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Research and analysis

# School and college voice: January 2026

Updated 28 May 2026

## Applies to England

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# Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Verian to recruit and maintain a panel of school and college leaders and teachers in England, known as the school and college voice (SCV). The SCV is designed to collect robust evidence to help DfE understand the perspectives of teachers and leaders. This allows the department to make more effective policy.

The SCV 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 January 2026 survey wave of the SCV.

# Methodology

The SCV survey is answered by teachers and leaders who have agreed to participate in short, regular research surveys on topical education issues.

We select teachers and leaders randomly using records from the School Workforce Census (SWFC) and invite them to take part in an online survey. For the first survey of the academic year, we send invitation letters and emails to teachers and leaders. For other surveys in that same academic year, we send the invitation by email and text message to the teachers and leaders who agreed to join the panel in the first survey.

We ran the January 2026 survey between 22 January and 16 February 2026. The respondents were:

| Audience                  | Responses |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Primary school leaders    | 894       |
| Secondary school leaders  | 1044      |
| Special school leaders    | 201       |
| Primary school teachers   | 670       |
| Secondary school teachers | 678       |

Questions with fewer than 30 responses (before weighting) are not included in this report, and base sizes of below 100 should be treated with caution. 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 [school and college panel omnibus surveys for 2024 to 2025](#). These comparisons are helpful to understand how trends may be changing. However, the survey methodology changes over time so comparisons to previous years are not as reliable as survey findings within each academic year.

In this report, we round figures to the nearest whole number.

We use consistent terminology to describe percentages that fall within specific bands, as follows:

- very few – 0% to 10%
- a small minority – 11% to 32%
- a minority – 33% to 47%
- about half – 48% to 52%
- the majority – 53% to 66%
- a large majority – 67% to 89%
- almost all – 90% to 100%

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. Non-response categories such as ‘don’t know’ and ‘prefer not to say’ are not typically presented in our tabulations and charts when their value rounds to zero.

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

# Topics covered in this survey

The survey included questions about:

- flexible working in schools
- partnerships between early years (EY) providers and schools
- resources to support disadvantaged pupils
- supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- access to specialist SEND support
- measuring outcomes in dedicated SEND spaces
- expansion of free school meals
- pupil premium strategy
- knife crime as a safeguarding issue

## Flexible working in schools

We asked teachers and leaders if their school had a flexible working policy that applies to teachers. Flexible working was defined as arrangements which allow employees to vary the amount, timing, or location of their work.

A minority of teachers (33%) and the majority of leaders (56%) said the school had a flexible working policy that applies to teachers. Among teachers, the proportion who said that their school had a flexible working policy that applied to teachers was higher in January 2026 (33%) than in November 2024 (19%).

We also asked teachers if, before taking the survey, they were aware that they had a statutory right to request flexible working. Awareness of the right to request flexible working was higher in January 2026 (44%) than when this question was previously asked in November 2024 (38%).

We then asked teachers whether they currently had any flexible working arrangements. Teachers were shown a list of forms of flexible working and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 1: forms of flexible working teachers said they use**

| Response                                                                              | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Part-time                                                                             | 27%        |
| Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time offsite                               | 23%        |
| Occasional ad hoc requests for time off or changes to hours at manager’s discretion   | 17%        |
| Job share                                                                             | 10%        |
| Annualised hours - working hours spread across the year                               | 4%         |
| Home or remote working (formally agreed as part of directed time or timetabled hours) | 3%         |
| Compressed hours - working agreed hours but over fewer days                           | 1%         |
| Other                                                                                 | 1%         |
| None of these                                                                         | 44%        |
| Don’t know                                                                            | 2%         |

**Base:** All teachers (n = 1880). Data table reference = “flexibleworking\_currentlywork”.

Use of each of these types of flexible working remained broadly stable among teachers between November 2024 and January 2026. However, the proportion of teachers who said that they used none of these types of flexible working was lower in January 2026 (44%) than in November 2024 (51%).

We asked teachers which of the following types of flexible working arrangement they would be interested in requesting if their school could make it available to them.

Again, teachers were shown a list of flexible working arrangements and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 2: types of flexible working arrangements teachers would be interested in, if they were available**

| Response                                                                              | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time offsite                               | 66%        |
| Home or remote working (formally agreed as part of directed time or timetabled hours) | 51%        |
| Occasional ad hoc requests for time off or changes to hours at manager’s discretion   | 50%        |
| Compressed hours - working agreed hours but over fewer days                           | 32%        |
| Part-time                                                                             | 21%        |
| Job share                                                                             | 8%         |
| Annualised hours - working hours spread across the year                               | 7%         |
| Other                                                                                 | 2%         |
| None of these                                                                         | 5%         |
| Don’t know                                                                            | 4%         |

**Base:** All teachers (n = 1880). Data table reference = “flexibleworking\_interested”.

The proportion of teachers who said that they were interested in requesting compressed hours, whereby they still work the agreed hours but do so over fewer days, was lower in January 2026 (32%) than in November 2024 (37%). The proportion of teachers interested in requesting other forms of flexible working remained broadly stable over the same period.

We also asked teachers whether they had made any requests for flexible working in the last academic year. Teachers were asked to consider any requests for flexible working arrangements they had made, from a short-term or ad hoc request for time off through to a request for a permanent change to working hours.

A large majority of teachers had not made any requests for flexible working in the last academic year (72%), a small minority had made requests that were accepted (24%) and very few had made requests that were declined (4%).

The proportion of teachers who had made a request for flexible working (regardless of whether it was accepted or declined) was higher in January 2026 (28%) than in November 2024 (22%).

We then asked teachers who had not made any requests for flexible working in the last academic year why that was. They were shown a list of reasons and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 3: why teachers had not made any requests for flexible working in the last academic year**

| Response                                                           | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| I was not aware of my statutory right to request flexible working  | 42%        |
| Flexible working is not compatible with my current role            | 30%        |
| I don't feel confident to request flexible working                 | 28%        |
| I am not interested in working flexibly at this time               | 23%        |
| My school or trust does not support flexible working requests      | 14%        |
| Working flexibly would affect my career progression                | 11%        |
| I would like to make a flexible working request but don't know how | 7%         |
| Previous requests have been declined                               | 2%         |
| Other                                                              | 10%        |



**Base:** Teachers who said they had not made any flexible working requests in the last academic year (n = 1348). Data table reference = “flexibleworking\_reason”.

Among teachers who had not requested flexible working in the current academic year, the proportion who said that this was because they were not interested in working flexibly at this time was higher in January 2026 (23%) than in November 2024 (18%). Other reasons for not requesting flexible working remained broadly stable over the same period.

We asked leaders what types of flexible working were used by any teachers or leaders in their school. They were shown a list of flexible working arrangements and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 4: types of flexible working that leaders said were used by teachers or leaders in the school**

| Response                                                                              | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Part-time                                                                             | 88%        |
| Occasional ad hoc requests for time off or changes to hours at manager’s discretion   | 72%        |
| Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time offsite                               | 50%        |
| Job share                                                                             | 49%        |
| Home or remote working (formally agreed as part of directed time or timetabled hours) | 25%        |
| Compressed hours - working agreed hours but over fewer days                           | 10%        |
| Annualised hours - working hours spread across the year                               | 9%         |
| Other                                                                                 | 5%         |

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| None of these | 3% |
| Don't know    | 1% |

**Base:** All leaders (n = 2139). Data table reference = “flexibleworking\_staffwork”.

The proportion of leaders who said that teachers or leaders in their school used occasional ad hoc requests for time off or changes to their hours was higher in January 2026 (72%) than in November 2024 (64%). The proportion who said that offsite Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time was used was also higher in January 2026 (50%) than in November 2024 (44%). The proportion of leaders who said that home or remote working was used was also higher in January 2026 (25%) than in November 2024 (20%). Use of other types of flexible working remained broadly stable.

We asked leaders who had responsibility for reviewing or approving flexible working decisions which factors were most important when considering whether or not to allow teachers and leaders to work flexibly. They were shown a list of potential factors and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 5: factors leaders considered most important when making a decision on whether to allow teachers or leaders to work flexibly**

| Response                                                                         | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Effects on the pupils                                                            | 83%        |
| Teaching workforce capacity (including recruitment and retention considerations) | 49%        |
| Financial costs or school budget considerations                                  | 47%        |
| Staff wellbeing and productivity                                                 | 43%        |
| Timetabling and other scheduling considerations                                  | 33%        |

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Impact on wider team and other staff | 27% |
| Perceptions of fairness of process   | 9%  |
| Promoting an inclusive workplace     | 6%  |

**Base:** Leaders who said they have responsibility for reviewing or approving flexible working decisions (n = 1062). Data table reference = “flexibleworking\_considerations”.

Among those leaders who had responsibility for reviewing or approving decisions, the proportion who said the effects of flexible working on pupils was an important consideration was higher in January 2026 (83%) than in November 2024 (76%). The proportion who said the effects of flexible working on staff wellbeing and productivity was an important consideration was also higher in January 2026 (43%) than in November 2024 (33%).

The proportion of leaders who said the impact of flexible working on the wider team was an important consideration was lower in January 2026 (27%) than in November 2024 (33%). The proportion who said that perceptions of fairness of process was an important consideration was also lower in January 2026 (9%) than in November 2024 (14%).

The data for the other factors remained broadly stable between November 2024 and January 2026.

## Partnerships between EY providers and schools

We asked primary school teachers who taught reception, year 1 or year 2 which activities their school carried out with local EY providers during the 2024 to 2025 academic year, to support the transition of pupils attending reception class. EY providers were defined as including private nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. Nursery classes on school sites were excluded. Teachers were shown a list of potential activities and asked to select all that the school had carried out.

**Figure 6: activities the school carried out with local EY providers during the 2024 to 2025 academic year, to support transition from reception**

| Response                                                                   | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Hosted information sessions for parents or families                        | 83%        |
| Shared information or resources about school readiness with parents        | 71%        |
| School staff visited children in EY settings to support pupil transition   | 65%        |
| Held formal transition meetings to discuss individual children             | 57%        |
| School staff visited children at home                                      | 52%        |
| Hosted visits for incoming pupils with their EY key workers                | 48%        |
| School staff visited EY settings to observe teaching and learning practice | 32%        |
| Staff met to align curriculum or pedagogy across the settings              | 25%        |
| EY staff visited the school to observe teaching and learning practice      | 10%        |
| Other                                                                      | 3%         |
| Don't know                                                                 | 9%         |

**Base:** Primary teachers who taught reception, year 1 or year 2 (n = 287). Data table reference = “eyp\_activities”.

We also asked primary school teachers who taught reception, and whose school had carried out activities with local EY providers to support the transition from reception, whether there was an activity that had not been carried out that would have been helpful for their current class. They were shown a list that included any of the activities their school had not carried out last year and asked to select those that would have been helpful. The base sizes were low (less than 100) for most of the

answer codes and, as such, the data from this question are not presented here. While the relevant data are included in the accompanying data tabulations, the data should be treated with caution.

We also asked primary school teachers who taught reception, year 1 or year 2, and whose school had carried out activities with local EY providers to support the transition from reception, what they thought were the main benefits, if any, for the transitioning of pupils into reception class. They were shown a list of potential benefits and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 7: the main benefits for the transitioning of pupils into reception class, as reported by teachers**

| Response                                                                                    | Primary |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Familiarising children with the school environment and staff to reduce anxiety              | 84%     |
| Aiding the transition for children with identified SEND or additional needs or disadvantage | 74%     |
| Establishing relationships between home and school                                          | 53%     |
| Building strong relationships between school and EY settings                                | 32%     |
| Gathering information about prior learning or development to inform planning                | 27%     |
| Aligning teaching and learning expectations between the settings                            | 4%      |
| Don't know                                                                                  | 4%      |
| I do not think there were any benefits                                                      | 1%      |

**Base:** Primary teachers who taught reception, year 1 or year 2 and whose school carried out activities with EY providers to support pupil transition into reception (n = 258). Data table reference = “eyp\_benefits”.

We asked primary school leaders what, if any, activities their school carried out with local EY providers during the 2024 to 2025 academic year. Again, private nurseries, pre-schools and childminders were included, while nursery classes on school sites were excluded. They were shown a list of potential activities and asked to select all that the school carried out.

**Figure 8: activities that the school carried out with local EY settings during the 2024 to 2025 academic year, as reported by leaders**

| Response                                                                                     | Primary |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Hosted visits for incoming pupils, for example ‘stay and play’, or with their EY key workers | 80%     |
| School staff visited children in their EY settings                                           | 80%     |
| Held formal transition meetings to discuss individual children                               | 79%     |
| Held family engagement and information sharing activities                                    | 61%     |
| School staff visited EY settings to observe teaching and learning practice                   | 42%     |
| Held or shared joint training or continuing professional development sessions for staff      | 27%     |
| Staff met to align curriculum or pedagogy across the settings                                | 26%     |
| EY staff visited the school to observe teaching and learning practice                        | 19%     |
| Have a formal partnership agreement or network                                               | 12%     |
| Other                                                                                        | 5%      |
| Don’t know                                                                                   | 1%      |
| We did not collaborate with local EY settings                                                | 7%      |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 894). Data table reference = “eyp\_collaborate”.

We also asked primary school leaders what, if any, additional resources would help their school to undertake more transition or school readiness activities. They were shown a list of potential resources and asked to select all that would help.

## Figure 9: additional resources that would help the school undertake more transition or school readiness activities, as reported by leaders

| Response                                                                       | Primary |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Staffing support, for example someone to cover the class                       | 72%     |
| Input from outside agencies around SEND, vulnerable and disadvantaged children | 60%     |
| More engagement from parents                                                   | 47%     |
| More time specifically dedicated to transition activities                      | 47%     |
| More engagement from the EY setting                                            | 26%     |
| More continuing professional development and school specific training          | 20%     |
| Clearer guidance or expectations                                               | 19%     |
| Other                                                                          | 4%      |
| Don't know                                                                     | 1%      |
| No additional resource required.                                               | 6%      |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 894). Data table reference = "eyp\_resources".

# Specific resources to support disadvantaged pupils

Some pupils may experience barriers to learning because of their family’s financial situation, such as coming to school hungry, struggling to afford school uniform, trips or extracurricular activities. We asked teachers how confident they were in their ability to support these pupils to achieve and thrive at school.

Almost all primary school teachers (91%), a large majority of secondary school teachers (84%) and almost all special school teachers (97%) were very confident or fairly confident in their ability to support pupils experiencing barriers to learning because of their family’s financial situation.

**Figure 10: teachers’ confidence in their ability to support pupils facing financial barriers to learning**

| Phase     | Very confident | Fairly confident | Not very confident | Not at all confident | Don’t know | Total |
|-----------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|-------|
| Primary   | 30%            | 61%              | 7%                 | 1%                   | 1%         | 100%  |
| Secondary | 20%            | 64%              | 14%                | 1%                   | 1%         | 100%  |
| Special   | 50%            | 47%              | 3%                 | 0%                   | 0%         | 100%  |

**Base:** All primary teachers (n = 670), secondary teachers (n = 678) and special school teachers (n = 532). Data table reference = “disadvantaged\_confidence”.

We also asked school leaders how confident they were in their school’s ability to support pupils who faced barriers to learning because of their family’s financial situation.

Almost all primary school leaders (96%), secondary leaders (92%) and special school leaders (100%) were very confident or fairly confident in the school’s ability to

support pupils experiencing barriers to learning because of their family’s financial situation.

**Figure 11: leaders’ confidence in their school’s ability to support pupils facing financial barriers to learning**

| Phase     | Very confident | Fairly confident | Not very confident | Not at all confident | Total |
|-----------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Primary   | 50%            | 46%              | 3%                 | 0%                   | 100%  |
| Secondary | 37%            | 55%              | 7%                 | 0%                   | 100%  |
| Special   | 72%            | 28%              | 0%                 | 0%                   | 100%  |

**Base:** All primary leaders (n = 894), secondary leaders (n = 1044) and special school leaders (n = 201). Data table reference = “disadvantaged\_confidence”.

We also asked teachers what, if anything, would improve their confidence to support pupils who faced barriers to learning because of their family’s financial situation. They were shown a list of potential options and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 12: what, if anything, would improve teachers’ confidence to support pupils facing financial barriers to learning**

| Response                                                  | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| More external specialist support                          | 53%        |
| More internal specialist support                          | 43%        |
| Better knowledge about the specific needs of these pupils | 36%        |

|                                                                                  |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| More training on the most effective ways to support these pupils specifically    | 35% |
| Additional relevant advice or guidance from central government                   | 21% |
| More support from senior leaders in my school, multi-academy trust or federation | 20% |
| More support from teaching colleagues                                            | 4%  |
| Something else                                                                   | 13% |
| I do not need any support to improve my confidence                               | 7%  |
| Don't know                                                                       | 1%  |

**Base:** All teachers (n = 1880). Data table reference = "disadvantaged\_confidencebuild".

We also asked teachers what guidance or training, if any, they currently used to support pupils who faced barriers to learning because of their family's financial situation. They were shown a list of potential guidance or training and asked to select all that were used.

## Figure 13: guidance or training currently used by teachers to support pupils facing financial barriers to learning

| Response                                                                         | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Speaking to teaching colleagues                                                  | 69%        |
| Specific resources or training from my school, multi-academy trust or federation | 59%        |
| Information from the Education Endowment Foundation or other academic research   | 30%        |

|                                                         |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Specific resources or training from the local authority | 17% |
| Information from charities                              | 16% |
| Advice or guidance from central government              | 8%  |
| Other                                                   | 5%  |
| I do not use any specific guidance or training          | 8%  |
| Don't know                                              | 3%  |

**Base:** All teachers (n = 1880). Data table reference = “disadvantaged\_training”.

We asked teachers what factors, if any, were barriers to effectively supporting pupils who faced barriers to learning because of their family’s financial situation. They were shown a list of potential barriers and asked to select all that applied.

## Figure 14: barriers to teachers effectively supporting pupils facing financial barriers to learning

| Response                                                                                 | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Not enough available staff in the school                                                 | 72%        |
| I do not have enough time                                                                | 59%        |
| Insufficient access to specific support from the local authority or other local services | 40%        |
| Insufficient pastoral support in the school                                              | 36%        |
| I do not have the right knowledge or skills                                              | 17%        |
| Insufficient school specific continuing professional development and training            | 15%        |
| Other                                                                                    | 8%         |

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| No current barriers | 6% |
| Don't know          | 2% |

**Base:** All teachers (n = 1880). Data table reference = “disadvantaged\_supportbarriers”.

We also asked school leaders what barriers, if any, their school experienced in meeting the needs of pupils who faced barriers to learning because of their family's financial situation. They were shown a list of potential barriers and asked to select all that applied.

## Figure 15: barriers to schools meeting the needs of pupils facing financial barriers to learning, as reported by leaders

| Response                                                          | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Lack of funding                                                   | 86%        |
| Insufficient access to other specialist services or professionals | 67%        |
| Lack of capacity in the workforce                                 | 57%        |
| Lack of Local Authority support                                   | 45%        |
| Lack of pastoral or family support available through school       | 21%        |
| Lack of relevant government guidance or advice                    | 13%        |
| Lack of the right knowledge or skills in the workforce            | 11%        |
| Other                                                             | 4%         |
| There are no barriers                                             | 2%         |
| Don't know                                                        | 1%         |

**Base:** All leaders (n = 2139). Data table reference = “disadvantaged\_barriers”.

# Supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We asked teachers to what extent they agreed or disagreed that they had sufficient skills and knowledge to support pupils with SEND.

**Figure 16: whether teachers agreed or disagreed that they had sufficient skills and knowledge to support pupils with SEND**

| Phase     | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|-----------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Primary   | 25%            | 59%   | 6%                         | 7%       | 2%                | 100%  |
| Secondary | 23%            | 59%   | 11%                        | 6%       | 1%                | 100%  |
| Special   | 75%            | 23%   | 1%                         | 0%       | 0%                | 100%  |

**Base:** All primary teachers (n = 670), secondary teachers (n = 678) and special school teachers (n = 532). Data table reference = “send\_skills”.

A large majority of primary teachers (84%) and secondary teachers (82%), and almost all special school teachers (99%), strongly agreed or agreed that they had sufficient skills and knowledge to support pupils with SEND.

The proportion of primary school teachers who strongly agreed or agreed that they had sufficient skills and knowledge to support pupils with SEND was higher in

January 2026 (84%) than in January 2025 (74%). The equivalent proportion for secondary school teachers was also higher in January 2026 (82%) than in January 2025 (70%). Agreement remained broadly stable among special school teachers over the same period.

We also asked teachers how confident they were in meeting the needs of pupils requiring support for SEND.

**Figure 17: teacher confidence in meeting the needs of pupils requiring support for SEND**

| Phase     | Very confident | Fairly confident | Not very confident | Not at all confident | Don't know | Total |
|-----------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|-------|
| Primary   | 16%            | 63%              | 16%                | 3%                   | 1%         | 100%  |
| Secondary | 15%            | 68%              | 14%                | 1%                   | 1%         | 100%  |
| Special   | 69%            | 31%              | 0%                 | 0%                   | 0%         | 100%  |

**Base:** All primary teachers (n = 670), secondary teachers (n = 678) and special school teachers (n = 532). Data table reference = “send\_needs”.

A large majority of primary school teachers (79%) and secondary school teachers (84%), and almost all special school teachers (99%), said they were very confident or fairly confident in meeting the needs of pupils requiring support for SEND.

The proportion of secondary school teachers who said they were very confident or fairly confident in meeting the needs of pupils requiring support for SEND was higher in January 2026 (84%) than in January 2025 (76%). Reported confidence among primary teachers and special school teachers was stable over the same period.

We asked teachers which factors, if any, they thought would most improve their personal confidence to support pupils with SEND. They were shown a list of potential options and asked to select up to 3.

**Figure 18: what would most improve teachers' personal confidence to support pupils with SEND**

| Response                                                                          | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| More knowledge about specific types of SEND                                       | 38%     | 34%       | 30%     |
| Being supported to try out different pedagogical strategies and adaptive teaching | 33%     | 35%       | 34%     |
| Feedback from specialists                                                         | 36%     | 30%       | 28%     |
| Training or teaching in a specialist setting                                      | 34%     | 27%       | 10%     |
| On the job practice and experience                                                | 21%     | 21%       | 19%     |
| Guidance on expectations as part of the assess, plan, do, review approach         | 11%     | 12%       | 7%      |
| Feedback from your peers or colleagues                                            | 5%      | 13%       | 10%     |
| A leadership that believes in inclusion across the whole school                   | 4%      | 6%        | 5%      |
| Something else                                                                    | 24%     | 16%       | 12%     |
| I do not need anything to improve my personal confidence                          | 6%      | 10%       | 23%     |
| Don't know                                                                        | 1%      | 2%        | 2%      |

**Base:** All primary teachers (n = 670), secondary teachers (n = 678) and special school teachers (n = 532). Data table reference = "send\_improveconfidence".

We asked all school leaders to what extent they agreed or disagreed that their school could effectively support pupils with SEND or learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD).

**Figure 19: extent to which leaders agreed that the school could effectively support pupils with SEND or LDD**

| Phase     | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|-----------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Primary   | 21%            | 52%   | 13%                        | 10%      | 4%                | 100%  |
| Secondary | 20%            | 57%   | 13%                        | 9%       | 2%                | 100%  |
| Special   | 88%            | 11%   | 1%                         | 0%       | 0%                | 100%  |

**Base:** All primary leaders (n = 894), secondary leaders (n = 1044) and special school leaders (n = 201). Data table reference = “send\_effective”.

A large majority of primary school leaders (73%) and secondary school leaders (76%), and almost all special school leaders (99%), strongly agreed or agreed that their school could effectively support pupils with SEND or LDD.

The proportion of primary school leaders who strongly agreed or agreed that their school could effectively support pupils with SEND or LDD was higher in January 2026 (73%) than in January 2025 (68%).

We also asked leaders what, if any, barriers the school experienced in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND or LDD. They were shown a list of potential barriers and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 20: barriers that leaders experienced in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND or LDD at their school**

| Response        | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|-----------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Lack of funding | 95%     | 87%       | 76%     |

|                                                                   |     |     |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Staff supporting a large number of pupils with differing needs    | 86% | 77% | 43% |
| Lack of access to external specialist services or professionals   | 70% | 74% | 64% |
| Lack of capacity in the school workforce                          | 63% | 58% | 33% |
| Lack of support from Local Authority                              | 57% | 57% | 39% |
| Students don't have access to appropriate equipment or technology | 34% | 25% | 25% |
| Lack of expertise in the school workforce                         | 23% | 20% | 14% |
| Lack of relevant government guidance or advice                    | 12% | 13% | 12% |
| Lack of support from Multi Academy Trust or other governors       | 5%  | 6%  | 4%  |
| Other                                                             | 7%  | 6%  | 10% |
| There are currently no barriers                                   | 0%  | 1%  | 5%  |
| Don't know                                                        | 0%  | 1%  | 0%  |

**Base:** All primary leaders (n = 894), secondary leaders (n = 1044) and special school leaders (n = 201). Data table reference = "send\_barriers".

## Access to specialist SEND support

We asked teachers whether they had needed support when teaching or working with pupils with SEND from external specialists, since September 2025. They were shown a list of external specialists and asked to select all that they had needed support from.

**Figure 21: external specialists from which teachers had needed support when teaching or working with pupils with SEND since September 2025**

| Response                                                                       | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| A speech and language therapist                                                | 69%     | 14%       | 79%     |
| An educational psychologist                                                    | 60%     | 20%       | 43%     |
| Mental health services                                                         | 35%     | 25%       | 43%     |
| Local authority educational services                                           | 33%     | 13%       | 23%     |
| An occupational therapist                                                      | 33%     | 7%        | 64%     |
| Social services                                                                | 28%     | 13%       | 46%     |
| Alternative provision schools                                                  | 15%     | 14%       | 11%     |
| Physical health services                                                       | 11%     | 6%        | 23%     |
| A physiotherapist                                                              | 8%      | 3%        | 41%     |
| Non-school based or unregistered alternative provision                         | 7%      | 5%        | 7%      |
| I do not need support for pupils with SEND from any of these external services | 7%      | 33%       | 7%      |
| Don't know                                                                     | 6%      | 29%       | 2%      |

**Base:** All primary teachers (n = 670), secondary teachers (n = 678) and special school teachers (n = 532). Data table reference = “sendsupport\_external”.

We asked teachers who said they needed a particular type of external support how often they were able to access this. Teachers who said they needed more than 3

types of support were asked about 3 (chosen randomly from those they had selected).

**Figure 22: availability of required external specialists**

| Response                                               | Always | Most of the time | Some of the time | Never | It varies too much to say | Don't know |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|-------|---------------------------|------------|
| A speech and language therapist                        | 7%     | 24%              | 42%              | 10%   | 13%                       | 4%         |
| An educational psychologist                            | 4%     | 16%              | 42%              | 14%   | 19%                       | 6%         |
| Mental health services                                 | 3%     | 15%              | 40%              | 16%   | 16%                       | 9%         |
| Local authority educational services                   | 3%     | 14%              | 52%              | 6%    | 18%                       | 6%         |
| An occupational therapist                              | 4%     | 20%              | 41%              | 14%   | 15%                       | 5%         |
| Social services                                        | 6%     | 12%              | 44%              | 15%   | 15%                       | 9%         |
| Alternative provision schools                          | 3%     | 15%              | 39%              | 18%   | 16%                       | 9%         |
| Physical health services                               | 5%     | 32%              | 32%              | 13%   | 13%                       | 6%         |
| A physiotherapist                                      | 12%    | 20%              | 32%              | 14%   | 16%                       | 7%         |
| Non-school based or unregistered alternative provision | 2%     | 5%               | 43%              | 16%   | 24%                       | 9%         |

**Base:** Teachers who said they needed external support from a particular service

when working with pupils with SEND. Base sizes vary by support type, as follows: a speech and language therapist (n = 732), an educational psychologist (n = 555), mental health services (n = 448), local authority educational services (n = 286), an occupational therapist (n = 426), social services (n = 319), alternative provision schools (n = 151), physical health services (n = 126), a physiotherapist (n = 189) and non-school based or unregistered alternative provision (n = 64). The base for non-school based or unregistered alternative provision is lower than 100 and the data should therefore be treated with caution. Data have been rebased to exclude 'prefer not to say' responses (<4% in all cases). Data table reference = "sendsupport\_oftenext".

We asked teachers whether they had needed support from any internal specialists when teaching or working with pupils with SEND, since September 2025. They were shown a list of internal specialists and asked to select all that they had needed support from.

**Figure 23: internal specialists from which teachers had needed support when teaching or working with pupils with SEND since September 2025**

| Response                                                                 | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| SENCO                                                                    | 88%     | 75%       | 39%     |
| Teaching assistants                                                      | 79%     | 71%       | 80%     |
| Safeguarding lead(s)                                                     | 57%     | 49%       | 76%     |
| Mental health lead                                                       | 20%     | 19%       | 26%     |
| Other internal support staff                                             | 36%     | 33%       | 49%     |
| I do not need support for pupils with SEND from any internal specialists | 2%      | 5%        | 4%      |
| Don't know                                                               | 1%      | 3%        | 1%      |

**Base:** All primary teachers (n = 670), secondary teachers (n = 678) and special school teachers (n = 532). Data table reference = “sendsupport\_internal”.

We also asked teachers who said they needed a particular type of internal specialist support how often they were able to access this. Teachers who said they needed more than 3 types of support were asked about 3, chosen randomly from those they had selected.

## Figure 24: availability of required internal specialists

| Response                     | Always | Most of the time | Some of the time | Never | It varies too much to say | Don't know | Total |
|------------------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|-------|---------------------------|------------|-------|
| SENCO                        | 29%    | 30%              | 32%              | 3%    | 6%                        | 0%         | 100%  |
| Teaching assistants          | 22%    | 32%              | 33%              | 4%    | 9%                        | 0%         | 100%  |
| Safeguarding lead(s)         | 42%    | 29%              | 23%              | 2%    | 4%                        | 1%         | 100%  |
| Mental health lead           | 35%    | 28%              | 24%              | 4%    | 6%                        | 3%         | 100%  |
| Other internal support staff | 20%    | 38%              | 33%              | 1%    | 7%                        | 1%         | 100%  |

**Base:** Teachers who said they needed internal specialist support of a specific type when working with pupils with SEND. Base sizes vary by support type, as follows: SENCO (n = 1149), teaching assistants (n = 1264), safeguarding lead(s) (n = 954), mental health lead (n = 295) and other internal support staff (n = 590). Data have been rebased to exclude ‘prefer not to say’ responses (<3% in all cases). Data table reference = “sendsupport\_oftenint”.

# Measuring outcomes in dedicated SEND spaces

We asked primary and secondary leaders whether their school had a separate dedicated space used to support pupils with SEND, away from their mainstream classroom.

The majority of primary school leaders (53%) and a large majority of secondary school leaders (85%) said that their school had a separate dedicated space used to support pupils with SEND.

We also asked primary and secondary leaders who had a separate dedicated space used to support pupils with SEND, what type(s) of space it was.

**Figure 25: types of dedicated SEND space at leaders' schools**

| Response                                                                     | Primary | Secondary |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| A SEN Unit, formally recognised and funded by the local authority            | 7%      | 10%       |
| A Resourced Provision, formally recognised and funded by the local authority | 15%     | 19%       |
| Another type of dedicated space                                              | 84%     | 81%       |
| Don't know                                                                   | 0%      | 2%        |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 497) and secondary leaders (n = 884) who had a separate dedicated space used to support pupils with SEND, away from their mainstream classroom. Data table reference = “senunit\_spacetype”.

We also asked primary and secondary leaders who had a separate dedicated space used to support pupils with SEND, whether the school used any measures to

monitor the impact of the support provided. Examples of monitoring included reviewing the attendance, attainment or mental health and wellbeing of pupils who received support.

Almost all primary school leaders (91%) and a large majority of secondary school leaders (86%) said that the school used measures to monitor the impact of SEND support in dedicated spaces.

We also asked school leaders whose school monitored the impact of dedicated SEND spaces what measures were used. They were shown a list of potential measures and asked to select all that applied. The question highlighted the fact that some of these measures will be collected as a legal requirement, such as attendance. Leaders were asked only to select measures which they used to monitor pupil progress as a result of the support from the SEND space.

**Figure 26: measures used to monitor the impact of support in dedicated SEND spaces**

| Response                    | Primary | Secondary |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Attainment                  | 87%     | 87%       |
| Behaviour                   | 89%     | 82%       |
| Attendance                  | 75%     | 87%       |
| Social skills               | 86%     | 63%       |
| Engagement with education   | 76%     | 70%       |
| Mental health and wellbeing | 76%     | 68%       |
| Independence                | 75%     | 44%       |
| Confidence                  | 64%     | 45%       |
| Other                       | 5%      | 4%        |
| Don't know                  | 1%      | 4%        |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 452) and secondary leaders (n = 761) who had a separate dedicated space used to support pupils with SEND, away from their mainstream classroom. Data table reference = “senunit\_measures”.

We also asked primary and secondary leaders who monitored the impact of support in dedicated SEND spaces how the school tracked the measures used to monitor any impacts. They were shown a list of potential ways of tracking impacts and were asked to select all that applied.

## Figure 27: how schools tracked measures used to monitor the impact on a pupil with SEND

| Response                                                                                                                                             | Primary | Secondary |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Observational Methods, such as teacher (or teaching assistant) observations, video or photo evidence                                                 | 92%     | 81%       |
| Formative Assessment, such as ongoing checks to inform teaching which may include self-assessments and learning logs                                 | 84%     | 84%       |
| Summative Assessment, such as evaluating learning at the end of a unit or term                                                                       | 70%     | 80%       |
| Feedback and Reflection, such as encouraging pupils to understand their own learning, including written feedback, one-to-one reviews or goal setting | 64%     | 76%       |
| Progress Tracking Tools, such as using software or spreadsheets to monitor pupil progress over time                                                  | 67%     | 66%       |
| Other                                                                                                                                                | 3%      | 3%        |
| Don't know                                                                                                                                           | 1%      | 1%        |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 447) and secondary leaders (n = 728) who know which measures their school uses to monitor the impact of the SEN space. Data

## Expansion of free school meals

From September 2026, all pupils in households receiving Universal Credit will be eligible for free school meals (FSM). This change is expected to make [an additional 500,000 pupils eligible for FSM nationally](#).

We asked school leaders whether their school had an estimate of how many additional pupils will be eligible for FSM at their school from September 2026.

A small minority of primary school leaders (23%) and secondary school leaders (19%) and a minority of special school leaders (41%) had an estimate for how many additional pupils will be eligible for FSM from September 2026. Very few primary leaders (3%) and special school leaders (1%) said that eligibility for FSM was not relevant to their school – these leaders were not asked to answer the following questions about the expansion of free school meals.

We asked school leaders who had an estimate for additional FSM eligibility whether they had made plans or started planning in preparation for the additional pupils who will be eligible for FSM from September 2026.

**Figure 28: planning in preparation for the additional pupils who would be eligible for FSM from September 2026**

| Phase     | We have a detailed plan in place | We have started planning | We have not started planning, but intend to do so | We do not intend to do so | Don't know | Total |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------|
| Primary   | 18%                              | 39%                      | 32%                                               | 5%                        | 7%         | 100%  |
| Secondary | 15%                              | 44%                      | 24%                                               | 3%                        | 15%        | 100%  |
| Special   | 13%                              | 59%                      | 12%                                               | 8%                        | 8%         | 100%  |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 202), secondary leaders (n = 196) and special leaders (n = 82). It should be noted that the number of special school leaders who answered this question is low, meaning the findings should be treated with caution. Data table reference = “expansionfsm\_plans”.

Among those leaders whose school had an estimate for additional FSM eligibility, 57% of primary school leaders, 59% of secondary school leaders and 72% of special school leaders said that they already had a detailed plan in place or had started planning in preparation for the additional pupils who will be eligible for FSM from September 2026.

We asked leaders in schools whether they anticipated that the school or its meal provider would need to recruit additional staff to meet any increase in demand for FSM from September 2026.

Overall, 14% of primary school leaders, 15% of secondary school leaders and 12% of special school leaders anticipated a need to recruit additional staff.

We asked school leaders who anticipated that the school or its meal provider would need to recruit additional staff how many staff they anticipated needing to recruit.

## Figure 29: anticipated number of additional staff that would need to be recruited to meet the increase in demand for FSM from September 2026

| Response   | Leaders |
|------------|---------|
| 1 - 2      | 61%     |
| 3 - 4      | 13%     |
| 5 or more  | 1%      |
| Don't know | 25%     |

**Base:** Leaders who anticipated that the school or its meal provider would need to recruit additional staff to meet increase in FSM demand (n = 294). Data table reference = “expansionfsm\_howmany”.

We asked leaders which barriers they anticipated in delivering the FSM expansion from September 2026. They were shown a list of potential barriers and asked to select all that applied.

**Figure 30: barriers that leaders anticipated when delivering the FSM expansion from September 2026**

| Response                                                                    | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Financial constraints within current free school meal funding               | 38%     | 44%       | 34%     |
| Uncertainty about the number of additional pupils we will need to cater for | 37%     | 37%       | 17%     |
| Difficulty with timing, to meet the demand within lunch hour                | 26%     | 27%       | 16%     |
| Unsuitable space or facilities                                              | 15%     | 25%       | 19%     |
| Difficulty recruiting the required staff                                    | 14%     | 13%       | 13%     |
| Logistical challenges with supply chain                                     | 11%     | 11%       | 11%     |
| Other                                                                       | 2%      | 1%        | 3%      |
| We don't anticipate any barriers                                            | 27%     | 16%       | 35%     |
| Don't know                                                                  | 11%     | 17%       | 10%     |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 865), secondary leaders (n = 1044) and special school leaders (n = 199) in schools where eligibility for free school meals is relevant. Data table reference = “expansionfsm\_barriers”.



# Pupil premium strategy

The pupil premium grant is funding to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England.

To support schools to make effective use of the pupil premium, DfE has set out 5 steps in its guidance, [Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders](#), published in February 2024 and updated in March 2026.

The steps are:

- 1. Identifying the challenges faced by the school’s disadvantaged pupils.
- 2. Using evidence.
- 3. Developing an effective strategy.
- 4. Delivering and monitoring your strategy.
- 5. Evaluating and sustaining your strategy.

We asked school leaders whether they had heard of these 5 steps prior to taking part in the survey.

**Figure 31: whether leaders had heard of the 5 steps in the guidance on using pupil premium**

| Phase     | I know a lot about them | I know a little about them | I have only heard about them | I have never heard of them | Don't know | Total |
|-----------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------|
| Primary   | 46%                     | 34%                        | 10%                          | 9%                         | 1%         | 100%  |
| Secondary | 40%                     | 35%                        | 13%                          | 11%                        | 1%         | 100%  |
| Special   | 42%                     | 37%                        | 12%                          | 9%                         | 0%         | 100%  |

**Base:** All primary leaders (n = 894), secondary leaders (n = 1044) and special leaders (n = 201). Data table reference = “pupilpremium\_aware”.

Overall, 90% of primary school leaders, 88% of secondary school leaders and 91% of special school leaders had at least heard of the 5 steps in the published guidance. Among primary and secondary school leaders, awareness of the 5 steps had remained broadly stable since January 2025, when the question was last asked. Among special school leaders, awareness of the 5 steps was higher in January 2026 (91%) than in January 2025 (86%).

We asked school leaders who had at least heard of the 5 steps in the published guidance which steps, if any, they found most challenging to implement. They were asked to select up to 2 answers.

## Figure 32: which of the 5 steps to effective use of Pupil Premium leaders found the most challenging to implement

| Response                                                              | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Evaluating and sustaining your strategy                               | 28%     | 34%       | 18%     |
| Delivering and monitoring your strategy                               | 23%     | 24%       | 10%     |
| Using evidence                                                        | 14%     | 10%       | 22%     |
| Identifying the challenges faced by the school's disadvantaged pupils | 9%      | 19%       | 8%      |
| Developing an effective strategy plan                                 | 10%     | 14%       | 5%      |
| Don't know                                                            | 11%     | 12%       | 14%     |
| I do not find any of the steps challenging                            | 26%     | 16%       | 35%     |

**Base:** Primary leaders (n = 805), secondary leaders (n = 929) and special

school leaders (n = 183) who had heard of the 5 steps for making effective use of the Pupil Premium. Data table reference = “pupilpremium\_challenges”.

The proportion of special school leaders, who said that they did not find any of the 5 steps to effective use of pupil premium challenging to implement, was higher in January 2026 (35%) than in January 2025 (23%). Responses among primary school leaders and secondary school leaders remained broadly stable between January 2025 and January 2026.

We also asked leaders who had at least heard of the 5 steps in the published guidance which resources, if any, they had used to help develop their pupil premium strategy. They were shown a list of potential resources and asked to select all that applied.

## Figure 33: resources leaders used to help develop their Pupil Premium strategy

| Response                                            | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) resources      | 78%        |
| DfE Pupil Premium guidance                          | 75%        |
| DfE Pupil Premium strategy statement template       | 60%        |
| Advice from other school leaders                    | 39%        |
| DfE strategy statement worked examples              | 33%        |
| Support from your Multi-Academy Trust or Federation | 28%        |
| Local Authority support                             | 14%        |
| Other                                               | 3%         |
| Don't know                                          | 9%         |
| I have not used any resources                       | 2%         |

**Base:** All leaders (n = 1917) who had heard of the 5 steps for making effective use of the Pupil Premium. Data table reference = “pupilpremium\_resources”.

The proportion of leaders who said they had used DfE Pupil Premium guidance to help develop their pupil premium strategy was higher in January 2026 (75%) than in January 2025 (68%). The proportion of leaders who said they had used the DfE Pupil Premium strategy statement template was also higher in January 2026 (60%) than in January 2025 (55%).

The proportion of leaders who said they had used advice from other school leaders to help develop their pupil premium strategy was lower in January 2026 (39%) than in January 2025 (45%).

Usage of the other resources remained broadly stable between January 2025 and January 2026.

## Knife crime as a safeguarding issue

We asked special school leaders whether their school was currently actively dealing with knife crime as a safeguarding issue. We defined this as a leader at the school having taken action, however small, as a result of recognising a safeguarding risk to a pupil in relation to knife crime.

### Figure 34: proportion of special school leaders who said their school was currently dealing with knife crime as a safeguarding issue

| Survey date   | Special school |
|---------------|----------------|
| January 2026  | 24%            |
| June 2025     | 26%            |
| December 2024 | 19%            |

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| May 2024      | 25% |
| March 2024    | 25% |
| December 2023 | 18% |

**Base:** Special school leaders (n = 201). Base refers to most recent data: refer to previous reports for base sizes at each data point. The base for March 2024 is lower than 100 and the data should therefore be treated with caution. Data table reference = “knife\_action”.

Special school leaders who said that knife crime was a safeguarding issue that their school was actively dealing with were asked how many individual safeguarding incidents involving knife crime their school was actively dealing with at that moment in time. Only 44 special school leaders were asked this question and the data should therefore be treated with caution. Overall, 18% said they were dealing with no incidents, 41% said they were dealing with 1 or 2 incidents and 13% said they were dealing with 3 or more incidents. Around a quarter (28%) preferred not to specify how many knife crime incidents they were dealing with.

## Glossary of terms

**Special educational needs and disabilities (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
- 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 with 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).

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