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Research and analysis

Parent, pupil and learner voice: September 2024

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Applies to England

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Verian (formerly known as Kantar Public) to recruit and maintain a panel of Parents, Pupils and Learners in England, known as the Parent, Pupil and Learner Voice (PPLV). The PPLV is designed to collect robust evidence to help the Department for Education understand the perspectives of parents, carers, pupils and learners. This allows us to make more effective policy.

The PPLV works as a series of short surveys across the academic year, covering a range of new and longstanding policy issues. This report is about the findings

from the September 2024 survey wave of the PPLV.

Methodology

The PPLV survey is answered by secondary school pupils (years 7 to 13), learners in further education (years 12 and 13) and parents of primary, secondary and [special school](#) pupils (years 1 to 11) who have agreed to participate in short, regular research surveys on topical education issues. We select parents and pupils randomly using records from the [National Pupil Database \(NPD\)](#) and invite them to take part in an online survey. For the first survey of the academic year, we send invitation letters to households. For other surveys in that same academic year, we send the invitation by email and text message to the parents and pupils who agreed to join the panel in the first survey.

Mid-way through the academic year, we randomly select pupils and learners in years 12 and 13 and invite them to join the panel in the same way. We select learners (those studying in a college setting) from the [Individualised Learner Record \(ILR\)](#) and we select pupils (those studying in a school setting) from the NPD.

We ran a survey between 30 September and 28 October. The respondents were:

Audience	Responses
Primary school parents	1366
Secondary school parents	1979
Special school parents	822
Secondary pupils	3402

Questions with fewer than 30 responses (before weighting) are not included in this report. Complete findings can be found in the published data tables, which include more detail on how different groups answered each question.

The report makes some comparisons to previous surveys conducted in previous academic years, for example the [Parent, pupil and learner panel omnibus surveys for 2022 to 2023](#). These comparisons are helpful to understand how trends may be changing. However, the survey methodology changes over time and so comparisons to previous years are not as reliable as survey findings within each academic year. We introduced parents of pupils attending special schools in the 2023 to 2024 academic year, so any comparisons from previous academic years do not include these audiences.

In this report we round figures to the nearest whole number. We do not describe

0% and 100% as ‘none’ and ‘all’ because figure rounding may mean this is not accurate. For instance, 100% may be 99.6% of respondents, rounded to the nearest whole number. Unless otherwise stated, when we refer to the ‘average’ we are reporting the arithmetic mean.

Further information on the survey methodology is available in the accompanying [technical report](#).

Topics covered in this survey

The survey included questions about:

- attendance at school
- perceptions of fairness in society
- school uniform policies and costs
- home to school transport
- confidence in the [SEND](#) system
- wellbeing support
- mental health and wellbeing

Attendance at school

We asked pupils and parents how often they or their child had attended school in the past 2 weeks of term time.

Figure 1: How often pupils have attended school in the past 2 weeks of term, as reported by pupils or by their parents

Audience	Every weekday	Most weekdays	Some weekdays	Not at all	Total
Pupils	83%	14%	2%	1%	100%
Parents	89%	9%	2%	1%	100%

Base: All pupils (n = 3402) and parents (n = 4167). Data table reference = “attendance_pupils”.

The percentage of pupils reporting that they had attended school everyday or most

days over the previous 2 weeks was similar to when we have asked previously in March 2024 (95%) and December 2023 (95%). The percentage of parents reporting that their child had attended school every day or most days over the previous 2 weeks was also similar to when we asked this question previously in March 2024 (97%) and December 2023 (97%).

Illness was the most common reason given by both parents (68%) and pupils (70%) for not having attended school everyday in the past 2 weeks of term time. The second most common reason given was anxiety or mental health problems by both parents (26%) and pupils (23%).

We asked parents and pupils who said that they or their child had not attended school due to anxiety or mental health problems which factors had contributed to this.

Parents most commonly said:

- worries about lessons and learning (55%)
- general worries not about anything in particular (52%)
- worries about getting on with teachers (44%)

Pupils most commonly said:

- worries about lessons and learning (48%)
- general worries not about anything in particular (39%)
- worries about other pupils behaviour (39%)

Perceptions of fairness in society

We asked pupils a series of questions relating to their perception of fairness in society. Pupils were given a statement and had to respond with the extent they agreed or disagreed with it.

Figure 2: Pupils perceptions of fairness in society

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total
Everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent	32%	46%	12%	7%	2%	1%	100%

and hard
work can
take them

A person's background influences their outcomes in life	13%	34%	25%	18%	7%	2%	100%
When I am older, I will have a better life than my parents have now	13%	24%	44%	5%	1%	14%	100%

Base: All pupils (n = 3402). Data table reference = “lifestyle_fairchance”, “lifestyle_background”, “lifestyle_parents”.

School uniform policies and costs

We asked parents if, during the last 12 months, their child’s school had notified them that it had revised or is revising its school uniform policy. A minority of primary (16%), secondary (31%) and special school (13%) parents said that they had been notified that their child’s school had revised its school uniform policy. In addition, 3% of primary, 4% of secondary and 1% of special school parents said they had been notified that their child’s school is in the process of revising its school uniform policy.

Among parents whose child’s school had updated its school uniform policy in the past year, we asked what changes had been made.

Figure 3: What changes have been made to school uniform policy in the past year

Response	Primary	Secondary	Special
Reduced the number of compulsory uniform items with specific branding (e.g. school logos)	33%	24%	19%
The school now allows more uniform items to	32%	14%	22%

be purchased from cheaper outlets (e.g. supermarkets)

The school now offers a second-hand uniform scheme	23%	23%	13%
Increased the number of compulsory uniform items with specific branding (e.g. school logos)	9%	21%	10%
Reduced the number of items that can only be purchased from the school's suppliers	13%	13%	7%
Increased the number of items that can only be purchased from the school's suppliers	4%	11%	4%
The school now promotes another organisation's second-hand scheme	5%	4%	0%
Other	28%	24%	20%
Don't know	11%	15%	29%

Base: Parents who said that their child’s school had updated its school uniform policy in the last 12 months (n = 1103). Data table reference = “schooluniform_policychanges”.

Finally, we also asked parents how worried they were about being able to afford school uniform and school sports or PE kit for this academic year.

Figure 4: Parents’ degree of worry about affording school uniform, sports or PE kit this academic year

Phase	Very worried	Quite worried	Not very worried	Not at all worried	Prefer not to say	Not applicable	Total
Primary	6%	22%	40%	30%	1%	1%	100%
Secondary	11%	27%	36%	23%	2%	1%	100%
Special	7%	21%	39%	28%	2%	4%	100%

Base: All parents (n = 4097). Data table reference = “schooluniform_worry”.

Home to school transport

We asked parents what the main way their child usually travels to school is.

Figure 5: Main ways children usually travel to school according to parents

Response	Primary	Secondary	Special
Walk/cycle/scoot	55%	45%	4%
Free transport provided by Transport for London (Only asked to Parents based in London)	1%	5%	1%
Free transport, pass or allowance paid for by the council / local authority	1%	8%	71%
Car, e.g. someone drives them to school	40%	25%	19%
Taxi paid for by parent/guardian	1%	0%	0%

Base: All parents (n = 4167). Data table reference = “schooltransport_means”. Other, Not applicable and Don’t know options are not charted.

We also asked parents to what extent they agreed or disagreed that access to transport was a barrier that prevented their child attending their preferred choice of school. Access to transport was defined in the survey as how individuals reach and use transportation services, considering factors like affordability, geographical closeness and physical accessibility

Figure 6: Whether parents agree or disagree that access to transport is a barrier that prevented their child attending their preferred school choice

Phase	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Primary	2%	3%	16%	24%	55%	100%
Secondary	2%	8%	21%	27%	42%	100%
Special	4%	7%	25%	31%	33%	100%

Base: All parents (n = 4167). Data table reference = “schooltransport_barrier”.

In addition, a large majority of primary (86%) secondary (86%) and special school

(88%) parents said they have access to the school transport they need for getting to and from school.

For parents who said their child did not have access to the transport they need, we asked why this was.

Figure 7: Reasons why children do not have access to the transport they need to get to and from school

Response	Primary	Secondary	Special
They can't reasonably walk/cycle/scoot to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem	9%	13%	60%
They attend a school that is too far for them to walk/cycle/scoot	33%	39%	38%
They attend a school where the route isn't safe for them to walk/cycle/scoot	16%	20%	21%
I (or other parent) am unable to transport them to and from school	5%	14%	12%
Other reason	22%	22%	15%
Don't know	36%	14%	6%

Base: Parents who said that their child does not have access to the transport they need to get to and from school (n = 385). Data table reference = "schooltransport_whynoaccess".

We also asked parents how frequently in the past 12 months have transport problems affected their child's ability to get to school (that is, their child was very late or unable to attend that day). The majority of parents (73%) said that transport problems had never affected their child's ability to get to school. Of those parents who reported any such problems, the regularity varied but was mostly once or twice a year.

Figure 8: Frequency of transport problems affecting children ability to get to school, among parents who reported any such problems in the last year

Phase	At least every week	At least every month	At least termly	Once or twice a year	Total
Primary	8%	13%	16%	62%	100%
Secondary	14%	19%	16%	52%	100%

Special	9%	14%	19%	59%	100%
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Base: Parents who said their child had experienced transport problems in the last year (n = 1485). Data table reference = “schooltransport_problemoften”.

Confidence in the SEND system

We asked parents of pupils with SEND how confident they are that their child’s school is able to support their child’s special educational needs or disability.

Figure 9: Parent confidence in school support for their child’s special educational need or disability

Audience	Very confident	Fairly confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Total
Parents	22%	40%	18%	13%	100%

Base: Parents of children with SEND (n = 2102). “Don’t know” and “Prefer not to say” not charted. Data table reference = “sendsystem_confident”.

These results are similar to when we asked the same question in February 2024, when 56% of parents of children with SEND said they were very or fairly confident that their child’s school is able to support their child’s needs or disabilities, and 35% said they were not very or not at all confident.

For parents who were not very or not at all confident that their child’s school is able to support their special educational needs or disabilities, we asked what, if anything, would increase their confidence.

Figure 10: Factors that could increase parental confidence in their schools ability to support their child’s special educational need or disability

Response	Percentage
Additional SEND training for teachers and school staff	61%
Access to support from specialists	54%
In classroom and/or out of classroom support from teaching assistants	49%

Additional communication from the school about your child’s needs	29%
A greater focus on pupil wellbeing and culture of inclusion	22%
Changes to whole school policies/approaches to behaviour management	22%
Physical changes to the school environment	8%
Additional resources for physical disabilities	6%
Other	3%
None of the above	2%
Don’t know	4%
Prefer not to say	1%

Base: Parents of children with SEND who were not at all or not very confident that their child’s school is able to support their child’s special educational needs or disabilities (n = 1321). Data table reference = “sendsystem_increaseconfidence”.

For parents of pupils in special schools specifically, we asked what, if anything, mainstream schools could do to improve their provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities.

Figure 11: Parents’ views on how mainstream schools could improve provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities

Response	Percentage
Additional SEND training for teachers and school staff	72%
Access to support from specialists	57%
In classroom and/or out of classroom support from teaching assistants	40%
Changes to whole school policies/approaches to behaviour management	26%
A greater focus on pupil wellbeing and culture of inclusion	21%
Additional communication from the school about a child’s needs	15%
Physical changes to the school environment	13%

Additional resources for physical disabilities	12%
Don't know	6%
None of the above	3%
Other	2%

Base: Parents of children in special schools (n = 822). “Prefer not to say” not charted. Data table reference = “sendsystem_improvement”.

Wellbeing support

About half of parents (52%), and the majority of pupils (80%), were aware of mental health and wellbeing support available through their or their child’s school or college.

A higher proportion of parents said they were aware of mental health and wellbeing support available than when we last asked parents this question in June 2023 (49%) and in February 2022 (42%). A higher proportion of pupils also said they were aware of this support than when we last asked pupils in June 2023 (77%) and November 2022 (73%).

We asked parents aware of mental health and wellbeing support at their child’s school to what extent the support is helpful.

Figure 12: Whether parents agree or disagree that the mental health and wellbeing support provided by their child’s school is helpful

Phase	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Primary	38%	45%	12%	2%	1%	3%	100%
Secondary	25%	51%	14%	4%	2%	4%	100%
Special	59%	34%	4%	2%	1%	1%	100%

Base: Parents who said they were aware of any mental health and wellbeing support at their child’s school (n = 2198). Data table reference =

“wellbeingsupport_support”.

Among those aware of the mental health and wellbeing support available at the school, 31% of parents and 29% of pupils said they or their child had made use of this type of support. When last asked, in June 2023, more parents (35%) and pupils (32%) said they had made use of mental health and wellbeing support available.

We asked pupils to what extent the support provided was helpful or, if they had not used it, to what extent the support would be helpful.

Figure 13: Whether pupils agree or disagree that the mental health and wellbeing support provided by their school was or would be helpful

Audience	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Pupils had used the support	18%	44%	23%	8%	3%	4%	100%
Pupils who had not used the support	17%	45%	23%	7%	1%	7%	100%

Base: Pupils who said they had used the mental health and wellbeing support provided by their school (n = 1045). Pupils who said they had not used the mental health and wellbeing support provided by their school (n = 1410). Data table reference = “wellbeingsupport_mh_helpfulused”, “wellbeingsupport_mh_helpfulnotused”.

We also asked parents whether there are staff in their child’s school that their child would feel confident talking to about their child’s mental health.

Figure 14: Whether parents agree or disagree that there are staff in their child’s school that their child can go to talk about their mental health

Phase	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Primary	40%	42%	10%	3%	2%	3%	100%

Secondary	23%	39%	19%	8%	3%	8%	100%
Special	47%	37%	9%	3%	1%	2%	100%

Base: All parents (n = 4167). Data table reference = “wellbeingsupport_staff”.

We asked pupils how comfortable, if at all, they would feel speaking to adults in their school or college about their mental health.

Figure 15: How comfortable students feel speaking to adults in their school or college about their mental health

Audience	Very comfortable	Fairly comfortable	Not very comfortable	Not at all comfortable	Don't know	Total
Pupils	11%	46%	27%	11%	4%	100%

Base: All Pupils (n = 3402). Data table reference = “wellbeingsupport_comfortable”.

We asked pupils to what extent they agreed or disagreed that they knew enough about how to look after their own mental health, and the extent they agree or disagree that their school or college teaches them how to look after their mental health.

Figure 16: Extent pupils agree or disagree that they know enough, and are taught how, to look after their mental health

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
I know enough to look after my own mental health	22%	48%	18%	7%	1%	4%	100%
My school or college teaches me how	20%	46%	18%	9%	4%	3%	100%

to look
after my
mental
health

Base: All Pupils (n = 3402). Data table reference = “wellbeingsupport_mh_know”, “wellbeingsupport_mh_teach”.

We also asked pupils what extent they agreed or disagreed that teachers and staff at their school or college have time to help pupils with their mental health.

Figure 17: Extent to which pupils agree or disagree that teachers and staff at their school or college have time to help pupils with their mental health

Audience	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Pupils	15%	42%	21%	11%	4%	7%	100%

Base: All Pupils (n = 3402). Data table reference = “wellbeingsupport_mh_time”.

Finally, we asked parents about their confidence in looking after their child’s mental health.

Figure 18: Extent to which parents agree or disagree that they are confident in looking after their child’s mental health

Audience	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Parents	42%	43%	10%	4%	0%	1%	100%

Base: All parents (n = 4167). Data table reference = “wellbeingsupport_confident”.

Mental health and wellbeing

We asked pupils a series of questions about personal wellbeing validated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). These questions are known as the [‘ONS4’ personal wellbeing measures](#) and are answered using a scale from 0 to 10. For happiness, life satisfaction, and sense of things you do in life being worthwhile, a higher score is indicative of better personal wellbeing. For anxiety, a lower score is indicative of better personal wellbeing.

In the September 2024 survey, average scores for pupils for each personal wellbeing measure were:

Wellbeing measure	Average score
Happiness	7.1
Life satisfaction	7.3
Worthwhile	7.4
Anxiety	3.2

Base: All pupils (n = 3402). Data table references = “wellbeing_anxious”; “wellbeing_happy”; “wellbeing_worthwhile”; “wellbeing_satisfied”.

Across previous academic years, the average scores for pupils’ wellbeing measures were:

Wave	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Worthwhile	Anxiety
2024-09	7.1	7.3	7.4	3.2
2024-05	6.5	6.8	6.9	4.3
2024-03	6.4	6.5	6.6	4.4
2023-12	7.0	7.1	7.2	3.3
2023-03	6.4	6.4	6.5	3.9
2023-02	6.3	5.9	6.2	4.3
2022-11	6.6	6.9	6.9	4.0
2022-09	7.0	7.2	7.3	3.5

Base: All pupils (n = 3402).Bases refer to most recent data: see previous

reports for base sizes at each data point. Data table references = “wellbeing_anxious”; “wellbeing_happy”; “wellbeing_worthwhile”; “wellbeing_satisfied”.

In the September 2024 survey, average scores for parents’ views on their child’s personal wellbeing were:

Wellbeing measure	Average score
Happiness	8.2
Anxiety	2.5

Base: All parents (n = 4167). Data table references = “wellbeing_anxious”, “wellbeing_happy”.

Across previous academic years, the average scores for parents’ views on their child’s personal wellbeing were:

Wave	Happiness	Anxiety
2024-09	8.2	2.5
2024-05	7.9	2.8
2024-03	7.9	2.7
2023-12	8.2	2.4
2022-09	8.6	2.2

Base: All parents (n = 4167). Bases refer to most recent data: see previous reports for base sizes at each data point.Data table references = “wellbeing_anxious”, “wellbeing_happy”.

We also asked pupils how often they felt lonely.

Figure 19: How often pupils feel lonely

Audience	Hardly ever or never	Some of the time	Often	Prefer not to say	Total
Pupils	45%	39%	12%	3%	100%

Base: All Pupils (n = 3402). Data table reference = “wellbeing_lonely”.

The percentage of pupils who said they often felt lonely was lower when we last asked this question on May 2024 (15%) and March 2024 (19%), but similar to when we asked in December 2023 (13%).

Glossary of terms

Individualised Learner Record (ILR): The primary data collection about further education and work-based learning in England. It is requested from learning providers in England’s further education system.

National Pupil Database (NPD): A register data set of all pupils in state schools in England, compiled by the Department for Education. It contains attainment data as children progress through school, as well as information on pupil background, absences and exclusions from school.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age
- 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.

Some children and young people who have SEND may also have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision, they will also be covered by the SEND definition.

Special schools: Schools which provide an education for children with a special educational need or disability. Almost all pupils in special schools have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), which are plans for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support. EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.

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