were more likely to say that they paid for lessons than those with secondary-aged children (70% v 50%).

6.2. <u>Cultural visits</u>

Respondents were asked whether they had taken their oldest school age child to a museum or a gallery; a play concert or other performance; or a historic site (e.g. stately home, castle) during the last six months (which included the summer holidays). In each case the responses were significant by social group, with middle class respondents (particularly social group A and B) more likely to indicate doing this (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Percentage of respondents saying that they have taken their child to a museum or a gallery; a play, concert or other performance; or a historic site during the last six months, by social group (N = 1173)

a museum or gallery | *play concert or other performance* | *a historic site*

It is noticeable that the social group differences are less marked in relation to visits to museums or galleries, where entrance is generally free, than for plays or concerts which have to be paid for. This suggests the impact of cost of provision on take-up and the benefits of the free museum entrance policy for social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The recent report from Save the Children (2013) showed that more than a fifth of parents (particularly those in low-income groups) said they had had to cut down on their children's activities as a result of the recession.

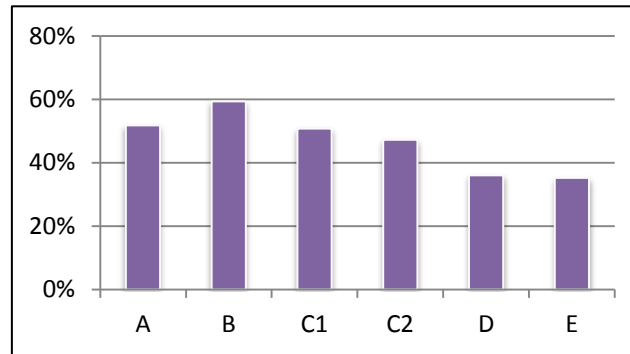There were a number of other significant differences:

- Respondents with children at private schools were significantly more likely to take them to a play, concert or other performance, and to a historic site, but no more likely to take them to a museum or gallery.
- Those with primary aged children were more likely than those with secondary aged children to take then to a museum or gallery and to a historic site (but no more likely to take then to a play, concert or other performance).
- BME parents were less likely than White parents to take their children to a historic site.
- London parents were more likely to take their children to museums or galleries and to plays or concerts, presumably reflecting the greater availability of cultural opportunities in the capital.
- Hyper choosers were more likely to say they had taken their children to visit all the places listed.

6.3. Computers and internet access

Unsurprisingly in an online survey, the vast majority of respondents said that their children had access to the internet at home; only a very small minority said the child had no internet access at all, and they were almost all referring to children aged 5-7. More than half the respondents in each social group reported that their oldest school age child could access the internet on *their own* PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone; the differences in responses by social group were not significant, with figures varying from 62% of social group A to 53% of C2 and

D.[39] There was a significant difference by social group in smart phone ownership among the secondary age range (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Percentage of respondents reporting that secondary-aged children have their own smartphone (N = 722)

Use of mobile phones as learning tools is a practice extending to an increasing number of secondary schools. But our findings caution that schools should be wary of assuming that all young people have access to these vehicles; as only about half were reported to have their own smartphone.

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[39] As we might expect, the main contrast in the data about internet access was between secondary aged children (77% reported to have their own internet access) and primary aged children (25%). Secondary aged children were far more likely than primary to have their own PC, laptop or tablet computer (62% v 21%) and their own smartphone (49% v 6%).

Key findings and implications

There were statistically significant differences by social group in use of most of the parental strategies and behaviours relating to their children's education, with middle class parents (and particularly those in social groups A and B) more likely to adopt strategies that would increase their child's chances of educational success.

This applied particularly to strategies that involved financial outlay. Where there was no financial outlay (e.g. in attending parents' evenings, or trips to museums), the differences were less marked. Hence although the application of both social and financial capital are advantaging children in middle-class families, our study highlights the especial impact that financial advantage is making in the purchase of additional educational support and experiences. This clearly raises issues around equality of opportunity, and a potential explanation for the inequity of educational outcome in the English education system according to socio-economic background (with damaging implications for social mobility). Our findings concerning parents' statements around the desire to provide private tuition or send their child to private school clearly indicate how affordability limits the support that working class parents are able to provide.

However, although our study demonstrates the higher proportion of middle-class parents using the various strategies to promote their children's educational achievement, thus supporting previous research, the data does not suggest a clear-cut difference between middle class and working class strategies in the way that has been suggested in some previous research. Rather, it shows that similar strategies are adopted by some parents right across the social spectrum, but that more middle class parents adopt them. In particular, our analysis has identified a group of 'hyper choosers' (those who used five or more sources of information to support their choice of school for their children), and a group of 'limited choosers' – those who used only one or none of the listed sources of information to choose a school (rather, choosing a school that was simply most convenient, or where they believe their child would be happiest, etc.). Although middle-class parents are again over-represented in the 'hyper choosers' group, even here some working class parents (and/or low income parents) are also represented. And although lower in number than their working class counterparts, some middle class parents were also found in the 'limited chooser' group that used only one or no information sources to identify a school.

These findings have important implications for the Government's policies driving a diverse education quasi-market premised on parental choice. The assumption underpinning such policies is that parents are both informed and engaged in active choice-making – equipped with the requisite information and knowledge, and actively desiring to apply this information in choice-making. We specifically identified and analysed the group that indicatively express the behaviours anticipated by government policy: those parents that used at least one independent documentary source, as well as one 'opinion' source. We identified these parents as 'informed choosers' and 'hyper choosers' (depending on the number of sources used). However, our findings show that:

- Only half of parents in social groups C2 and D, and less than half in E are informed choosers or hyper choosers;
- A third of parents in middle class social groups A, B and C1 are not informed choosers or hyper choosers.

That such a large proportion of parents is not acting in the ways envisaged by Government to activate a market underpinned by consumer choice presents a significant challenge for policymaking. Moreover, the confirmation that significantly more middle class parents are 'informed' and/or 'hyper' choosers raises issues around equity, and challenges for social mobility. It is the socially disadvantaged that underachieve in the English education system, and their attainment inequalities have a detrimental impact on the achievement of the UK system overall (OECD, 2010b). Policymakers will need to recognise the dangers of

exacerbating social and educational inequality through parental 'choice' policies. Nevertheless, that some working class parents *are* behaving as 'informed choosers' indicates potential to facilitate extension of such practices across this group by better information provision and resourcing.

The role of finance overlaps with that of private education. A strong finding has been the level of financial and other investment in the education of children sent to private schools – not only are their parents paying substantial sums for their education,[40] but for many this is also being supplemented by additional private tuition,[41] parents working in voluntary roles at the school, contacting the school and paying for additional 'enrichment' classes and activities. Parents also seem highly aware of the additional benefits (such as smaller class sizes) that they are purchasing by sending their children to private school. The study reveals the remarkable extent of financial and other investment that is being directed at these children's education. And many bursaries within the sector appear to be benefiting those who can already afford private education. The challenge for the Government is to find ways to address such inequalities. It needs to take more action to address the differences between state and private schools. To this end, we also need far better transparency to enable parents to compare different types of schools (including state and private/independent schools). Comparable data should be published for *all* schools, and schools should be subject to the same scrutiny and inspection criteria.

The implications of our findings, then, centre around:

- Financial inequality, and its implications for the application of strategies to promote children's educational achievement;
- Inequalities in the exercise of informed choice in identifying a school
- Implications for social equality and social mobility.

In order to promote social mobility and to address the socio-economic gaps for attainment, the Government will need to:

- Ensure further social redistribution, within and without the education system
- Recognise the limitations (and perverse consequences) of the 'choice' model as a mechanism for system-wide improvement
- Work to empower working class parents via the provision of information on local education provision in accessible formats
- Enable working class parents to access more enrichment activities, that are currently limited to middle class parents by affordability
- Incentivise social mixing in education, and disincentivise game playing by affluent parents which reinforces educational inequalities.

Addressing these challenges will require a range of approaches. Clearly, the school sector cannot be held solely responsible for addressing the social inequalities in practice and outcome identified in this report: this study has shown the difference that money makes in the range of strategies parents can use to support their children's education. Wealth inequality impedes the equal starting points important for facilitating meritocratic outcomes, by allowing the affluent to purchase advantage in a variety of important ways. Support for social mobility will, then, require measures to reduce wealth inequality. The introduction of

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[40] As an indication of the level of schools fees, the website Best-Schools.co.uk provides a league table of private schools. Private schools in the top 100 for GCSE results are shown as having fees for day pupils ranging from £9,480 to £26,640 per annum (accessed February 2013)

[41] The website Personal Tutors reports hourly fees for private tuition ranging from about £20 per hour for primary pupils outside SE England to over £37 per hour for A level science tuition in SE England (accessed February 2013).

the Pupil Premium is an important and welcome step in the right direction. However, the Pupil Premium is focused on pupils on Free School Meals, whereas our analysis highlights a much wider issue of social and education inequality. Moreover, the Pupil Premium is small in comparison to the sums being spent by some wealthier parents on their own children. The gap in resources spent outside school is also significant.

One way to address these resource inequalities is a voucher system via which families could purchase additional educational support. This recommendation – also supported by the headteachers' association ASCL (2013) – would empower families to take ownership of their children's developmental and educational opportunities, and support the home learning environment that research shows to be vital in giving children a good start.[42] Our research findings highlight the potential benefits of such an approach, given, for example, the aspiration for private tuition among social group D respondents.

In addition, the government needs to find ways to improve the information available to all parents, and its accessibility. Our findings support previous research showing that many working class parents have strong aspirations for their children's educational success.[43] And indeed, our findings show that many working class parents are using external, 'official' information in an active way to exercise choice about their children's schooling. However, our findings also support research that suggests working class parents may be less able to effect 'choice' – partly due to lack of information and 'know how', in addition to the financial constraints. Hence the Government needs to work with businesses and organisations used to working with and marketing to working class consumers, to provide accessible vehicles via which to present a wide range of information and data about schools, and the implications. This is not just about Ofsted reports and league tables: a wide range of information needs to be available in an accessible and effective way. And broader information relevant to young people's education trajectories - for example, information on 'facilitating subjects',[44] and on universities - might also be included.

A further area for intervention is access to schools. Accessing quality education is not just about information and choice, it may also be affected by finance (e.g. house prices in the catchment area of some schools), and school admissions. The Government needs to take strong steps to address the social segregation that characterises the English education system, impeding social mobility. With regard to school admissions policies and practices, we have suggested policy measures that incentivise schools and their governors/trustees to embrace the moral mission of quality education for *all* children. Schools all have an important moral mission in education. It is important that they have the means to demonstrate this publicly. So schools should be expected to publish socio-economic data on who applies and who is admitted, to reveal any trends to segregation and encourage inclusive practice.[45] The publication of this data should also be monitored by the Schools Adjudicator. We would also like to see stronger support for systems of ballots or banding for admissions across local systems. Of course, equality of access also raises questions around transport costs and affordability, and we recommend that the Government and schools take steps to raise awareness of the little-known entitlement to educational transport access to a choice of schools. Since September 2008, the law has extended rights to free transport for all children from low income groups of compulsory school age who are 11 or over in two ways – to a choice of schools within six miles of the child's home, and to the nearest school preferred by reason of a parent's religion or belief up to a maximum of 15 miles from the child's home. Children of compulsory school age who are 11 or over from low income families must have travel arrangements made to one of their three nearest qualifying schools

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[42] See e.g. Allen (2011), Melhuish et al (2008); EPPSE (2012).

[43] See e.g. Kintrea et al, 2011.

[44.] The subjects most valued by Russell Group universities; see http://russellgroup.org/InformedChoices-latest.pdf

[45] As recommended by West et al (2009), and the Academies Commission (2013)

where they live more than two miles, but not more than six miles from that school.[46] We are also concerned that schools that do admit large numbers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds are not penalised for this, but rather that their successes can be properly acknowledged and celebrated. The Government is currently reviewing performance indicators for schools, and the presentation of contextual data. We would like to see performance indicators that celebrate those schools that are successful in supporting the achievement of working class pupils, and which evaluate the relative added value that schools are making – and we believe that these performance indicators should be applied to *all* schools (both in the state and private sector).

These measures will promote social justice and equality of opportunity in access to high quality education, helping to address the current inequalities in 'choice-making' that damage social mobility

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[46] http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00224737/home-school-travel-transport, p21

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Appendix A: Further discussion of the sample

YouGov conducts its surveys online using *Active Sampling* ; restrictions are put in place to ensure that only the people contacted are allowed to participate. This means that all the respondents were selected by YouGov, from their panel of registered users; only those who are selected from this panel were allowed to take part in the survey. Respondents were sent an email inviting them to take part in a survey. The email message included a link taking them to the YouGov website where the survey is hosted using their proprietary survey software. Everyone taking part received a modest cash incentive for doing so. This ensured that the sample was not made up of respondents who expressed a particular interest in taking part in a survey on the issue or with an 'axe to grind'. Some groups appear to be under-represented among the respondents. For example, London has 15.3 per cent of all school pupils (DfE, 2012) but parents living in London made up only 12.8 per cent of respondents. Similarly, Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups appear to be under-represented, comprising over 24 per cent of school pupils (DfE, 2012) but only 12.6 per cent of the sample. These figures may be explained partly by the over-sampling of social group A, and partly by the trend for BME families to have larger numbers of children (Whiting, 2012); our respondents were parents rather than children.

Parents whose children attend private / independent schools may also be slightly under-represented. While some seven per cent indicated that their child attended such a school, and this matches the national figure, one might have expected a higher proportion among the survey respondents, given the over-sampling of social group A parents.