



Department  
for Education



Government  
Social Research

# **COVID-19 School Snapshot Panel**

**Findings from the early February survey**

**March 2021**

**IFF Research Ltd**

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## Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the first wave of the School Snapshot Panel (run in February 2021), a new panel run by IFF Research on behalf of the Department for Education.

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

- Remote education;
- Pupil mental health and wellbeing; and
- Support for pupils with SEND.

Additionally, there is an annex included that provides summary findings from a short preliminary survey run with primary leaders on the panel in late January 2021.

### A note on the reporting

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

Two types of weighting were applied to the data, depending on whether questions were asking for school-level or individual-level answers from leaders and teachers. Where responses from 'leaders', 'teachers' or 'leaders and teachers' are referred to in the report, individual-level weighting has been applied. Where responses from 'schools' are referred to, leaders have answered the survey question and a school-level weighting has been applied. Further detail on the weighting approach can be found in the methodology section on page 11.

Findings from each wave should be interpreted in the context of the schools Covid-19 guidelines in place at that time. During February 2021, a national lockdown was in place and only children of key workers and vulnerable children were able to attend schools.

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

### Remote education

During February 2021, schools were delivering remote education to most pupils.

As a proportion of the school population, schools reported that relatively few pupils were without internet access (1%), or without a laptop or tablet in their household (4%). Pupils having to share access to a digital device was a more prevalent issue, however (15% of

pupils on average). These figures have been calculated excluding schools that were unsure about the number of pupils in each category. Schools were generally more certain about the number of pupils without a laptop or tablet (13% did not know), or with no internet access (14%), than the number with a shared device (23%) or limited internet access (22%). Most primary schools reported that they had set at least 3-4 hours of work per day for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 (91% and 86% of schools teaching each Key Stage, respectively).

Similarly, most secondary schools reported that they were setting 5 or more hours per day for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 (86% and 92% of schools teaching each Key Stage, respectively).

The majority of schools monitored all pupils' general engagement with remote education (92%) and the number of hours being set for all pupils (84%). Monitoring the number of hours all pupils were working was considerably less common (52%).

The most common types of remote education provision reported by teachers were online worksheets and activities (reported by 92% of teachers), lessons over video call (80%) and recorded video lessons (76%).

## **Pupil Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Schools most commonly supported the mental health and wellbeing of pupils not attending school by offering:

- Activities to help with wellbeing, such as remote assemblies, virtual social activities and planned physical activity (98%);
- Advice or guidance about being safe online (94%);
- Access to school staff for parents to talk to about their child's mental health and wellbeing (93%); and
- Lessons or sessions about mental health and wellbeing (91%).

Most teachers agreed that they knew how to help pupils with mental health issues to access support offered by their school or college (82%) and felt equipped to identify behaviour that might be linked to a mental health issues (74%).

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

Most schools' plans to teach the new RSHE curriculum had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic: 87% reported that it had been impacted by the pandemic to at least a small extent, with 26% reporting that their plans had been impacted by a great extent.



Two-thirds (66%) of schools had, however, started to teach the new RSHE curriculum (either before or after September 2020) and a further 23% planned to start in the 2021 summer term.

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

Half of teachers agreed that they felt equipped to support pupils with SEND during early February 2021. Of those teachers who said they did not feel equipped to support pupils with SEND, they were most likely to report that this was because of a lack of time (71%).

## **Vulnerable children**

Around three-quarters (73%) of secondary schools reported that there were vulnerable children who were not attending school but ought to be.

The most common reason for this absence, according to secondary schools, was the child's parent or carer thinking they may be exposed to the virus in school (78%). Other, slightly less common (but still widespread), reasons were the parent's refusal to send their child (67%) and the child's refusal to attend (65%).

Virtually all (98%) schools reported that at least some vulnerable children not attending school were engaging with remote education, although fewer than one-in-10 (8%) reported that all of these pupils were engaging.

## **Rapid asymptomatic testing**

Secondary schools and colleges have been asked to implement rapid asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 as all students begin to return to face-to-face education from March 8th, extending the existing testing programme that has been in place since January.

Having enough staff to oversee the tests was seen to be the biggest challenge associated with implementing rapid testing: the vast majority (91%) of secondary schools reported that it would be either very (58%) or fairly (32%) challenging.

The other key challenge was felt to be ensuring that pupils conduct their tests properly: four-in-five (79%) secondary schools reported that it would be either very (38%) or fairly (42%) challenging.

## Attendance

Most schools reported that they had found it challenging to accommodate the demand for places for children eligible<sup>1</sup> to physically attend (79% reported it had been challenging). One-third (36%) had found it very challenging.

The most common actions that schools had taken to accommodate places were a rota for staff working on site (59% of schools) and providing online learning to pupils physically in school (56%).

However, a number of schools had taken steps to try to limit attendance on site either by encouraging parents not to take a place if a parent works from home (53%), encouraging parents not to take a place if only one parent is a critical worker (47%), limiting places to only some days of the week (21%) or introducing additional criteria or prioritisation for attendance (20%). These steps were more common in primary schools than secondary schools.

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<sup>1</sup> From 5 January 2021, schools were asked to provide on-site education for children of critical workers and pupils who have a social worker, an education, health and care plan or who have been deemed to be otherwise vulnerable by local authorities or education providers. Full guidance on eligibility for physical attendance can be accessed: [Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/children-of-critical-workers-and-vulnerable-children-who-can-access-schools-or-educational-settings)

## Introduction

This report details findings from the early February 2021 wave of the newly formed School Snapshot Panel, a panel of leaders and teachers sampled from the Schools Workforce Census to provide rapid feedback to the Department for Education.

The five-minute survey covered a range of topical issues in education during the third lockdown in early 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From 5th January primary schools, secondary schools and colleges across England moved to remote education for the majority of pupils, with the exception of children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils who were still able to access on-site education.

Additionally, an annex provides the summary findings from a short preliminary survey run with the primary leader group on the panel in late January 2021.

In this report there is occasional reference to findings from previous School Snapshot Surveys (including the COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey run in May 2020). Due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.<sup>2</sup>

## Methodology

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

The survey was administered online, and the fieldwork period was one week, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Leaders and teachers received an email invite and two reminder emails as required.

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

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<sup>2</sup> The School Snapshot Survey was administered to one leader and three teachers at each school sampled, whereas the School Snapshot Panel is a randomised sample of leaders and teachers taken from the schools workforce census data. Therefore, teachers are invited from schools that may not have been sampled for a leader survey.

**Table 1. Response rate by key group**

	<b>Primary Leaders</b>	<b>Secondary Leaders</b>	<b>Primary Teachers</b>	<b>Secondary Teachers</b>
Starting sample	1,372	754	969	866
Complete surveys	860	425	693	573
Response rate	<b>63%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>66%</b>

## **Weighting**

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

### **School-level weighting**

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

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

### **Teachers / individual weighting**

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

## Interpreting the findings

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

Given the sample size in the research (2,551), statistically we can be 95% confident that for a survey finding of 50% based on all respondents, the 'true' value (if all leaders and teachers had answered rather than a sample of 2,551) lies within a +/- 1.9% range of this figure (i.e. 48.1% - 51.9%). Results based on a sub-set of schools interviewed are subject to a wider margin of error. For example, for results among school leaders, we can be 95% confident that for a survey result of 50% the sampling error is +/- 2.7%.

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

Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement is used as a proxy for deprivation levels at the school. All schools in England were listed in ascending order of the proportion of their pupils that are entitled to FSM. This ordered list was then split into five equal groups (or quintiles). Quintile 1, which is referred to as the 'lowest proportion' throughout the report represents the schools with the lowest proportion of pupils entitled to FSM. This group thus equates to the schools with the least disadvantaged/deprived pupil population. The proportion of pupils entitled to FSM increases progressively as the quintiles increase. Schools in the 'highest proportion' quintile (quintile 5), represent the schools with the highest proportion of pupils entitled to FSM, i.e. having the greatest level of disadvantage in the local population. In the report, significant differences tend to be tested between schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils and schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils.

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

In this report there is occasional reference to findings from previous School Snapshot Surveys (including the COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey run in May 2020). It should be

noted that due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.

## Remote education

Ensuring that all pupils unable to attend school on-site are able to access high quality remote education has been a priority for the Department throughout the pandemic. The questions included in this survey have allowed us to understand the extent and nature of remote education being delivered to pupils, as well as identify barriers to high quality remote education. This insight has informed the package of support provided to schools, which can be accessed via the Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk. The insights have also helped the Department to assess the extent to which the Get Help with Technology programme has supported access to remote education through the provision of laptops, tablets and support to access the internet.

## Access to remote education

Access to remote education is a policy priority for the Department for Education. Through the Get Help with Technology programme, the Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including making 1.3 million laptops and tablets available for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering over 70,000 4G routers for pupils without connection at home. The programme calculated the need for devices using school-level FSM eligibility data, but accurate data is needed on levels of remaining digital access needs.

In the early February School Snapshot Panel survey, schools were asked about how many of their pupils in fell into the following categories:

- Pupils without a laptop or tablet in their household;
- Pupils with a single tablet/laptop in their household that was being shared;
- Pupils with no internet access; and
- Pupils with limited internet access which reduced their ability to engage with remote education.

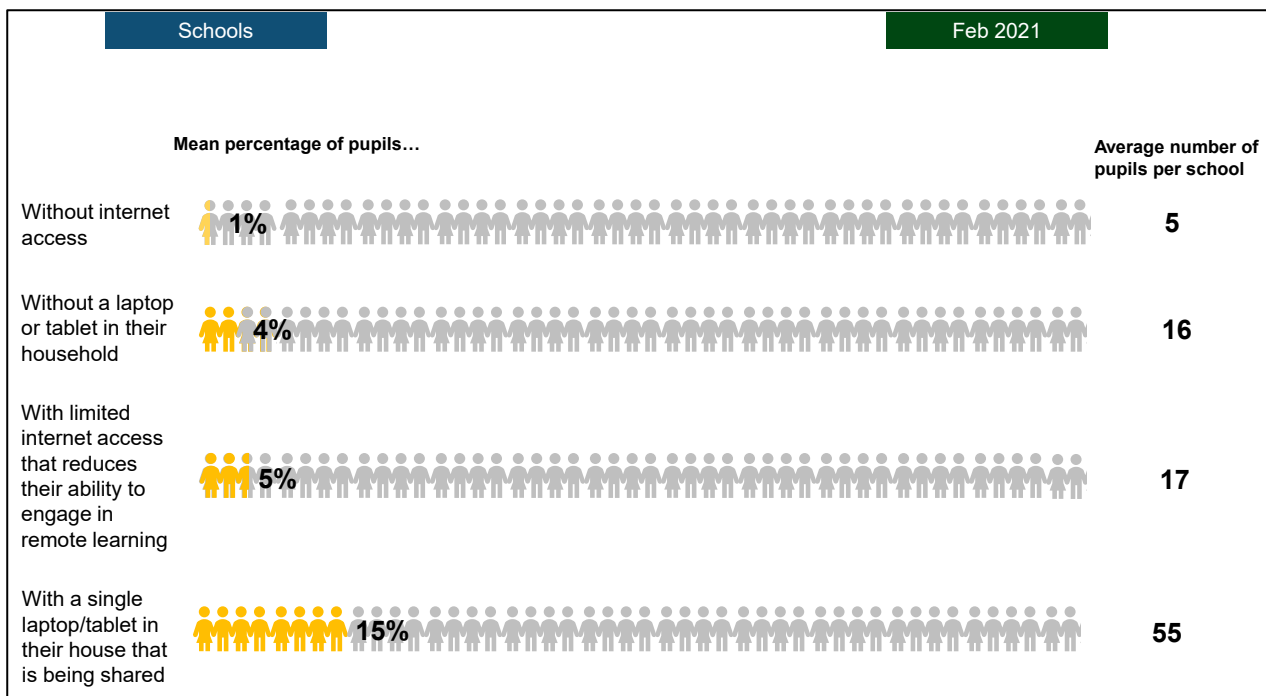
As a proportion of the school population, schools reported that relatively few pupils were without internet access (1%), without a laptop or tablet in their household (4%), or with limited access to the internet (5%). Roughly one in six (15%), however, were reported as having shared access to a digital device.

Figure 1 shows the mean percentage of pupils that fell into each category (as a proportion of the school population), as reported by the schools that knew how many pupils in their school fell into each category. The end column of the chart shows how

these percentages translate to the mean number of pupils within each category across schools.

A relatively high proportion of schools were not sure about the number of pupils that fell into each group, but they were generally more certain about the number of pupils without a laptop or tablet (13% did not know), or with no internet access (14%), than the number with a shared device (23%) or limited internet access (22%).

**Figure 1. The mean percentage of pupils falling into the following categories, as a proportion of the school population**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A6: All schools that know how many pupils fall into the following categories: Pupils without a laptop or tablet in their household (n=1,006); Pupils with a single tablet/laptop in their household that is being shared (n=571); Pupils with no internet access (n=990); Pupils with limited internet access which reduces their ability to engage with remote education (n=728).

Differences by school phase were limited, suggesting that, as a proportion of the school population, access to digital devices and connectivity is similar for pupils at primary and secondary schools. Primary schools were, however, significantly more likely to report that a higher proportion of their pupils had a single, shared digital device in their household (17% of pupils in primary schools fell into this group on average, compared with 10% of secondary school pupils).



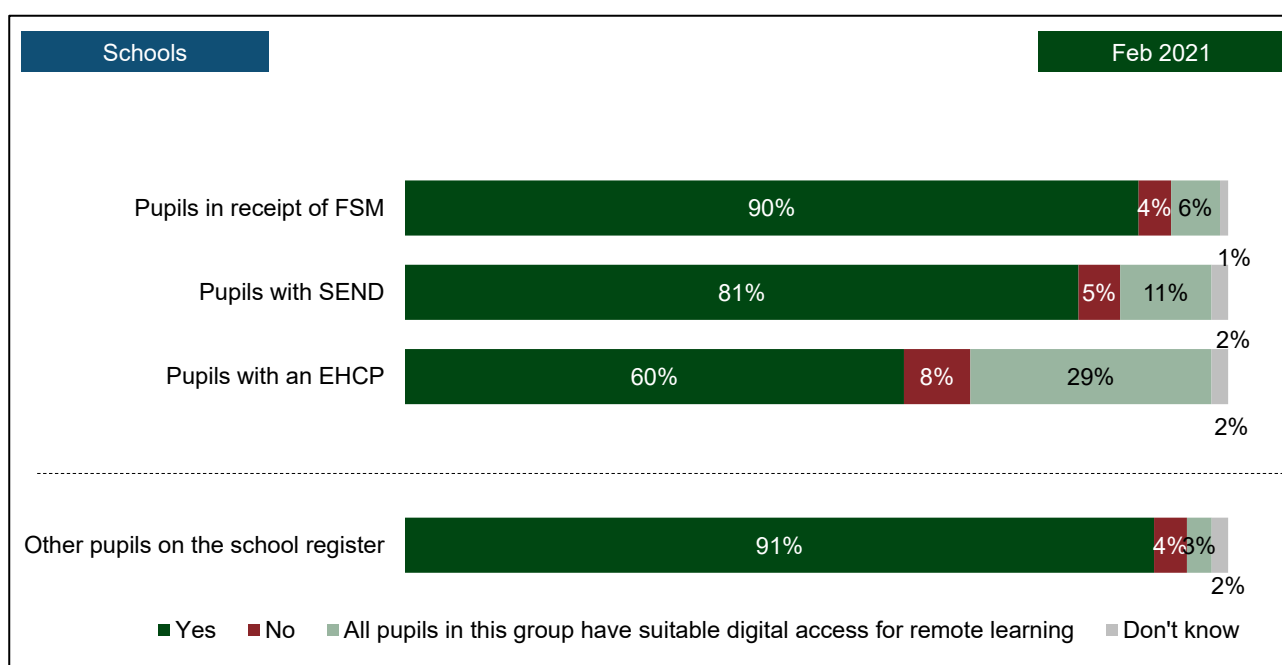
## Provision of digital devices

Schools were also asked whether they had provided laptops, tablets or connectivity support for different groups of pupils within their school.

Nearly all schools had provided devices or support to at least some pupils – 90% had provided support specifically to FSM pupils, and 91% had provided support to other pupils on the school register.

Schools were less likely to have provided devices and connectivity support to pupils with SEND (81%) and specifically those with an EHCP (60%). However, most of the schools that did not provide support to these groups reported that it was because all their pupils in these groups already had suitable digital access for remote learning.

**Figure 2. Whether schools have provided laptops, tablets or connectivity support to the following groups of pupils**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A7: All schools with pupils in the following groups at their school: Pupils with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) (n=1,235); Pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) (n=1,282); Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (n=1,279); Other pupils (any other pupils on the school register) (n=1,279).

There were key differences by school phase. Secondary schools were significantly more likely to have provided laptops, tablets or connectivity support to the following groups:

- Pupils with SEND (88%, compared with 80% of primary schools); and
- Pupils with an EHCP (85%, compared with 55%).

Additionally, schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to have provided devices or support to pupils in every group. The difference was most pronounced for pupils with an EHCP (72%, compared with 42% of schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils).

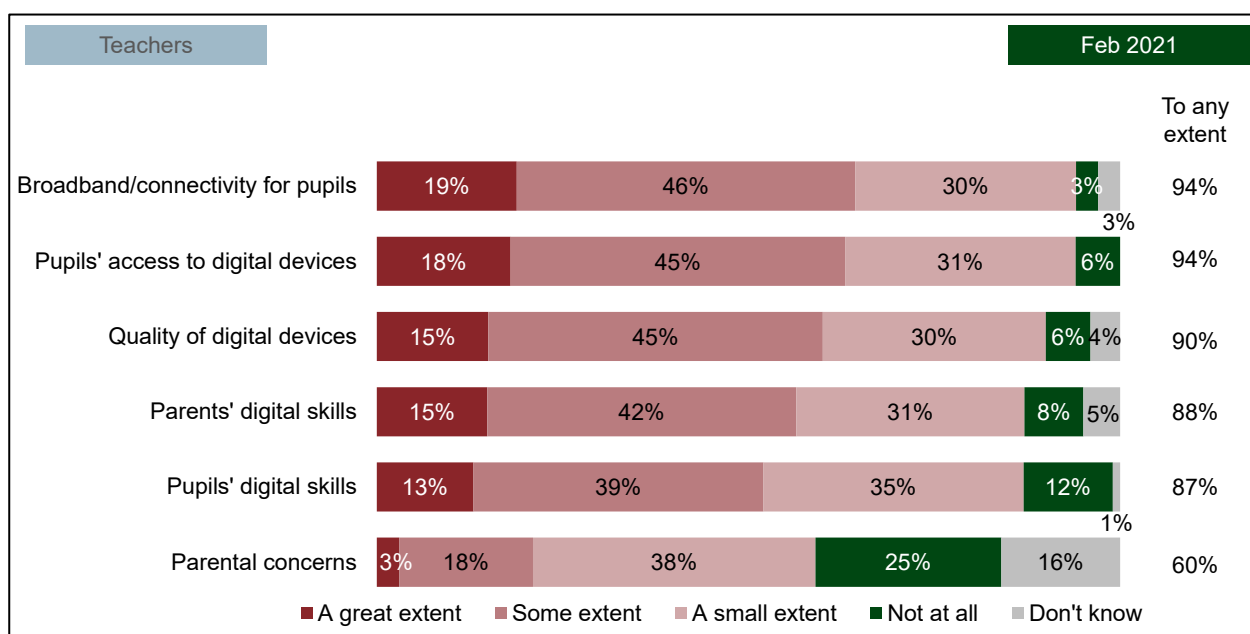
### Barriers to remote education

Teachers were asked about the extent to which they considered a series of factors to represent a barrier to remote education for their pupils (see Figure 3). These included a range of factors relating to access, service provision and capability.

All six factors were considered to be a barrier by the majority of teachers, with between 3% and 19% of teachers considering them to be a barrier to a great extent.

Of all six factors, parental concerns were least likely to be considered a barrier, with a quarter of teachers (25%) reporting that this was not a barrier at all.

**Figure 3. Extent to which the following factors were considered barriers to remote education by teachers**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A8: All teachers (n=1,266).

Differences by phase were common, with primary and secondary teachers considering different factors to be a barrier to remote education for pupils. Conversely, primary teachers were significantly more likely to consider parents' digital skills to be barrier (19%, compared with 11% of secondary teachers). Secondary teachers were significantly more likely to consider broadband or connectivity for pupils to be barrier to a great extent (22%, compared with 15% of primary teachers).

Teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were more likely than those based at schools with the lowest proportion to consider most factors to be a barrier to remote education for pupils. The difference was most pronounced in relation to parents' digital skills: 29% of teachers at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils considered this to be a barrier to a great extent, compared with 9% from schools with the lowest proportion.

## Monitoring remote education

As well as access to remote education, this survey covered schools' approaches to monitoring remote education. Schools and teachers were asked about:

- The number of hours of work set for pupils;
- Whether guidance had been provided about the number of hours pupils should be working; and
- Whether the numbers of hours pupils were working was being monitored.

## Hours set for pupils not attending school – schools

Schools were asked what the minimum number of hours of work set per day for pupils learning at home had been over the last week (for the Key Stages taught in their school).

Reflecting government guidance,<sup>3</sup> the vast majority of primary schools reported that they had set 3-4 hours of work per day for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 (91% and 86% of schools teaching each Key Stage, respectively). Similarly, the vast majority of secondary schools reported that they were setting 5 or more hours per day for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 (86% and 92% of schools teaching each Key Stage, respectively) – see Figure 4 for further details.

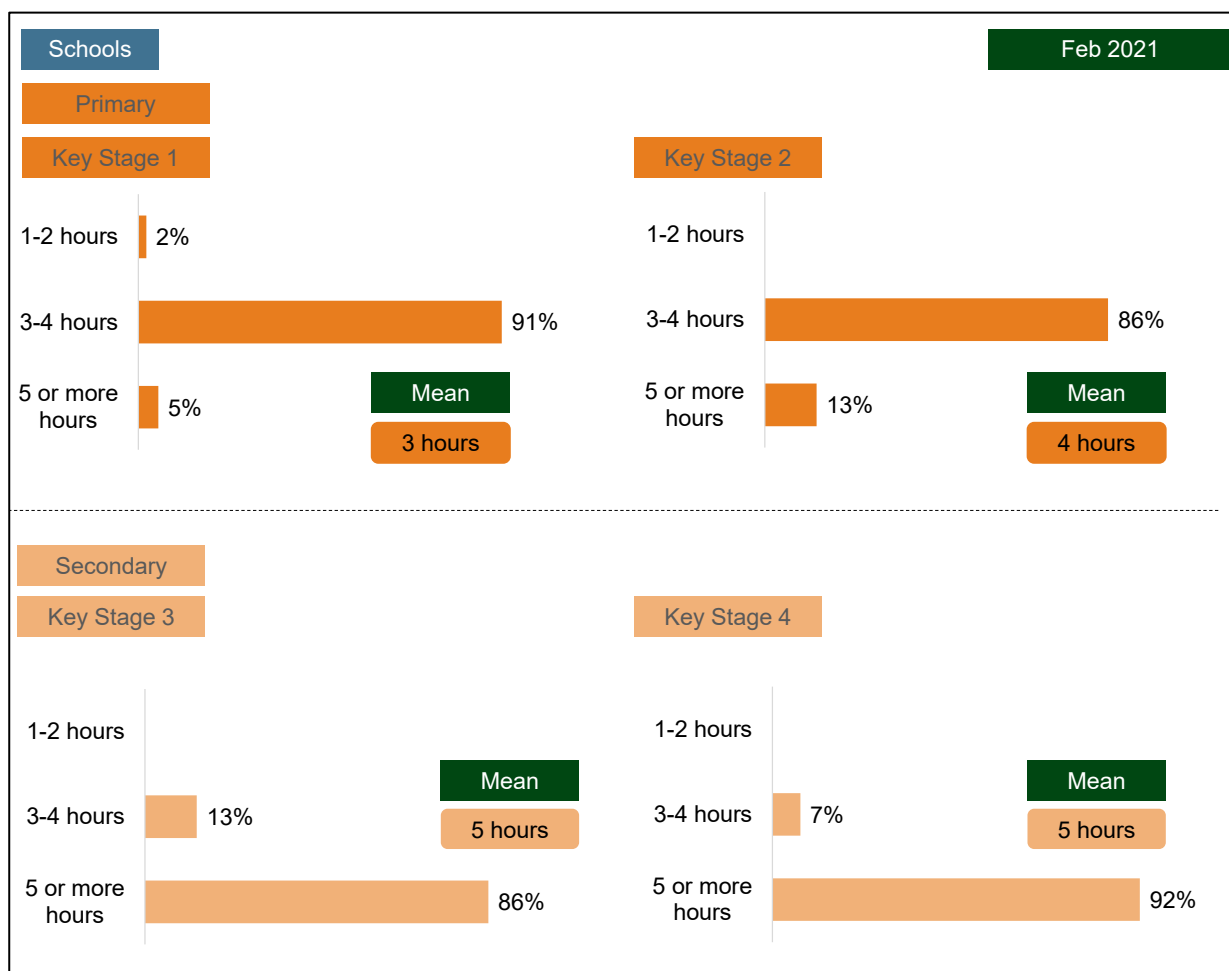
The mean number of hours set for pupils in each Key Stage was as follows:

- Key Stage 1: 3 hours
- Key Stage 2: 4 hours
- Key Stage 3: 5 hours
- Key Stage 4: 5 hours

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

**Figure 4. Minimum number of hours of work set per day for pupils not attending school, reported by schools**

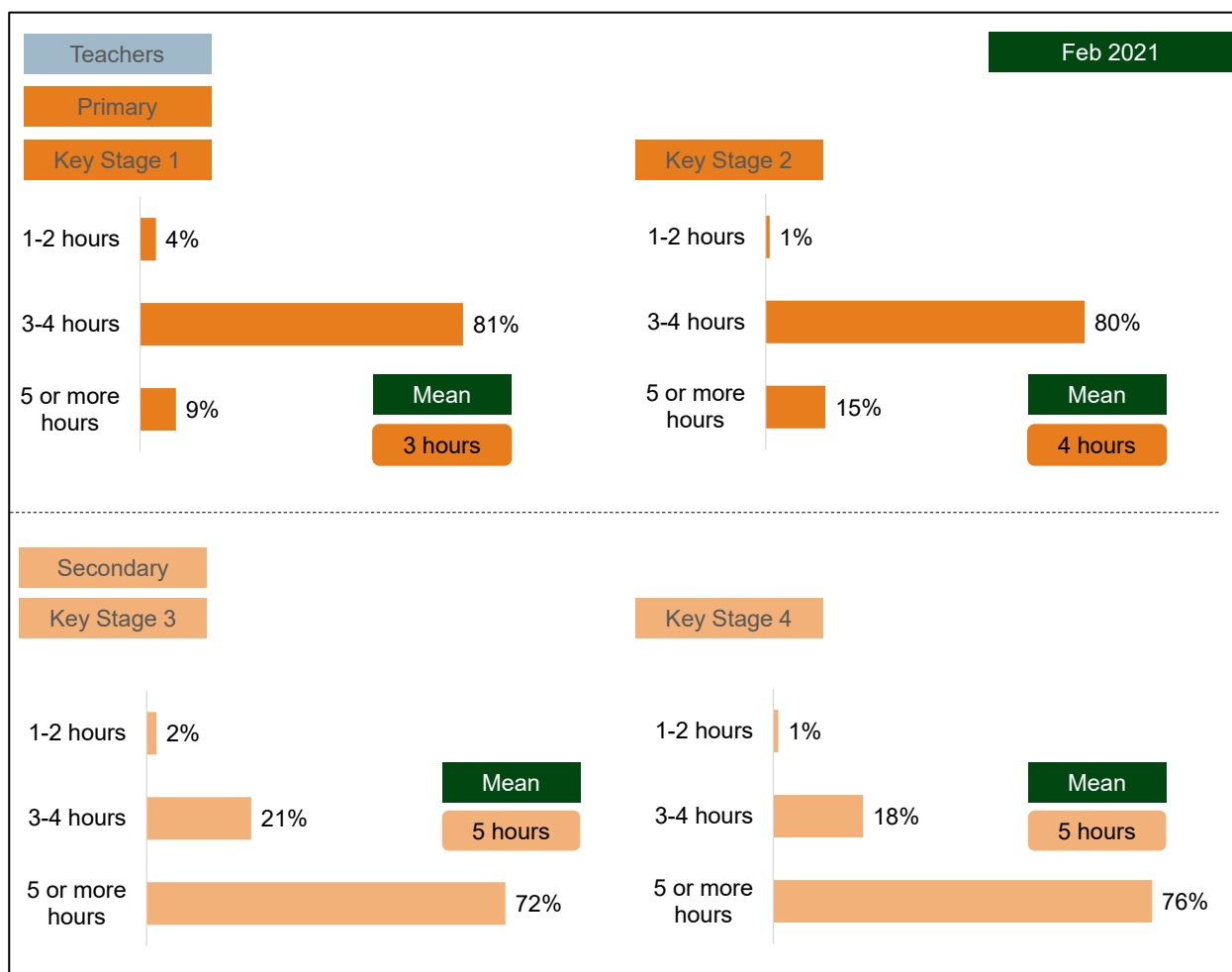


Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A1: All schools that teach pupils in: Key Stage 1 (n=796); Key Stage 2 (n=813); Key Stage 3 (n=409); Key Stage 4 (n=401).

### Hours set for pupils not attending school – teachers

Teachers were asked the equivalent question about the pupils they individually teach, and the overall trend was similar. Primary teachers reported they were setting a minimum of 3 hours of work for Key Stage 1 pupils, and 4 hours for Key Stage 2 pupils. Secondary teachers were setting a minimum of 5 hours for both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils.

**Figure 5. Minimum number of hours of work set per day for pupils not attending school, reported by teachers**



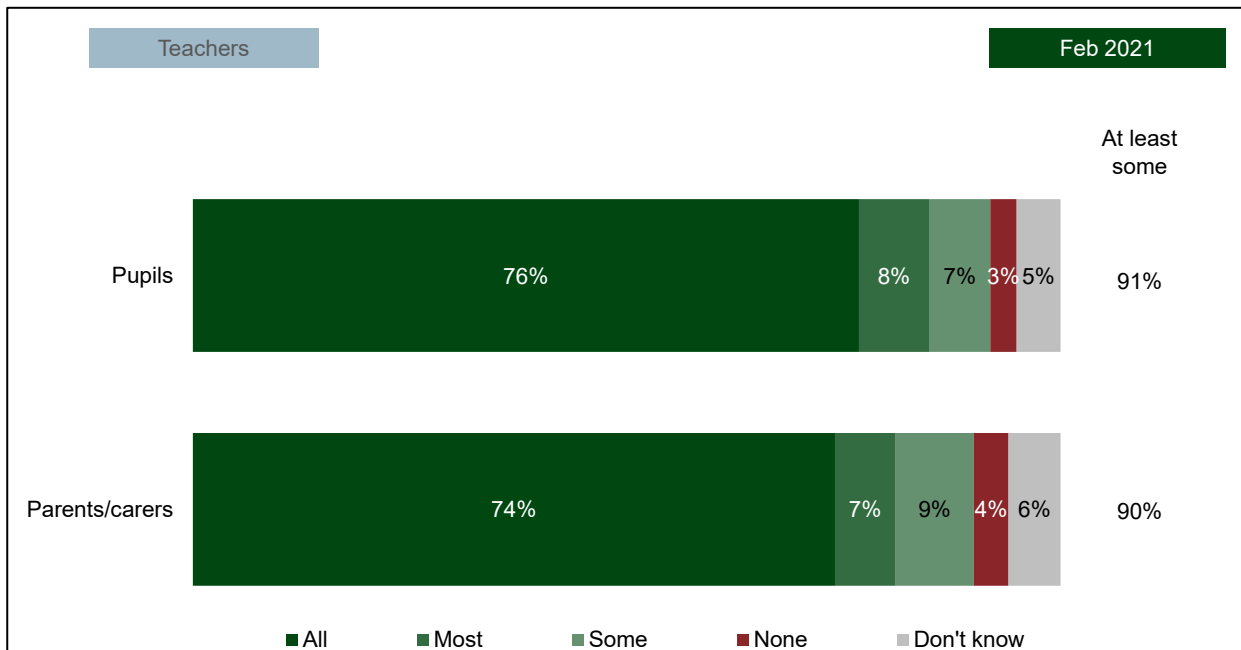
Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A1: All teachers that teach pupils in: Key Stage 1 (n=389); Key Stage 2 (n=507); Key Stage 3 (n=535); Key Stage 4 (n=548).

### Guidance provided to parents and pupils

Teachers were asked what proportion of parents and pupils they have provided guidance to regarding the number of hours of learning pupils should be doing each day when learning remotely.

Most teachers reported that they had provided this guidance to all parents and pupils (76% and 74% of teachers, respectively) – see Figure 6 for more details.

**Figure 6. Proportion of pupils and parents/carers that teachers have provided guidance to on the number of hours of learning pupils should be doing each day when learning remotely**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A3: All teachers (n=1,266).

There were key differences by phase, with:

- Primary teachers being significantly more likely to provide guidance to parents/carers (78% reported they had provided guidance to all parents vs. 70% of secondary teachers); and
- Secondary teachers significantly more likely to provide guidance to pupils (80% reported they had provided guidance to all pupils vs. 72% of primary teachers).

Additionally, teachers based in schools rated as outstanding by Ofsted were significantly more likely to report they provided guidance to all parents and pupils (81% and 83% respectively, compared with 74% and 76% on average across all other Ofsted groups).

## Monitoring remote education – schools

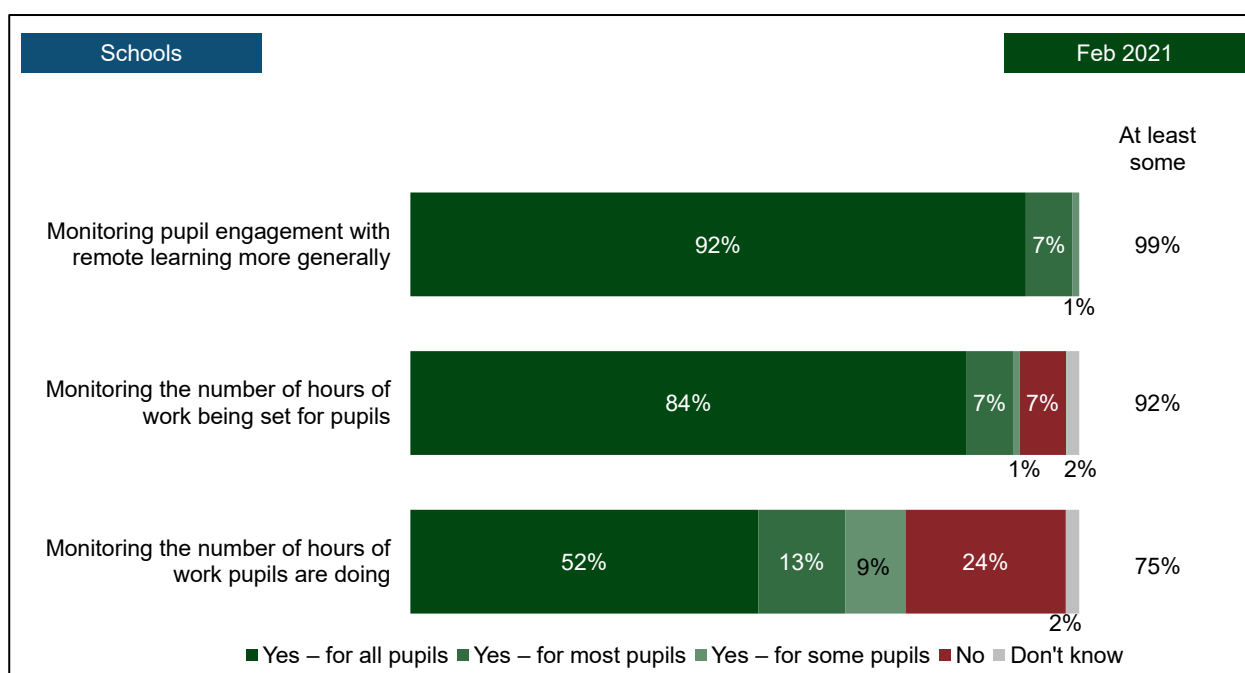
Schools were asked whether they were monitoring these key aspects of remote education:

- The number of hours of work being set for pupils;
- The number of hours of work pupils were doing; and
- Pupil engagement more generally.

While the majority of schools reported that they monitored pupil engagement with remote education more generally (92% reported they did this for all pupils) and the number of hours being set for pupils (84% reported they did this for all pupils), fewer monitored the number of hours pupils were working (52% did this for all pupils). Around a quarter (24%) of schools reported they did not monitor this (see Figure 7).

Additionally, virtually all (99%) schools reported that they were informing pupils' parents if there were any concerns about pupils not engaging with work.

**Figure 7. Proportion of schools monitoring each aspect of remote education**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A4: All schools (n=1,285).

Differences by phase were small, but secondary schools were significantly more likely to be monitoring the number of hours of work all pupils were doing (67%, compared with 50% of primary schools).



Schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were also significantly more likely to be monitoring the number of hours of work all pupils were doing (59%, compared with 50% of schools with the lowest proportion).

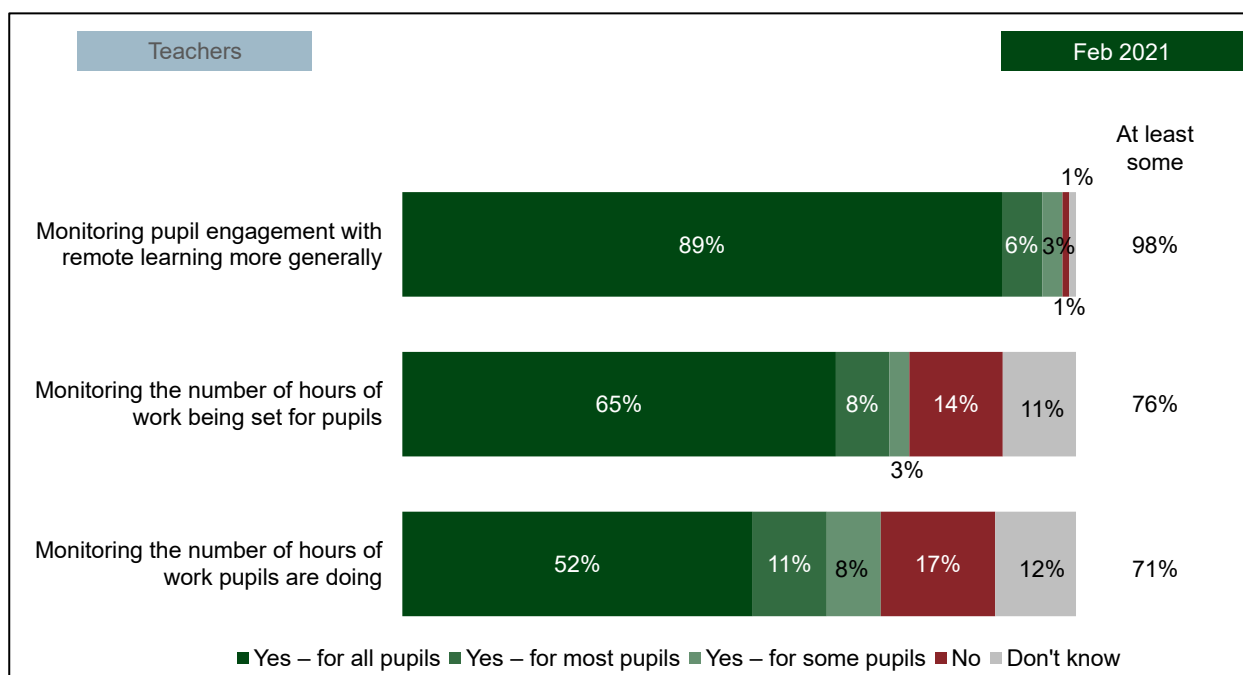
## Monitoring remote education – teachers

As with leaders, almost all (98%) teachers reported they were informing pupils’ parents if there was a concern that the pupil was not engaging with work set.

In addition, a similar proportion of teachers as leaders reported they were monitoring engagement with remote education more generally for all pupils (89%) and the number of hours of work being done by all pupils (52%).

However, teachers were slightly less likely than leaders to report that they were monitoring the number of hours work being set for pupils (65% reported they were doing this for all their pupils, compared with 52% of leaders).

**Figure 8. Proportion of teachers monitoring each aspect of remote education**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A4: All teachers (n=1,266).

Primary teachers were significantly more likely to report they were monitoring the following for all pupils they teach:

- The number of hours being set for pupils (71%, compared with 58% of secondary teachers); and

- Pupil engagement with remote education more generally (91%, compared with 87%).

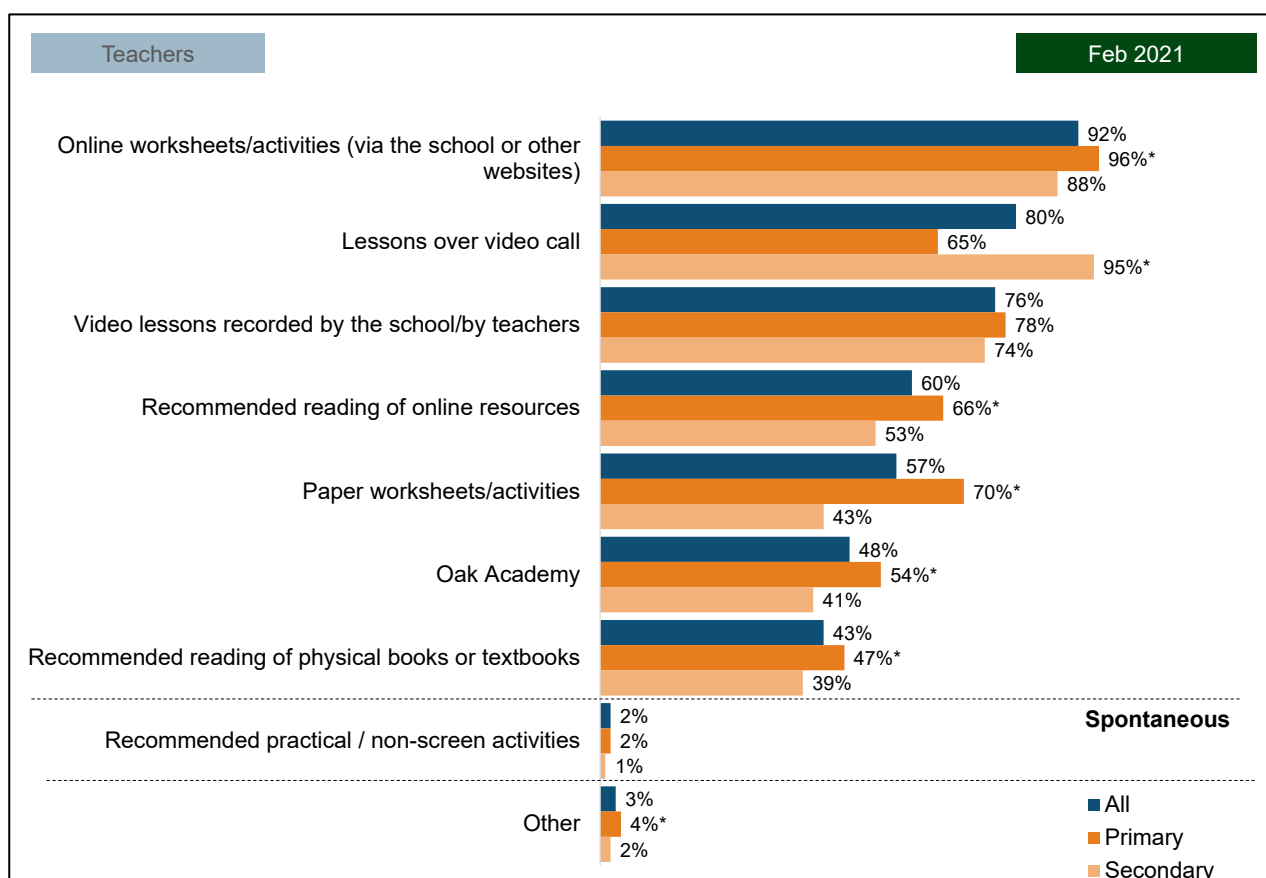
## Remote education provision

Teachers were asked about the types of remote lessons and other ways of learning that their school offered to pupils not physically attending school.

Teachers reported a range of provision. The most common of these were online worksheets and activities (reported by 92% of teachers), lessons over video call (80%) and recorded video lessons (76%).

As Figure 9 shows, primary school teachers more likely to report using many of the types of remote education covered in the survey than secondary school teachers. For example, 70% of primary teachers said they used paper worksheets and activities compared with 43% of secondary teachers.

**Figure 9. Types of remote lessons and other ways of learning teachers reported that schools offer for pupils not physically attending, by school phase**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A4: All teachers (n=1,266); Primary (n=693); Secondary (n=573).

Teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to offer paper worksheets and activities as a remote education tool for their pupils (69%) compared with 50% of schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils.

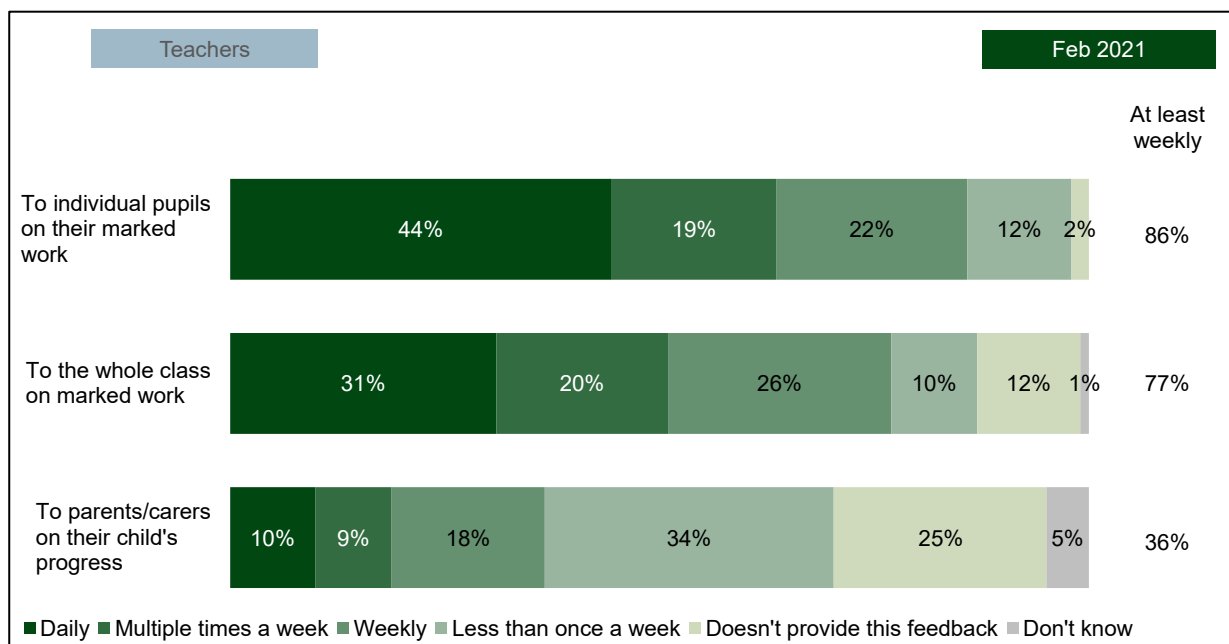
## Feedback to remote education

As well as types of remote education provision, teachers were also asked about how often they have provided feedback for pupils learning from home. Three types of feedback were covered in the survey:

- Whole-class feedback on marked work;
- Individual-pupil feedback on marked work; and
- Feedback to parents/carers on their child's progress.

Teachers were most likely to provide feedback to individual pupils on marked work (44% reported they did this daily), and least likely to provide feedback to parents/carers on their child's progress (10% reported they did this daily). The majority (86%) reported they provided feedback to individual pupils on marked work at least weekly, around one-in-three (36%) reported they provided feedback to parents on their child's progress at least weekly.

**Figure 10. Frequency with which teachers provide the following types of feedback**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. A10: All teachers (n=1,266); Primary (n=693); Secondary (n=573).

Differences by school phase were pronounced: primary teachers provided each type of feedback significantly more regularly than secondary teachers. For instance, three-quarters (76%) of primary teachers provided feedback to individual pupils on marked work daily, compared with one-in-10 (11%) secondary teachers. And one-in-five (19%) primary teachers provided feedback to parents/carers on their child's progress, compared with 1% of secondary teachers.

Differences by FSM proportion were also prominent, with teachers at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils more likely to provide feedback on marked work. For instance, roughly two-in-five (43%) teachers based at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils reporting they provided whole-class feedback on a daily basis, compared with 29% of teachers based at schools with the lowest proportion.

## **Pupil mental health and wellbeing**

Pupil mental health and wellbeing is an ongoing priority for the Department for Education. The pandemic and associated lockdown measures are affecting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in a variety of ways. Being away from school will likely have had a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, as they will have had less contact with friends, access to supportive adults and structure and routine.

This chapter of the report covers key issues around pupil mental health and wellbeing explored in the early February survey:

- Support for pupils not attending school; and
- Teachers' ability to support pupils experiencing mental health issues.

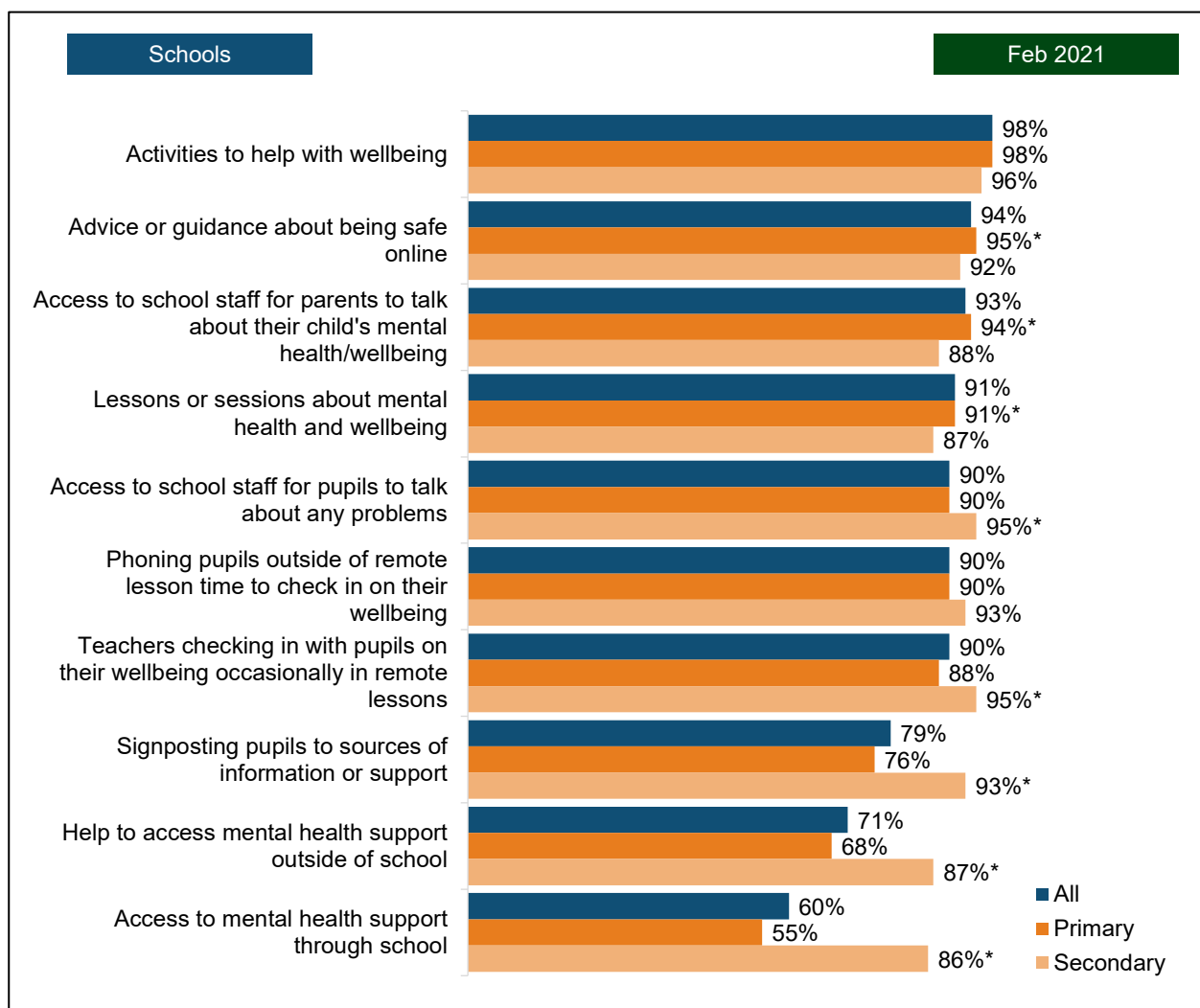
### **Support for pupils not attending school**

Schools were asked how they were supporting pupils not physically attending school to help with their mental health and wellbeing. Most schools offered several types of support covered in the survey, with more than nine-in-10 reporting they offered:

- Activities to help with wellbeing, such as remote assemblies, virtual social activities and planned physical activity (98%);
- Advice or guidance about being safe online (94%);
- Access to school staff for parents to talk about their child's mental health and wellbeing (93%); and
- Lessons or sessions about mental health and wellbeing (91%).

The full list of activities can be found in Figure 11.

**Figure 11. Mental health and wellbeing support offered by schools for pupils not attending school**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. B1: All schools (n=1,285); Primary (n=860); Secondary (n=425). \* Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

The types of support offered differed by school phase. Primary schools were slightly more likely than secondary schools to provide the following:

- Advice or guidance about being safe online (95% vs. 92%);
- Access to school staff for parents to talk to about their child's mental health and wellbeing (94% vs. 88%); and
- Lessons or sessions about mental health and wellbeing (91% vs. 87%).

Conversely, more secondary than primary schools said they offered the following support:

- Access to school staff for pupils to talk about any problems (95% vs. 90%);
- Teachers checking in with pupils on their wellbeing occasionally in remote lessons (95% vs. 88%);
- Signposting pupils to sources of information or support (93% vs. 76%);
- Help to access mental health support outside of school (87% vs. 68%); and
- Access to mental health support through the school (86% vs. 55%).

## Teachers' views on mental health support

Teachers were asked about the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements regarding their ability to support pupils' mental health (Figure 12).

Teachers were most likely to agree that they knew how to help pupils with mental health issues to access support offered by their school or college (82%) and felt equipped to identify behaviour that might be linked to a mental health issues (74%). Fewer agreed that they had access to mental health professionals if specialist advice was required (57%), or that they knew how to help pupils access specialist support outside of school or college (52%).

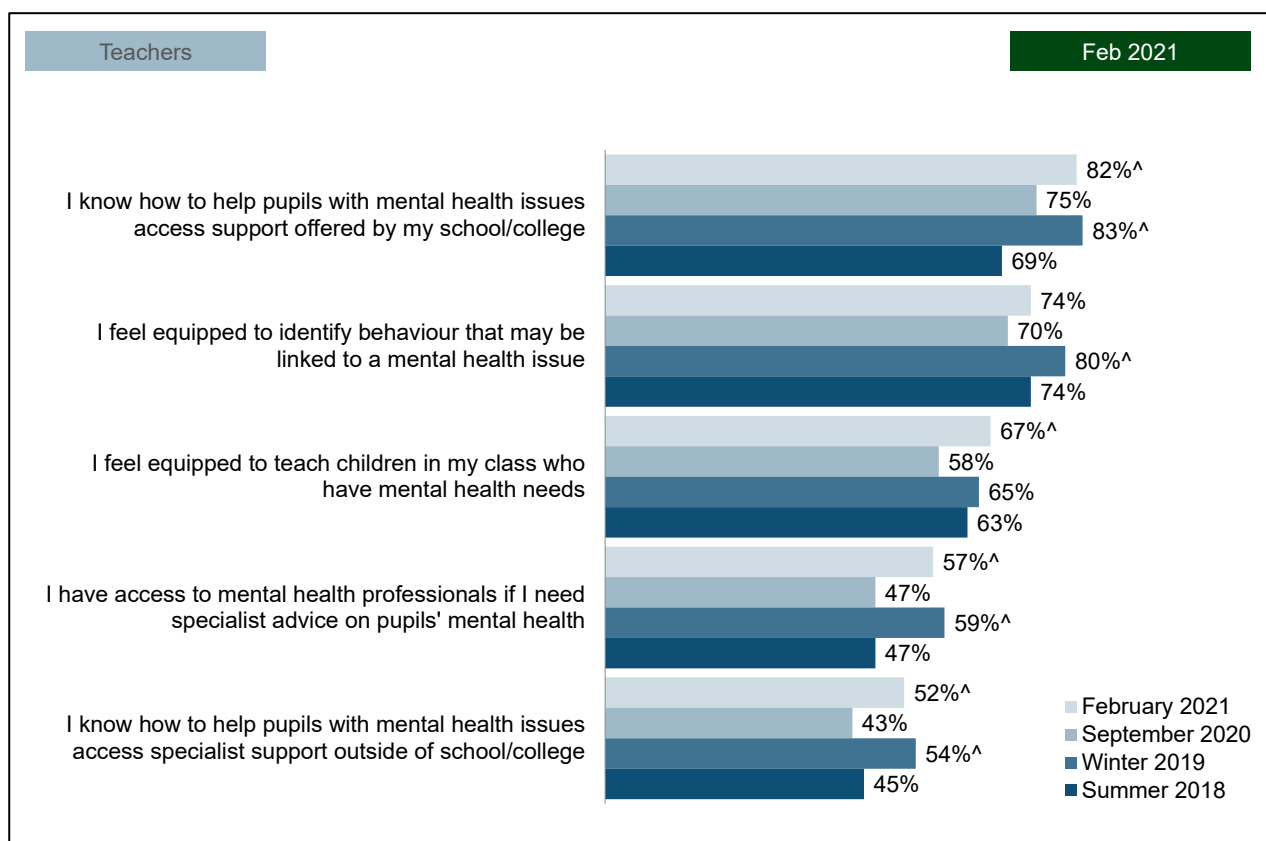
These statements were covered in previous waves of the School Snapshot Survey (Summer 2018 and Winter 2019) and the September 2020 wave of the DfE Panel of School Leaders and Teachers.<sup>4</sup> Although responses in the early February 2021 survey were generally consistent with the findings from Winter 2019, there have been significant fluctuations across time, with results in September 2020 and Summer 2018 generally lower than in February 2021 and Winter 2019.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This panel was set up and run by the DfE in 2020. The School Snapshot Panel replaced this panel in 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Please note, due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey, the DfE Panel of School Leaders and Teachers, and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.

**Figure 12. Agreement with a range of statements concerning teachers' ability to support pupils experiencing mental health issues**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. B2: All teachers (n=1,266). School Snapshot Survey, Winter 2019/Summer 2018: All teachers (n=1,013/1,040). DfE Panel of School Leaders and Teachers, September 2020: All teachers (n=746). ^ Indicates a statistically significant difference between that wave and the previous wave.

The main subgroup differences relate to school phase; primary teachers were significantly more likely than secondary teachers to agree that they:

- Felt equipped to identify behaviour that may be linked to a mental health issue (79% vs. 70%);
- Felt equipped to teach children in class who have mental health needs (70% vs. 64%).



## Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Pupils need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way. Linked to pupil mental health and wellbeing, the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum gives schools a statutory framework to provide pupils with the skills to manage their mental health and wellbeing. The aim of teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, recognise issues in themselves and others and, when issues arise, seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

The law requires schools to provide some relationships, sex and health education to all secondary age pupils in the academic year 2020/21, and to provide some relationships and health education to all primary age pupils. Schools are also required by law to publish a Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and to consult parents on this, which can be done online. However, for many schools, development of a fully comprehensive relationships education/relationships and sex education policy and RSHE curriculum will be an iterative process, which will need to continue into next year. Some schools may therefore choose to focus this year's RSHE teaching on the immediate needs of their pupils, introducing a more comprehensive RSHE programme in September 2021. Teaching in the 2021/22 academic year should seek to address any gaps in pupils' RSHE education this year.

As part of this survey, schools were asked about whether they were currently delivering the RSHE curriculum, and to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their plans to deliver the curriculum.

### Impact of COVID-19 on plans to deliver RSHE

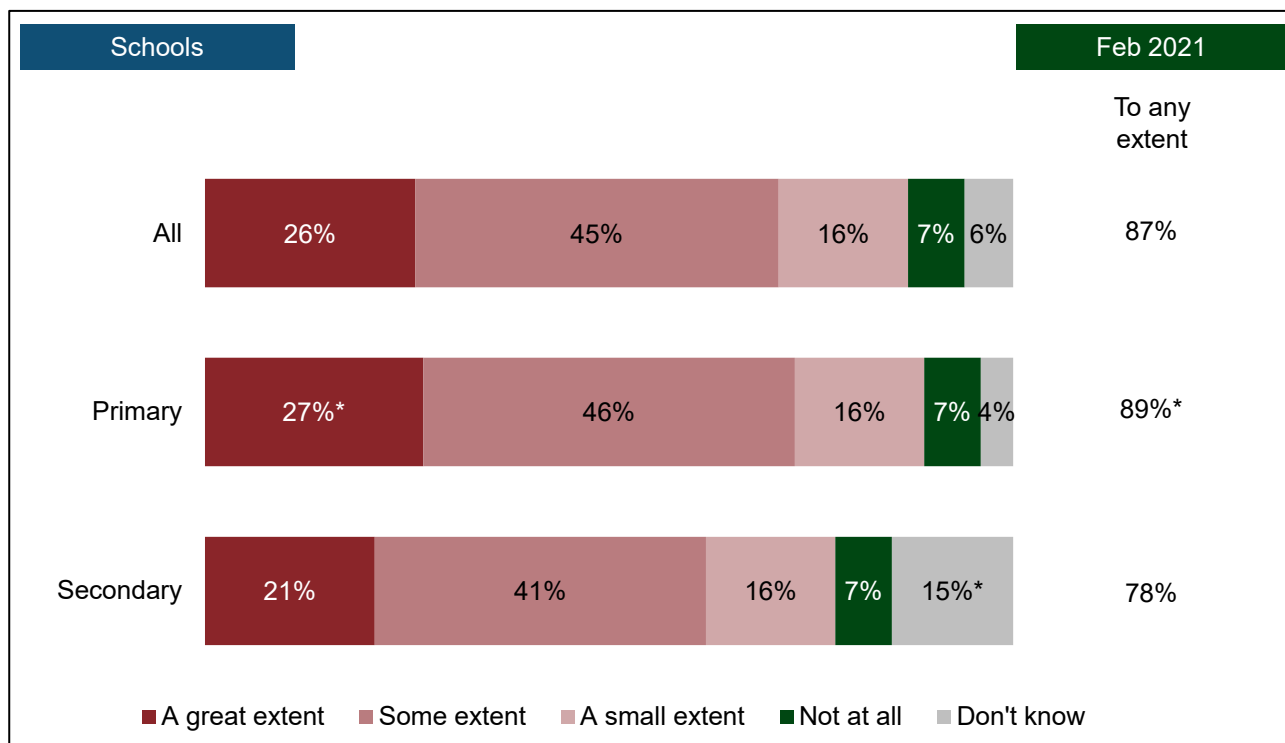
Most schools' plans to teach the RSHE curriculum had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 13). Primary schools were slightly more likely to have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to a great extent (27%, compared with 21% of secondary schools). This is, in part, due to the high proportion of leading practitioner respondents within secondary schools that were unsure about the impact of COVID-19 on the schools' plans to teach the new RSHE curriculum (46%, compared with 20% of primary school leading practitioners).

Figure 13 Almost nine-in-10 schools (87%) said their plans to teach the new curriculum been impacted by the pandemic to at least a small extent, with a quarter (26%) reporting that their plans had been impacted to a great extent.

Primary schools were slightly more likely to have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to a great extent (27%, compared with 21% of secondary schools). This is, in

part, due to the high proportion of leading practitioner respondents within secondary schools that were unsure about the impact of COVID-19 on the schools' plans to teach the new RSHE curriculum (46%, compared with 20% of primary school leading practitioners).

**Figure 13. Extent to which schools' plans to teach the RSHE curriculum had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey, C1: Base: All schools (n=1,285); Primary (n=860); Secondary (n=425). \* Indicates statistically significant differences between primary and secondary schools.

Schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to say their plans to teach the curriculum have been impacted to a great extent (36%, compared with 25% of schools with the lowest proportion).

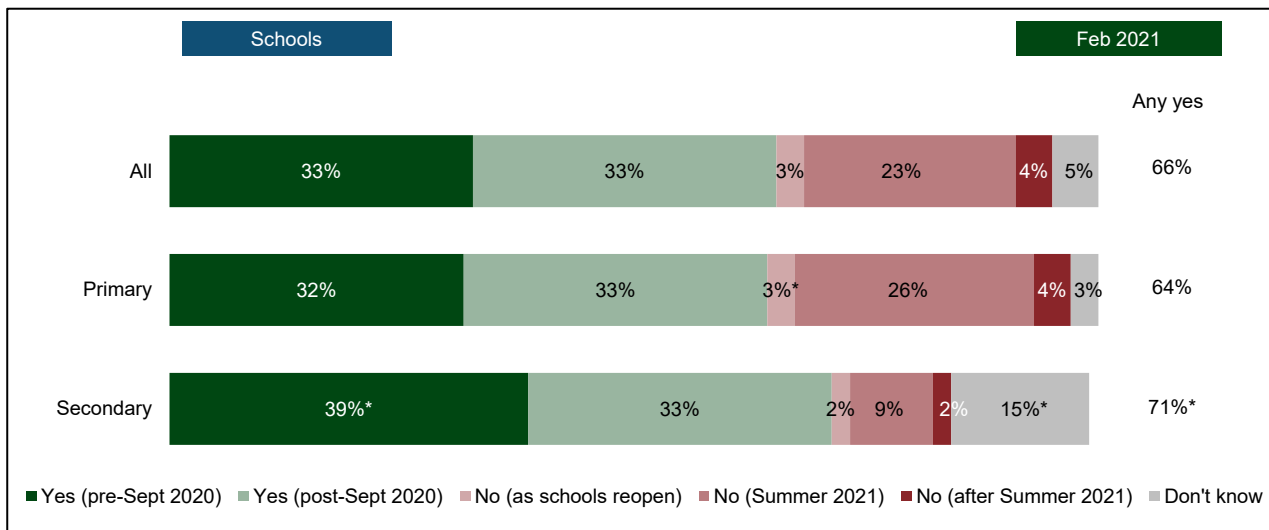
## Delivery of RSHE

Two-thirds of schools (66%) had started to teach the RSHE curriculum, with half of those starting before September 2020 (33%), and the other half starting after September 2020 (33%). Of those that had not started teaching the new curriculum, almost one-in-four (23%) planned to start in the 2021 summer term.

Secondary schools were significantly more likely than primary schools to have started to teach the RSHE curriculum (71%, compared with 64% of primary schools). This is, in

part, due to the high proportion of leading practitioner respondents within secondary schools that reported they were unsure about when their school is expected to start teaching the RSHE curriculum (54%, compared with 19% of primary school leading practitioners).

**Figure 14. Whether schools had started teaching the RSHE curriculum**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey, C2: Base: All schools (n=1,285); Primary (n=860); Secondary (n=425). \* Indicates statistically significant differences between primary and secondary schools.

## SEND

This chapter of the report covers whether teachers in mainstream schools felt equipped to support pupils with SEND in early February 2021, and any barriers to meeting the needs of these pupils faced by teachers. The findings will enable DfE to work with its partners on removing these barriers and to adjust its guidance.

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

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

### Supporting pupils with SEND

Teachers were asked the extent to which they agreed that they felt equipped to support pupils with SEND. The extent to which they felt equipped varied, with around half (49%) of teachers agreeing with the statement and one-in-three (31%) disagreeing (see Figure 15). Around one-in-five (19%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

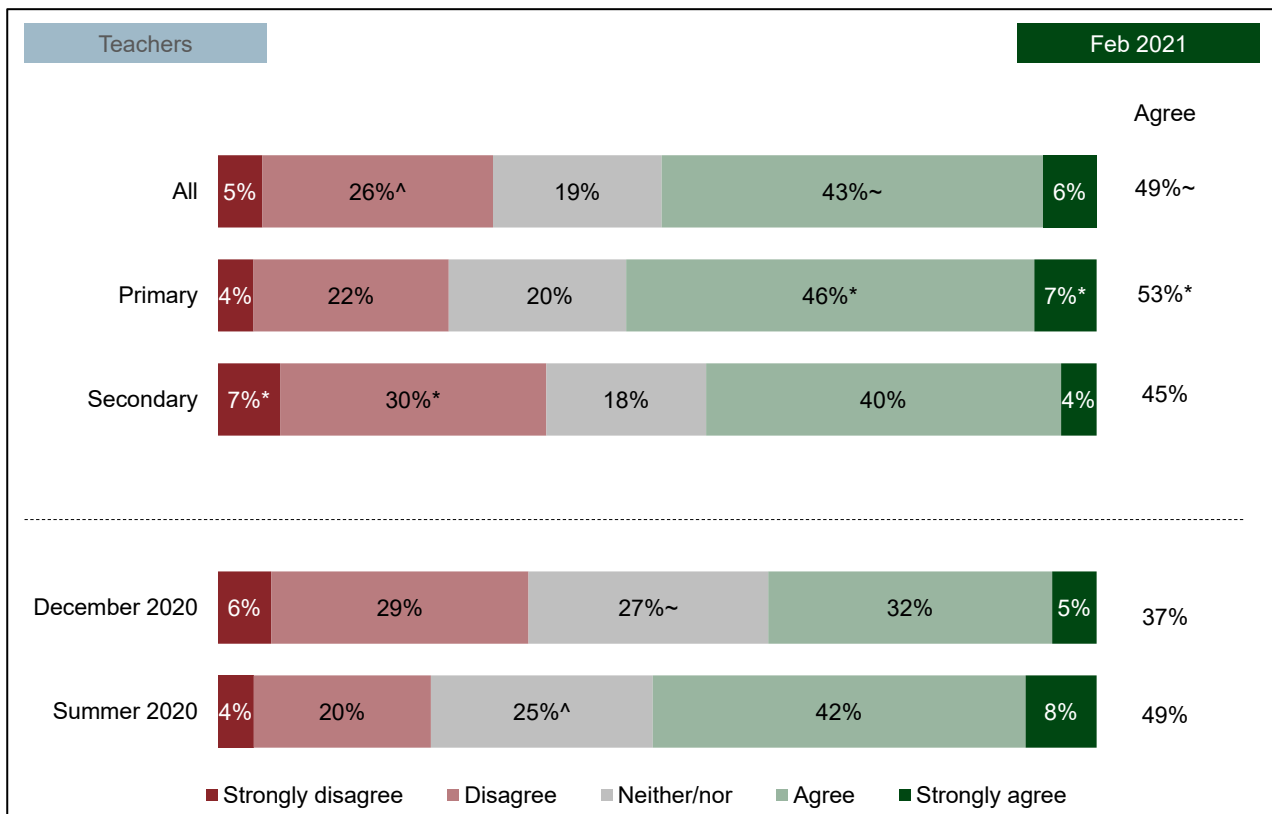
There were notable changes in how equipped teachers felt throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the early February 2021 findings were broadly in line with responses in the School Snapshot Survey Summer 2020 wave (49% agreed with the statement in both surveys), this represented a significant improvement from December 2020 (when 37% agreed with the statement).<sup>6</sup>

Primary teachers were significantly more likely to feel equipped to support pupils with SEND in early February 2021 than secondary teachers (53% vs. 45%).

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<sup>6</sup> Please note, due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey, the DfE Panel of Leaders and Teachers, and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.

**Figure 15. The extent to which teachers agreed or disagreed that they felt equipped to support pupils with SEND during the COVID-19 crisis**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. D1: All teachers (n=1,266); Primary (n=693); Secondary (n=573). School Snapshot Survey, Summer 2020. All teachers (n=997). DfE Panel of Leaders and Teachers, December 2020. All teachers (n=619). \* Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary teachers, ~between February 2021 and December 2020, and ^ between February 2021 and Summer 2020.

In addition, within the secondary school population, teachers at schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to agree they felt equipped to support pupils with SEND (53%, compared with 36% of secondary teachers at schools with the lowest proportion).

## Barriers to meeting the needs of pupils with SEND

Teachers who disagreed that they were equipped to support pupils with SEND during the COVID-19 pandemic were asked which barriers hindered their ability to meet this need (Figure 16). The main barrier, reported by nearly three-quarters (71%) of teachers, was a lack of time to provide additional support to these pupils.

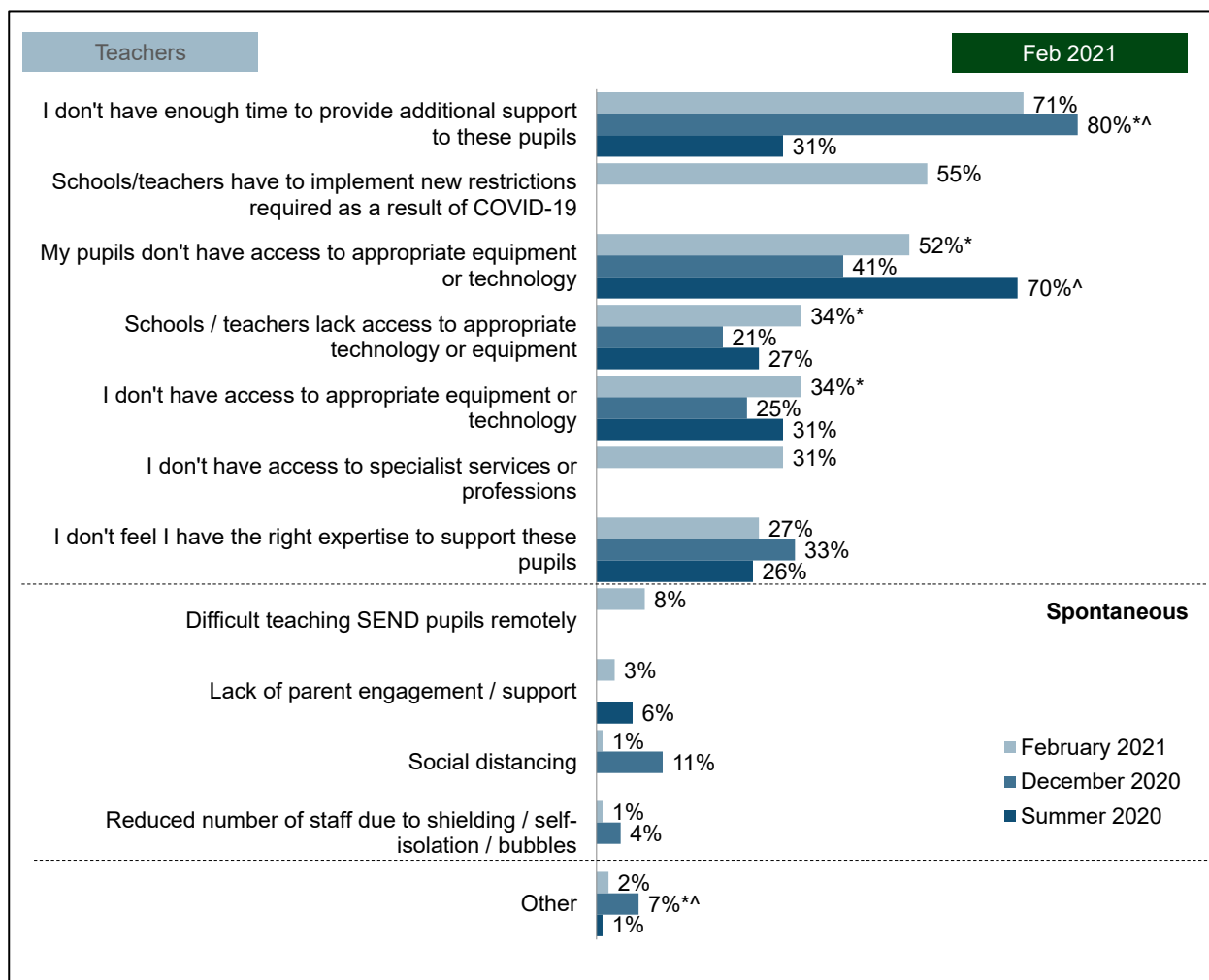
There were significant changes in the prevalence of barriers reported by teachers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion reporting a lack of time to provide additional support to these pupils increased sharply from 31% in Summer 2020 to 80% in December 2020, before falling to 71% in February 2021..<sup>7</sup>

Other changes over time included the proportion reporting that their pupils don't have access to appropriate equipment or technology – this decreased significantly from 70% in Summer 2020 to 41% in December 2020, before significantly increasing to 52% in early February 2021. In February 2021, more than half (55%) of teachers stated there were barriers associated with implementing new restrictions as a result of COVID-19. Around a third (34%) of teachers reported the schools/teachers or they themselves did not have access to appropriate equipment or technology, and just under a third (31%) reported not having access to specialist services or professions.

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<sup>7</sup> Please note, due to differences in methodology between the School Snapshot Survey and the School Snapshot Panel, direct comparisons should be treated with caution.

**Figure 16. Barriers to meeting the needs of pupils with SEND**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. D2: Teachers that did not feel equipped to meet the needs of pupils with SEND (n=386). School Snapshot Survey, Summer 2020: (n=245). DfE Panel of Leaders and Teachers, December 2020: (n=218). \* Indicates a statistically significant difference between that wave and the previous wave, and ^ between that wave and the next wave.

There were generally few differences in providing support by phase, however, secondary teachers were significantly more likely than primary teachers to report a lack of time hindered their ability to support pupils with SEND (79%, compared with 60% of primary teachers). They were also more likely to feel they lacked the right expertise (33% vs. 20% of primary teachers).

Additionally, pupils lacking access to appropriate equipment or technology was significantly more likely to be a barrier reported by teachers at schools with the highest proportions of FSM pupils (65% vs. 37% of those at schools with the lowest proportion).

## Vulnerable children

Although most children were not attending school on site in February 2021, vulnerable children and young people continued to be expected to attend where it was appropriate for them to do so. Understanding the attendance status of vulnerable children is a priority for the Department for Education.

The early February survey established secondary schools' views on:

- Whether there were any vulnerable children who ought to be attending school but were not;
- Reasons for non-attendance of vulnerable children; and
- The proportion of those not attending that were engaged in remote education.

### Reasons for absence of vulnerable children

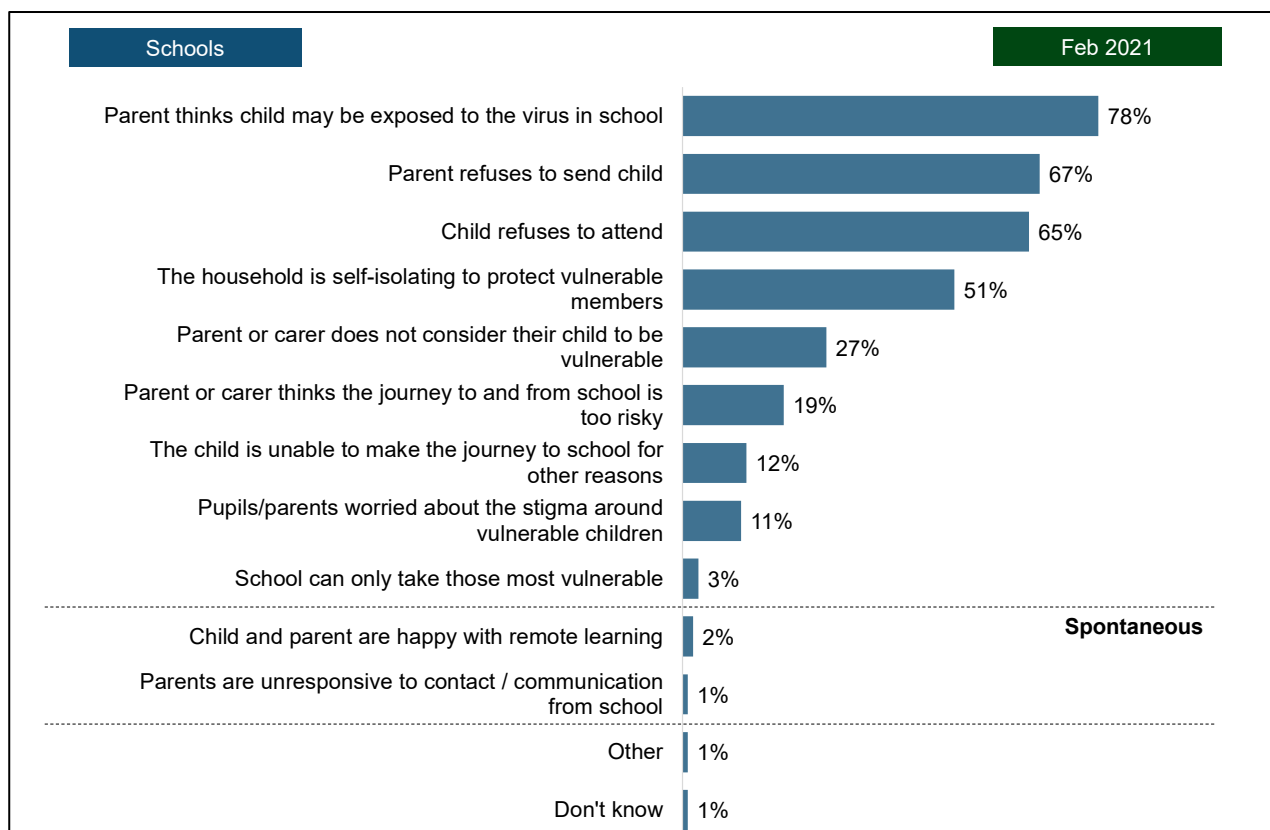
Around three-quarters of secondary schools (73%) reported that there were vulnerable children who were not attending school that ought to be.

These secondary schools reported a range of reasons for this absence (see Figure 17), with the most common being the child's parent or carer thinking they may be exposed to the virus in school (78%). Other, slightly less common (but still widespread), reasons were the parent's refusal to send their child (67%) and the child's refusal to attend (65%).

The least common reasons reported by secondary schools were pupils or parents being worried about the stigma associated with being a vulnerable child (11%) and that schools were only able to take the most vulnerable pupils (3%).



**Figure 17. Reasons for absence of vulnerable children from school**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. E2: All secondary schools where vulnerable children are not attending school (311).

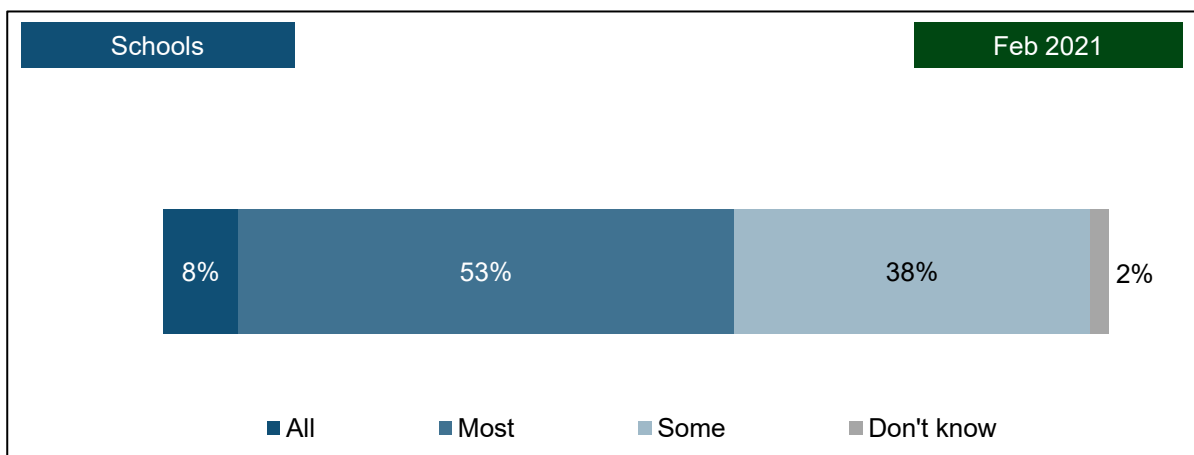
Secondary schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to report the reason for absence as the child’s parent or carer thinking they may be exposed to the virus in school (88%, compared with 54% of secondary schools with the lowest proportion).

## Vulnerable children engagement with remote education

Secondary schools generally felt that vulnerable children not attending school were engaging with remote education (see Figure 18).

Although fewer than one-in-10 (8%) reported that all of these pupils were engaging in remote education, around half (53%) thought most were and the other four-in-10 (38%) thought that some were.

**Figure 18. Whether vulnerable children not attending school were engaging with remote education**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. E3: All secondary schools where vulnerable children are not attending school (311).

There were differences by school setting, with urban schools significantly more likely to report that all vulnerable children not attending school were engaging in remote education (9%, compared with none in rural settings).

## Rapid asymptomatic testing

Since January, we have been delivering the programme of rapid asymptomatic testing for the primary school, secondary school and FE college workforce and for children, young people and students in year 7 and above (or equivalent) in all schools, including secondary schools, special schools, alternative provision, and colleges.

As part of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown, it announced that during the week commencing 8 March, pupils and students will be offered asymptomatic testing on site in secondary schools and FE colleges. For pupils and students, they will be tested 3 times at an on-site Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS), upon their return to school or college. This will give pupils and students the opportunity to get used to swabbing in a supervised environment first. They will then be provided with home test kits for regular twice weekly testing. Testing remains voluntary but strongly encouraged. Primary pupils are not included in the rapid testing programme.

We have rolled out our asymptomatic testing programme to staff in secondary schools and colleges, primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. Staff should receive twice weekly home testing, before coming into work which is in line with the community testing programme.

To better understand expectations about delivering the testing programme, the early February survey covered secondary schools' perspectives on:

- Which specific staff members were responsible for administering COVID-19 tests; and
- The extent to which the following represented challenges to implementing rapid testing when schools full re-open:
  - Collecting and recording consent from parents;
  - Collecting and recording consent from pupils (for schools with pupils over the age of 16);
  - Having enough staff to oversee the tests; and
  - Ensuring pupils conduct their tests properly.

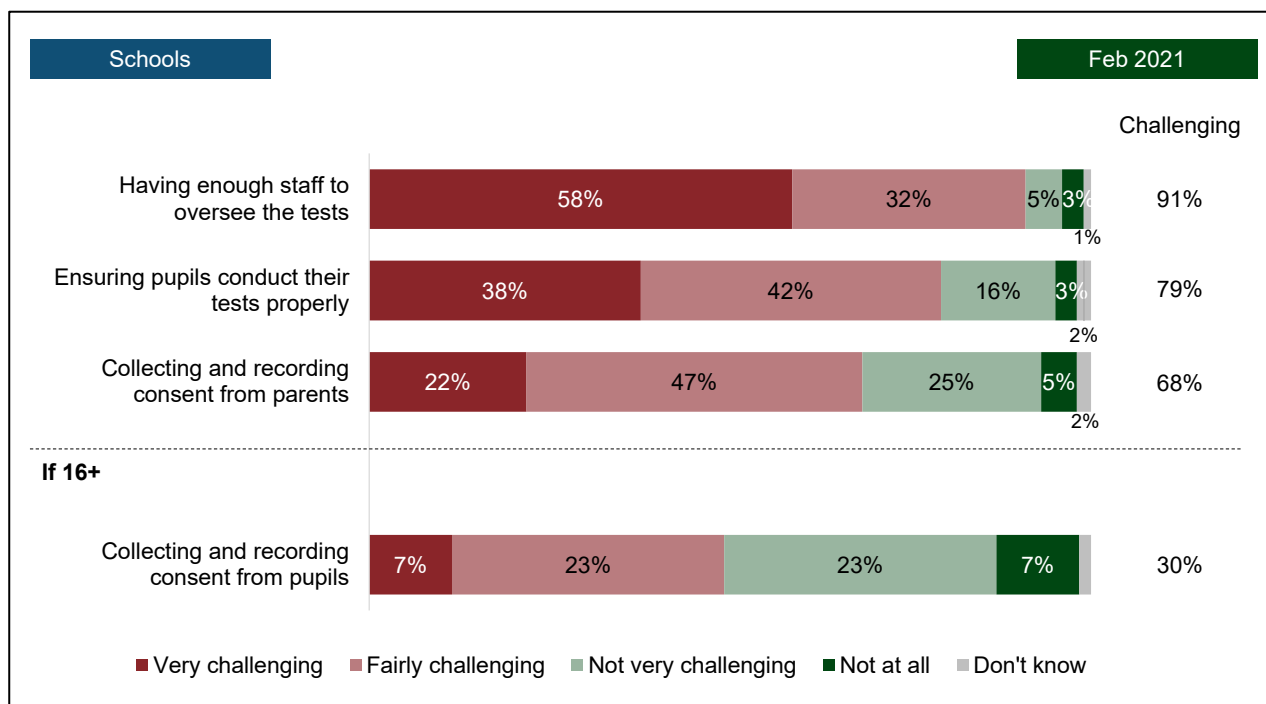
The administration of COVID-19 tests in secondary schools was managed in one of two ways. Half allocated responsibility to a single member of staff (49%), and the other half assigned a group of designated staff who shared the duty (48%). A minority (1%) organised it in another way.

Of the challenges associated with implementing testing, having enough staff to oversee the tests represented the biggest expected challenge: the vast majority (91%) of

secondary schools reported that this would be either very (58%) or fairly (32%) challenging.

The other key challenge was ensuring that pupils conduct their tests properly: four-in-five (79%) secondary schools reported that this would be either very (38%) or fairly (42%) challenging (see Figure 19).

**Figure 19. Challenges for secondary schools around implementing mass COVID-19 testing when schools fully reopen**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. F1: All secondary schools (n=425) for the first three challenges; secondary schools with pupils aged 16+ (n=255) for the fourth challenge.

Significantly more secondary schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils indicated that collecting and recording consent from parents would be a challenge (86%, compared with 50% of secondary schools with the lowest proportion).

## Attendance

In early 2021, government guidance stated schools would remain open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children or young people during the COVID-19 national lockdown and these pupils would be eligible<sup>8</sup> to continue to physically attend school. Schools were asked questions related to managing the demand for places during this time, potential challenges arising from the wider-opening of schools and what the Department for Education could do to support good pupil attendance.

Guidance was clear that there was no limit to the number of vulnerable and critical worker children who should be allowed to attend. Guidance did make clear that critical workers should keep their children at home where they were able to. Vulnerable children were strongly encouraged to attend school at all times during this period, and schools were expected to accommodate them.

### Accommodating demand for school places

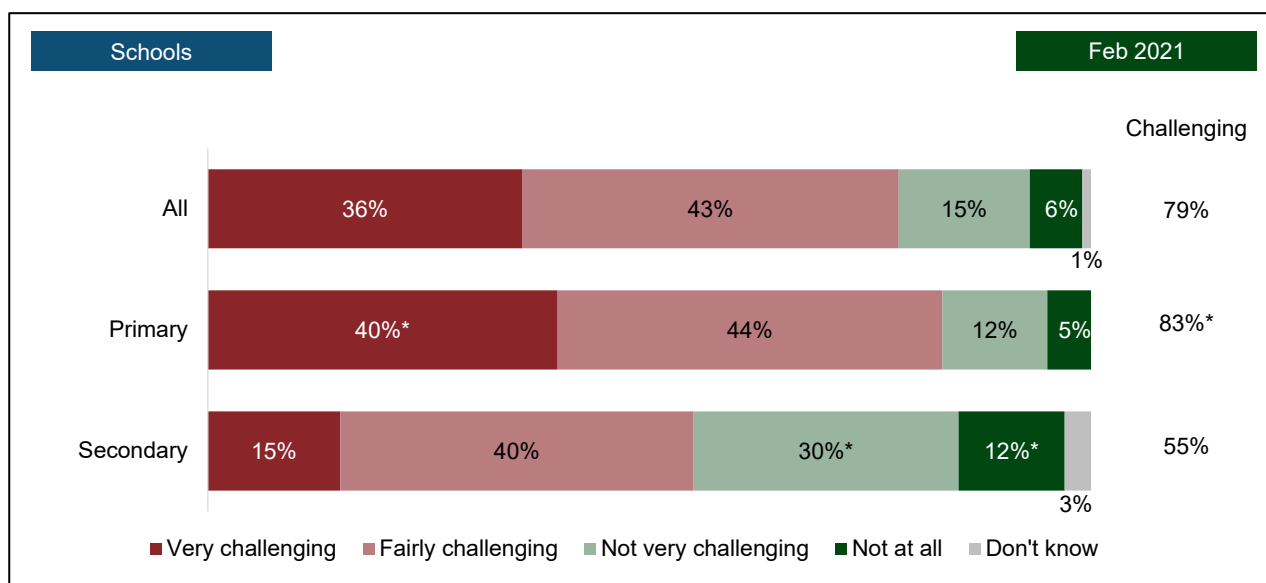
Schools reported that they generally had found it challenging to accommodate the demand for places (79% reported it had been challenging). One-third (36%) had found it very challenging.

Differences by school phase were large (see Figure 20). Accommodating the demand for places was a significantly greater challenge for primary schools (83% of primary schools reported it had been very or fairly challenging, compared with 55% of secondary schools).

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<sup>8</sup> From 5 January 2021, schools were asked to provide on-site education for children of critical workers and pupils who have a social worker, an education, health and care plan or who have been deemed to be otherwise vulnerable by local authorities or education providers. Full guidance on eligibility for physical attendance can be accessed: [Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/children-of-critical-workers-and-vulnerable-children-who-can-access-schools-or-educational-settings)

**Figure 20. How challenging schools have found it to accommodate the demand for places for pupils eligible to physically attend school during lockdown**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. G1: All schools (n=1,285); Primary (n=860); Secondary (n=425). \* Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

FSM eligibility also had an influence on the extent to which schools found this challenging. Schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils were significantly more likely to report this was a challenge (80%, compared with 72% of schools with the highest proportion).

### Actions taken to accommodate the demand for places

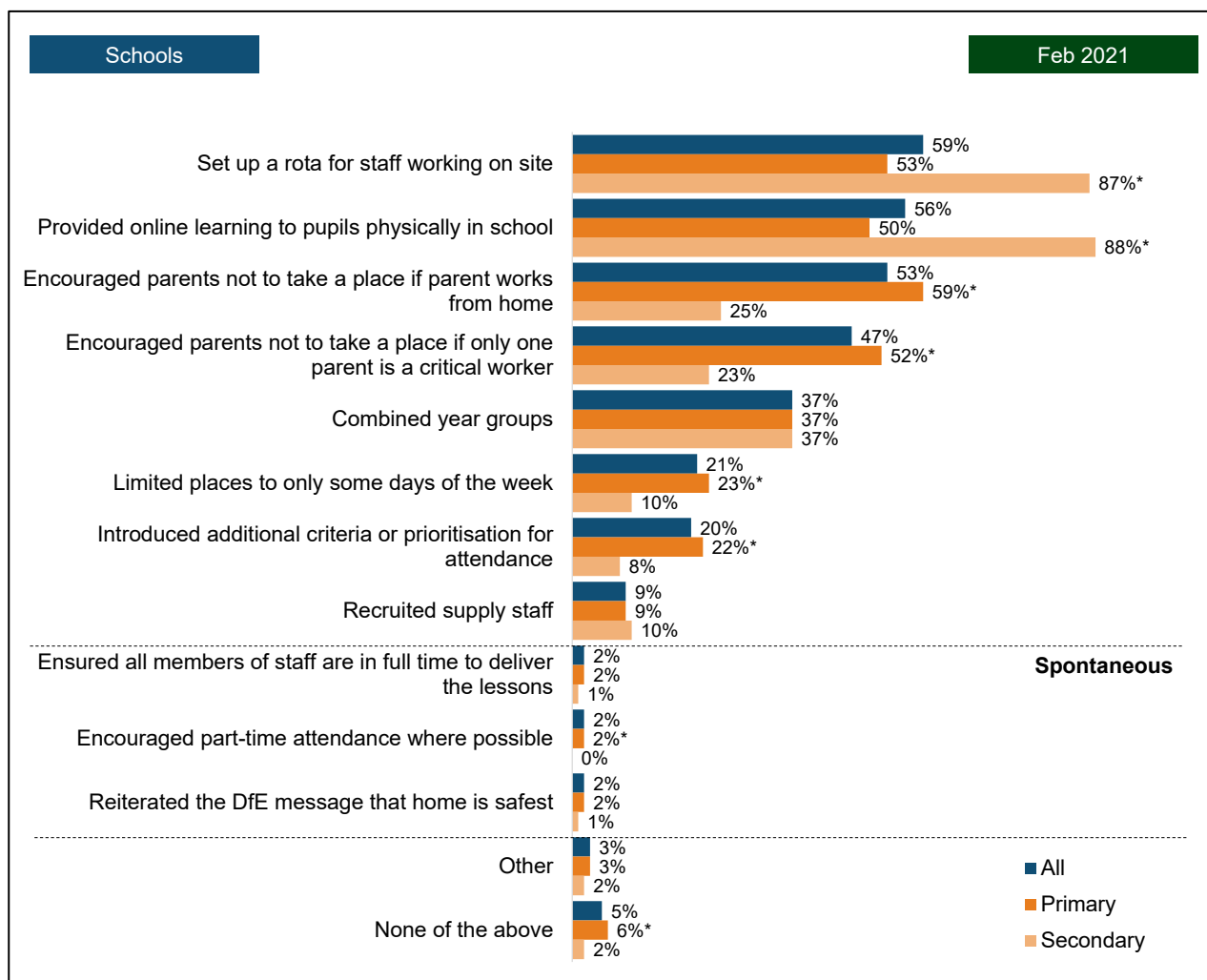
Schools reported a wide range of actions they had taken to accommodate the demand for places at school. Schools had most commonly:

- Set up a rota for staff working on site (59%);
- Provided online learning to pupils physically in school (56%); and
- Encouraged parents not to take a place for their child if one parent worked from home (53%).

Secondary schools were significantly more likely than primary schools to have set up a staff rota (87% vs. 53%) and to have provided online learning to pupils physically in school (88% vs. 50%). Reflecting the fact that they were more likely to have found accommodating demand challenging, primary schools were significantly more likely to have taken steps to accommodate demand for places by:

- Encouraging parents not to take a place if a parent worked from home (59% vs. 25% of secondary schools);
- Encouraging parents not to take a place if only one parent was a critical worker (52% vs. 23%);
- Limiting places to only some days of the week (23% vs. 10%);
- Introducing additional criteria or prioritisation for attendance (22% vs. 8%).

**Figure 21. Actions taken by schools to accommodate the demand for places during lockdown**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, February 2021 survey. G2: All schools (n=1,285); Primary (n=860); Secondary (n=425). \* Indicates a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary schools.

Schools with the lowest proportions of FSM pupils were significantly less likely to have encouraged parents not to take a place if one parent worked from home (43% vs. 57% of schools with the highest proportion).





# Annex 1

## A short survey of primary leaders

This annex presents the findings of a short preliminary survey that took place between 22 and 24 January 2021 to understand specific issues around wraparound provision in schools and how this changed between autumn term 20/21 and following the new restrictions to school attendance introduced in January 2021. This survey was run with the primary leader group only. A total of 453 primary school leaders completed the survey.

### Wraparound offer in schools

Around three-quarters (77%) of primary schools were offering daily supervised wraparound childcare in the autumn term of 20/21.

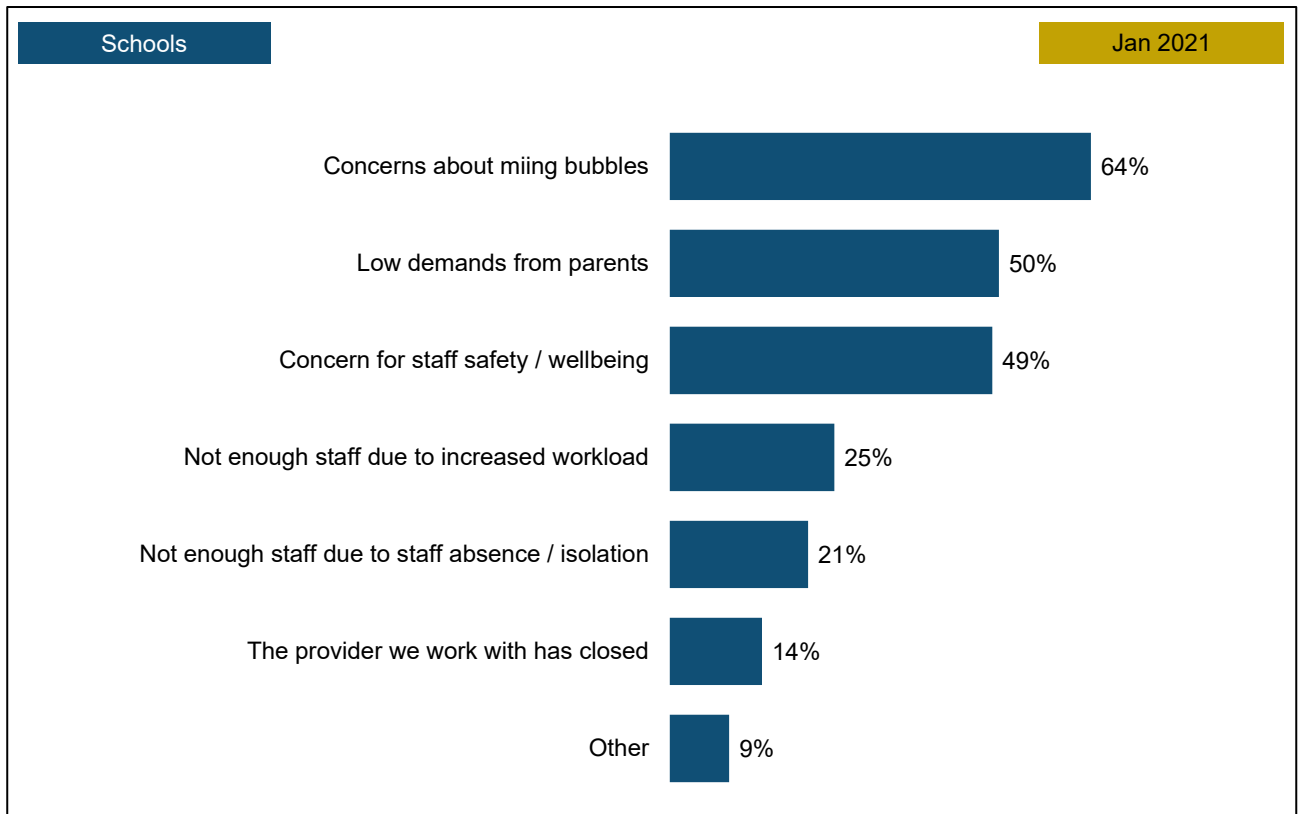
Since the new restrictions were introduced in January, just under half (46%) of primary schools were offering daily supervised wraparound childcare. Of the 210 schools surveyed who were offering wraparound care in January, 72% offer both before and after school provision, 24% before school only and 4% after school only.

The leaders of schools who offered wraparound childcare were asked about how the provision they offer is managed, 77% provide it through school staff on the school site, 21% by a private organisation on the school site and 2% use a private organisation on a different site. The base size is low, but the South Eastern region is statistically significantly more likely to be run by private providers in comparison to the national figure (although the majority is provided by schools themselves).

### The reasons schools stopped offering wraparound provision

The leaders of 142 schools offered wraparound provision in the autumn term but were not offering it following the introduction of new restrictions in January 2021. These leaders were asked their reasons for withdrawing the offer. The most common reasons were concerns about mixing bubbles (64%), low demand from parents (50%) and concern for staff safety/wellbeing (49%).

**Figure 22. Reasons for no longer offering wraparound care**

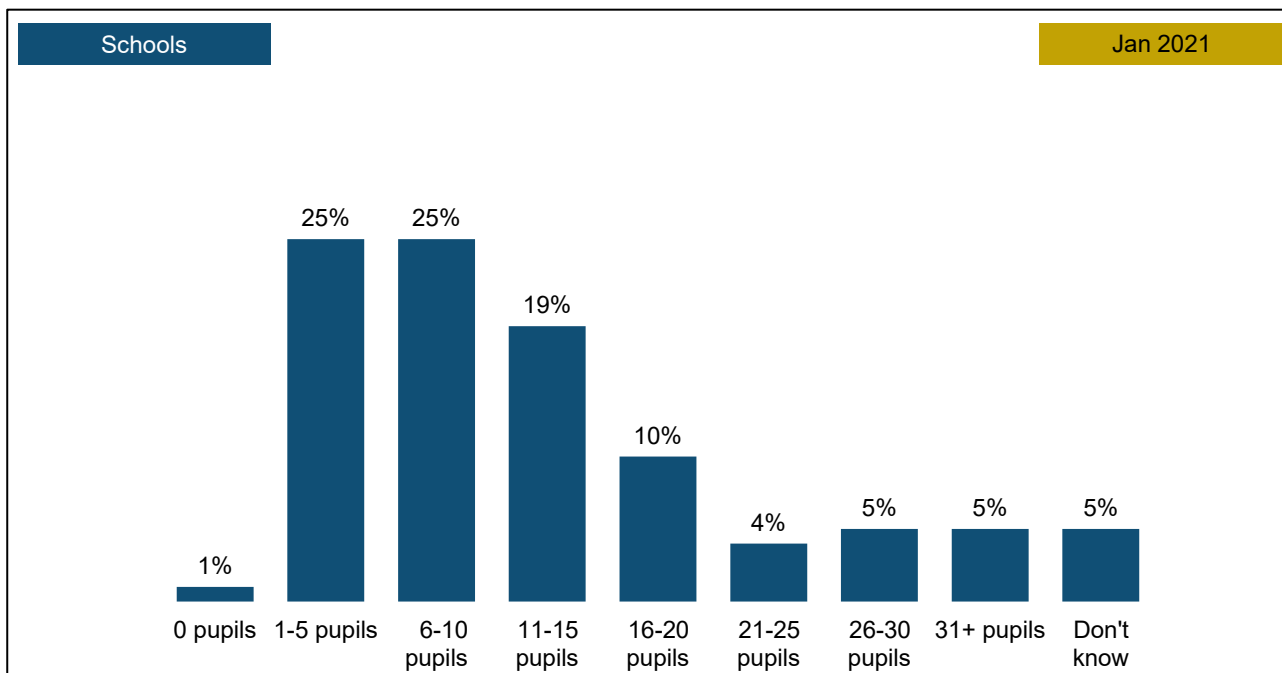


Source: School Snapshot Panel, Primary Leader January 2021 survey. A8: Primary schools that had stopped offering wraparound childcare (n=142).

## The number of children attending wraparound provision

The leaders of schools offering wraparound provision were asked about the number of pupils attending and the balance between vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Half of the schools offering wraparound care have ten or fewer children attending on a typical day.

**Figure 23. The number of children attending on a typical day**



Source: School Snapshot Panel, Primary Leader January 2021 survey. A6a: Primary schools offering wraparound provision since the introduction of the January restrictions (n=210).

Across the schools who completed the survey the mean average of children attending on a typical day was 14. Some leaders did not know the balance between vulnerable children and children of critical workers, but among those who did the mean averages were roughly 3 vulnerable children and 13 children of critical workers.

## **Capacity for offering more provision**

The 210 school leaders offering wraparound provision in January were asked whether they had capacity to cater for more vulnerable children and children of critical workers at their provision; 57% reporting that they had capacity while 43% that they did not.

## **Half-term holiday provision**

Only 6% of school leaders were intending to open or hire out their premises for holiday childcare provision for vulnerable children or children of key workers during half-term. 27% were not sure and 67% said they were not intending on doing so.



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