

General Teaching Council for England  
**Survey of Teachers 2007**

Report two / **Teachers' Views on Pupil Achievement** /  
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Report two: Teachers' views on pupil achievement

# Foreword

Sarah Stephens, Director of Policy

Every year since 2004, the GTC has commissioned an independent organisation to carry out a national survey. We do this in order to gauge teacher views and experiences on a range of professional matters. The results of these surveys have been used to form and influence a wide range of national policies and programmes on teaching, education and teacher development. We communicate the findings of these surveys back to the profession in a number of ways, including through our website, three professional networks, and our termly magazine, *Teaching*.

When commissioning the 2007 survey, we knew that the factors contributing to achievement and low or under achievement were complex, and that some of these factors were outside the control of the teaching profession. The existing literature on pupil achievement repeatedly illustrates this. Recently, findings from the report *Tackling Low Educational Achievement* published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reminded us of how many interweaving factors are associated with low achievement. These factors include gender; ethnicity; eligibility for free school meals; low reading and writing scores in primary school; unidentified special educational needs; being in care; and expenditure on pupils and schools.

Against this background, the GTC wanted to take some views and experiences from the teaching profession. So we asked teachers several questions. What types of pupil achievement did they think should be given priority in schools? What did they think some of the barriers were for pupil achievement? What, in their experience, are effective ways of helping children and young people to increase their achievement?

Most teachers' views on and experiences of pupil achievement acknowledge the range and complexity of contributing factors. As this report shows, most teachers take a broad view on pupil achievement, arguing that it should be seen as 'multi-faceted' and 'pluralistic'. And although this will be something that all reflective professionals already know, we think it's worth saying again: we can't afford to be careless with our understanding of 'achievement' and 'attainment'. We know, statistically, that certain groups of pupils are at risk of under attaining. We also know that there are many known, and some unknown factors contributing to or creating this risk. What we cannot assume is that a pupil *will* under attain, just because he or she is a member of a group that has been known statistically to be at risk of doing so.

We will want to be in touch with partner organisations about the implications of some of the survey findings for our individual and shared concerns about the perennial problem of low or underachievement. We will want to take on, consider and respond to the barriers to achievement – both real and perceived – that teachers describe in this report.

Some of this work has already begun. We recently began a dialogue, lead by Professor Leon Feinstein, with organisations including the Strategy Unit; Ofsted; the Teaching and Learning Research Programme; the Teaching and Development Agency for Schools; the Association of Teachers and Lecturers; and 11 Million to discuss what teachers and school leaders need to know and how they can use their knowledge to intervene or support children and young people at risk of low or underachievement. This dialogue is important because, in between the factors contributing to low or underachievement at the level of the individual pupil and the

factors relating to the education system, are school level factors. We know from Feinstein's research that schools are key determinants in the paths that individual pupils take, and that teachers are crucial to confirming or interrupting those paths. We will be looking for further opportunities to build the evidence base for ourselves and partners, and to support professional knowledge in this area.

Teachers refer frequently to the importance of parents in supporting their children's achievement. Sometime ago we had commissioned a *Research of the Month* summary on a literature review conducted by Charles Desforges on this subject (accessible at [www.gtce.org.uk/researchofthefmonth](http://www.gtce.org.uk/researchofthefmonth)). In light of this literature review we wanted to know more about teachers' experiences of working with parents to engage them with their child's learning. We know, for example from the recently published University of Warwick report *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement*, that although schools often report that parents are hard to reach, parents often find schools equally hard to reach. We have already begun a brief follow-up qualitative project with parents to further understand their views on how best to support their child's learning, how they want to work with schools and teachers in doing so and what they perceive the barriers are to this effort. This project will not only inform our policy work, but is intended to help teachers better understand parents' perspectives, and therefore work with them more effectively. We will want to set the insights from this project alongside those in this survey report and the growing body of research on the benefits and barriers of engaging parents in their children's education and learning.

Questions about achievement are enduring questions. Given the context of the 'Children's Plan' recently published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, it is crucial that we continue to use and build the evidence base in order to support the teaching profession in meeting the challenges we face in raising achievement and well-being for all children and young people.

We believe that highly skilled teachers and expert teaching lie at the heart of raising achievement. It is vital that the profession has the opportunity and resources to refine and share its collective skills, and engage with relevant research knowledge, to further raise standards across the profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Stephens', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Stephens

## **Acknowledgements**

Our thanks go to all teachers who contributed to this annual survey of teachers by making time to complete and return questionnaires. We are also grateful to those teachers who helped pilot earlier drafts of the survey questionnaire.

The administration of the survey and initial analysis of data was carried out by ORC International. Further analysis and reporting was carried out by John Harland and Ian Gibbs of LC Research Associates.

## **Associated reports and documents**

### **Appendices**

A full set of appendices accompanies this report, including methodology, questionnaire, frequency tables, trend data, profile of teachers and supporting cross-tabulation tables.

### **GTC Survey of Teachers 2007, first report: Teachers' careers and views on professional development**

The survey questionnaire asked several questions about teachers' views on their career plans and on their experience of the provision and uptake of professional development opportunities. Data from these items are reported in the first report of the three in this series, entitled *Teachers' careers and views on professional development*. This report also investigates training in the area of equalities.

### **GTC Survey of Teachers 2007, third report: Black and minority ethnic teachers' views on pupil achievement, careers and continuing professional development**

The GTC was also concerned, as in 2006, to gauge the views and experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers. Therefore, alongside the 2007 survey, a booster survey was conducted. Questionnaires were distributed to a booster sample of 2800 BME teachers, of which 461 eligible questionnaires were returned. To these were added the 77 responses from BME teachers to the main sample, making a total of 538 responses. Data from these responses are reported on in the third report, entitled *Black and minority ethnic teachers' views on pupil achievement, careers and continuing professional development*.

### **Document access information**

This report is available on the GTC website at [www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey](http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey). For a large text or other version, please contact the GTC by email ([research@gtce.org.uk](mailto:research@gtce.org.uk)) or telephone (020 7023 3903).

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

This is the second of three reports on the findings of the General Teaching Council for England's (GTC's) Survey of Teachers 2007. It focuses on teachers' views on and experiences of pupil achievement. The findings are used to inform GTC policy and advice to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

The first report in this series focuses on teachers' career plans and the provision and uptake of professional development opportunities by teachers in England, and the third report focuses on the views and experiences of black and minority ethnic teachers on pupil achievement and career development. These reports are available as separate documents.

In 2007, GTC commissioned the independent research organisation, ORC International, to undertake this annual survey of a sample of registered teachers. This is the fourth such annual survey of teachers commissioned by the GTC, and findings from previous surveys are available on the GTC website at [www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey/](http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey/).

## Research methods

A stratified random sample of 10,000 teachers was drawn from a pool of 428,758 eligible teachers registered with the GTC. In total 2489 teachers completed and returned questionnaires, a response rate of 25%. This response rate is very low – considerably lower than that for the 2006 survey (37%). The major consequence of any response rate that falls so low is to compromise the validity of the results. In relation to the present 2007 survey it means, for example, that we cannot be sure that the views and attitudes expressed by the one-quarter of the sample that responded to the survey are not systematically different from those of the three-quarters who chose not to reply. Given that a substantial majority of teachers in the target sample did not respond to the questionnaire, any generalisation from the achieved sample to the wider population of teachers cannot be made without many reservations. This limitation should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings described in this report and, at best, the salient results should be perceived as the basis for hypotheses that warrant further investigation.

The achieved sample contains statistically significant non-response biases due to an under-representation of teachers in the age group 30-39 years, men and secondary schools, and over-representation of teachers in the age group 50-59 years, women and primary schools. These non-response biases should be considered when assessing the 2007 survey findings.

## Key findings

### **What do teachers believe should count as achievement? Which aspects of achievement are given priority? Which are not?**

In order to explore teachers' perspectives on the various ways of conceptualising pupil 'achievement', teachers were asked how closely a series of preselected statements reflected their personal beliefs. The responses demonstrated that only a minority (27%) of teachers indicated that achievement as getting 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' reflected their beliefs either 'completely' or 'quite closely'. In contrast, all the other versions of achievement attracted the corresponding responses from at least two-thirds of teachers.

In short, most teachers:

- thought that achievement should be seen as multifaceted and pluralistic;
- valued generic skills (like 'learning to learn') highly;

- considered that achievement across the whole curriculum should be accentuated rather than emphasise a small number of specific subjects;
- emphasised the importance of long-term learning achievements; and
- placed higher value on achievement areas other than those that are currently prioritised by national testing.

Pupil achievement as 'becoming life-long learners' received the largest endorsement from teachers, with notably high nominations from primary school teachers and those in management positions.

### **What teaching and learning strategies are deemed by teachers to be effective in supporting the various aspects of achievement?**

The survey examined teachers' experiences of the effectiveness of four teaching and learning strategies for supporting achievement: thinking skills / cognitive acceleration; assessment for learning; structured group discussion; and pupils as researchers.

All four teaching and learning strategies were found by the majority of teachers to be effective in supporting pupils to attain most, although not all, aspects of achievement. At least half of the teachers gave thinking skills / cognitive acceleration a positive rating for all of the eight aspects of achievement. At the other end of the spectrum, assessment for learning had four achievement areas that failed to reach a 50% consensus of positive responses. However, it was seen as the most effective strategy for achieving good results in national tests. As mentioned above, it appeared that the strategy of pupils as researchers was more likely to be outside the experience of more teachers than the other three strategies.

Notable minorities of teachers registered that the four teaching and learning strategies were less than effective in supporting 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested', with, for example, a quarter of teachers indicating that this was not assisted by structured group discussion or pupils as researchers.

Differences between results from primary and secondary school teachers were consistent enough to suggest that all four strategies were found by more primary than secondary school teachers to be effective ways of supporting pupil achievement, almost regardless of the type of achievement.

In addition to the four teaching and learning strategies studied in this survey, teachers were asked to portray other approaches to teaching and learning that they had created for themselves. Peer learning, personalised learning, cross-curricular teaching, information and communications technology (ICT)-related strategies, making the curriculum relevant and peer assessment were cited by appreciable numbers of teachers.

### **Which groups of pupils do teachers believe to be most at risk of underachieving? What are the barriers to achievement by these groups?**

Teachers identified many different groups at risk of underachievement. Most responses could be grouped into one of seven themes or broad groupings:

- parenting and the influence of parents;
- ability / achievement / attainment;
- gender and ethnicity;
- special educational needs;
- individuals' motivations to learn and disaffection;

- family economic background; and
- home and family conditions.

Teachers' responses about the barriers faced by underachieving groups fell into two main categories: those to do with the characteristics of pupils and their background, and those relating to the social, economic and familial contexts in which the children are located and the influence that these factors have upon them.

In more detail, a notable minority of teachers said that the particular frames of mind and behavioural traits of individual pupils were one of the main barriers to achievement for underachieving groups. Included here was peer pressure, negative attitudes towards learning, and low personal motivation, expectation and aspiration in life in general.

Lack of parental support was identified by many teachers as impacting on pupil achievement.

Teachers also identified school-related barriers, which included insufficient staff in appropriate roles, large class sizes and time and other resources, with special educational need (SEN) pupils leading to others getting 'overlooked' within schools. A few teachers mentioned the perceived inflexibility of the wider education system in accommodating groups of learners at risk of underachieving.

### **Do teachers think that national policies have had positive or negative impact on supporting achievement?**

Teachers' views were sought in relation to 16 current national policies and initiatives. They were asked what impact, in their experience, 16 different policies had on supporting achievement.

Most, but not all, national policies had in most teachers' experience had a positive impact on supporting achievement. For example, of those who had actually experienced the policies, large majorities registered that the following initiatives had led to a positive impact in support of pupil achievement: investment in information and communication technology (ICT); enhancing teacher development; new school buildings; and assessment for learning. In addition, over half of all respondents said that the following had produced positive impacts: collaboration and networking; developments in school leadership; Every Child Matters; and personalised learning.

### **What local resources and support strategies to address underachievement have teachers experienced and used? How do teachers rate their importance?**

All of the 10 factors were said by the majority of teachers to be important, suggesting that a combination of a wide range of approaches has been found effective. In particular, the vast majority of teachers affirmed that the quality of school leadership was very important. Most teachers also said that small group teaching, small classes and support staff working in classrooms were very important. Teacher to teacher support and professional development were also believed to be important for addressing underachievement.

Respondents from primary schools were more likely to attach higher importance to a greater number of factors when compared with secondary school teachers. Teachers in secondary and primary schools with higher levels of challenge were more likely to rate out of school hours provision more highly than those in schools with lower levels of challenge.

### **What approaches have teachers experienced and used to enable parents and carers to support children's achievement? Which of these, according to teachers, have a positive impact?**

Good communication was seen as the key. Nine out of ten teachers said that improving communication between themselves and parents has had a positive impact on pupil achievement. In a similar vein, over three-quarters of teachers affirmed that initiatives to draw on parents' / carers' knowledge of their child, and an open door policy for parents / carers had proved beneficial.

Notable minorities of teachers had no experience of certain ways of working with parents. For example, well over one-third had no experience of supporting parents in improving their own subject knowledge, and one in five teachers had no experience of providing opportunities for parents to learn about learning.

More primary than secondary teachers were positive about all ways of involving parents, and more secondary school teachers than primary school teachers had no experience of each aspect of parental / carer involvement. Furthermore, the higher the level of linguistic / socio-economic challenge faced by the school, the more teachers said that the stated way of involving parents had had a positive impact on achievement.

In response to an open question, teachers identified five main ways to help parents / carers to have a positive impact:

1. promoting high-quality, regular communication between teachers and parents / carers;
2. home visits;
3. supporting parents' language skills
4. supporting parenting skills; and
5. helping parents to learn about learning and to develop their subject knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

While the survey results highlighted the extent of teachers' criticisms of certain national policies, they also demonstrated teachers' support for many national initiatives and strategies, as well as teachers' constructive insights into ways of working and forms of support that have been found to be beneficial in tackling underachievement.

# Chapter one

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the study

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC), the professional body for teaching, maintains a register of qualified teachers and works with registered teachers to help improve standards of teaching and the quality of learning. In 2007, the GTC commissioned the independent research organisation, ORC International, to undertake this annual survey of a sample of registered teachers. This is the fourth such annual survey of teachers commissioned by the GTC, and findings from previous surveys are available on the GTC website at [www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey/](http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey/).

This is the second of three reports on the findings of the GTC's Survey of Teachers 2007. It focuses on teachers' views on pupil achievement and on tackling underachievement. Teachers' perceptions on the impact of school-level efforts, parental involvement and national policies are also presented. The report also examines the data on which teaching and learning strategies were considered particularly effective or ineffective for different types of achievement. The findings are used to inform GTC policy and advice to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

The first report in this series focuses on teachers' career plans and the provision and uptake of professional development opportunities by teachers in England, and the third report focuses on the views and experiences of black and minority ethnic teachers on pupil achievement and career development. These reports are available as separate documents.

### 1.2 Research questions

With regard to the issues concerning achievement, the 2007 survey aimed to investigate six main sets of research questions:

- What do teachers believe should count as achievement? Which aspects of achievement are not given sufficient priority? Which are given too high a priority?
- What teaching and learning strategies are effective in supporting those aspects of achievement which: (a) they believe should be most important; and (b) they believe are actual priorities?
- Which groups of pupils do teachers believe to be most at risk of underachieving? What are the barriers to achievement by these groups?
- How effective do teachers believe different policies to be in supporting achievement?
- What local resources and support strategies to address underachievement have teachers experienced and used? How important and effective are these, in their experience? To what extent is there an alignment between (a) teachers' views and experiences as professionals responsible for teaching and learning; (b) public policy on teaching and learning; and (c) the local context?
- What approaches have teachers experienced and used to enable parents and carers to support children's achievement? Which of these have a positive impact, in their experience?

### 1.3 Summary of methodology

#### The questionnaire

After piloting, the final 10-page questionnaire (see Appendix B) included 20 questions, most of which asked teachers to express their views or describe recent experiences. Seven of the questions were 'open', inviting teachers to provide relatively unprompted written comments.

The answers to these open questions provided insights into the reasons behind responses to the 'closed' items (that is, questions with a limited number of possible responses).

### **Trend questions**

The GTC identified which survey questions from previous years should be repeated. All or most parts of nine questions were repeated from the 2006 questionnaire; four of these had also appeared in the 2005 and three in the 2004 questionnaires.

### **Sampling and distribution**

A stratified random sample of 10,000 teachers was drawn from a sample pool of 428,758 eligible teachers registered with the GTC; that is, those who were in service in state schools in England in September 2006. The stratifying variables were gender; age; type of school; phase; and government office region. The survey was distributed by post (to home addresses where these were available) in the last week of February 2007, with postal and email reminders sent in March. It was also made available online for those who preferred to respond in this way.

### **Achieved sample**

In total 2489 teachers completed and returned questionnaires, a response rate of 25%. This response rate is very low – considerably lower than that for the 2006 survey (37%). Inevitably, the major consequence of any response rate that falls so low is to compromise the validity of the results. In relation to the present 2007 survey it means, for example, that we cannot be sure that the views and attitudes expressed by the one-quarter of the sample that responded to the survey are not systematically different from those of the three-quarters who chose not to reply. Given that a substantial majority of teachers in the target sample did not respond to the questionnaire, any generalisation from the achieved sample to the wider population of teachers cannot be made without many reservations. This limitation should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings described in this report and, at best, the salient results should be perceived as the basis for hypotheses that warrant further investigation.

Compounding the limitations of the low response rates, a comparison of the achieved sample with the population in terms of the stratifying variables revealed some statistically significant non-response biases. As explained in Appendix A, chi-square tests identified three variables where differences between the drawn sample and the achieved sample were significant: gender, phase and age. With regard to gender, male respondents were under-represented (21% in the achieved sample compared to 26% in the drawn sample), while women were over-represented (79% compared to 74%). For phase of schooling, secondary school teachers were under-represented among respondents (40% in the achieved sample compared to 44% in the drawn sample), whereas primary school teachers were over-represented (48% compared to 45%). For age, the 30-39-year group were under-represented (22% in the achieved sample compared to 26% in the drawn sample), while teachers in the 50-59-year range were over-represented (34% compared to 30%). Hence, the achieved sample contains non-response biases due to an under-representation of teachers in the age group 30-39 years, men and secondary schools, and over-representation of teachers in the age group 50-59 years, women and primary schools. These non-response biases should be considered when assessing the 2007 survey findings. The non-response biases could, of course, be even more acute for specific items where the response rates are lower.

## Who responded to the survey?

Key personal characteristics of responding teachers were:

- **gender:**
  - 79% female; and
  - 21% male;
- **ethnicity:**
  - 93% white;
  - 3% BME; and
  - 4% preferred not to say / missing;
- **age:**
  - 4% 20-24 year olds;
  - 13% 25-29 year olds;
  - 22% 30-39 year olds;
  - 24% 40-49 year olds;
  - 34% 50-59 year olds; and
  - 2% over 60 years;
- **disability:**
  - 2.5% with a disability, a previously unknown statistic.

Key professional characteristics of responding teachers were:

- **role:** 28% class teachers, plus a further:
  - 21% class teachers with special curriculum / non-curriculum responsibilities;
  - 15% heads of department, year or key stage;
  - 4% assistant heads;
  - 5% deputy heads;
  - 7% head teachers;
  - 8% supply teachers;
  - 3% special educational needs coordinators (Sencos);
  - 2% advanced skills teachers (ASTs); and
  - 7% other;
- **terms of employment:**
  - 73% full time;
  - 22% part time; and
  - 5% missing;
- **length of service:**
  - 39% 0-9 years;
  - 20% 10-19 years;
  - 17% 20-29 years; and
  - 24% 30 plus years.

Key school context characteristics of responding teachers were:

- **phase:**
  - 48% primary;
  - 40% secondary; and
  - 12% other;
- **school type:**
  - 57% community;
  - 14% voluntary aided;
  - 9% foundation;
  - 8% voluntary controlled;
  - 5% local authority-employed supply teacher;

- 3% special schools;
- 2% agency-employed supply teacher; and
- 1% pupil referral units;
- **schools in mainly urban / other local authorities:**
  - 44% urban local authorities;
  - 54% other local authority;
  - 2% unknown;
- **measures of school challenge:** for as many teachers as school-level data were available, 25% of respondents were evenly distributed into each of four quartiles, from relatively low to the highest level of attainment / special educational needs (SEN) and linguistic / socio-economic challenge faced by their school.

### **Measures of school challenge**

These were developed by taking all respondents working in schools and linking the anonymised records to a range of data held by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). These data were as follows: school type, percentage of pupils with special educational needs, percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, percentage of pupils with English as an additional language, and key stage results. These imported data were used to create two measures of school context. The first is largely determined by a school's key stage results and by the percentage of pupils with special educational needs. We refer to this as 'attainment / SEN challenge'. The second measure is largely determined by the percentage of pupils in the school with English as an additional language, and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. This measure is referred to as 'linguistic / socio-economic challenge'.

### **Analysis and how data are reported**

The data were also linked to further background information taken from the GTC register of teachers and DCSF school data – length of service, local authority – and also to role, working status and key stage, which were asked in the questionnaire. The data were analysed using Bellview Fusion, Excel and SPSS software. Topline frequencies and two- and three-way cross-tabulations were produced.

Throughout the report, results are presented as percentages. Exceptions are made in some instances where the base (that is, the total number of teachers answering that question) was less than 100 and is not compared to other results where the base is above 100. Where appropriate, results are combined to show overall positive or negative percentages, for example, 'highly likely' plus 'likely'. To calculate these combined percentages, the frequencies for highly likely and likely are added together and divided by the base then multiplied by 100.

Unless stated to the contrary, the percentages presented in the report are derived by including missing data (due to respondents not answering specific items) and the 'not applicables' in the totals. Because of high proportions of missing data and 'not applicables' in some items presented in the first report, these data were usually excluded from the totals in that report. In this report, because missing data and 'not applicables' are usually (though not invariably) of a lower magnitude, they have generally been included.

For each questionnaire item, results from teachers with different personal and professional characteristics were compared. For other data, including those for school context (see later), notable differences and patterns are reported. As a general rule, comparative findings that do not achieve statistical significance<sup>1</sup> are not reported..

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<sup>1</sup> At the 0.01 level and above



Factor analysis and regression analysis were also carried out on selected parts of the data. An explanation of these statistical techniques can be found in the appendices that accompany this report.

A more detailed account of the survey's methodology is offered in Appendix A.

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

- **Chapter two.** What do teachers believe should count as achievement? Which aspects of achievement are not given sufficient priority? Which are given too high a priority? The alignment of what teachers believe should count as achievement and their actual experiences.
- **Chapter three.** What teaching and learning strategies are deemed by teachers to be effective in supporting those aspects of achievement?
- **Chapter four.** Which groups of pupils do teachers believe to be most at risk of underachieving? What are the barriers to achievement by these groups?
- **Chapter five.** How effective do teachers believe different policies to be in supporting achievement?
- **Chapter six.** What local resources and support strategies to address underachievement have teachers experienced and used? How important are these, in their experience?
- **Chapter seven.** What approaches have teachers experienced and used to enable parents and carers to support children's achievement? Which of these have a positive impact, in their experience?



## **Section A**

### **Pupils' achievement: teachers' beliefs and experiences**



## Chapter two

# Teachers' beliefs on and experiences of pupil achievement in schools

### Summary

This chapter addresses such questions as: What do teachers believe should count as achievement? Which aspects of achievement are not given sufficient priority? Which are given too high a priority?

In order to explore teachers' perspectives on the various ways of conceptualising pupil 'achievement', teachers were asked how closely a series of preselected statements reflected their own personal beliefs. Offering insights into one of the reasons why many teachers are opposed to the prevailing national testing system, the responses demonstrated that only a minority (27%) of teachers indicated that achievement as getting 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' reflected their beliefs either 'completely' or 'quite closely'. In contrast, all the other versions of achievement offered in the questionnaire attracted the corresponding responses from at least two-thirds of teachers. Hence, while other sources have documented teachers' opposition to the national tests on the grounds of logistics or the narrowing effect on the curriculum, this survey reveals another factor: teachers place a much higher value on other forms of achievement than that focused upon in national tests.

In short, most teachers:

- thought that pupil achievement should be seen as multifaceted and pluralistic;
- valued generic (like 'learning to learn') skills highly;
- considered that achievement across the whole curriculum should be accentuated rather than emphasise a small number of specific subjects;
- emphasised the importance of long-term learning achievements; and
- placed higher value on achievement areas other than those that are currently prioritised by national testing.

Pupil achievement as 'becoming life-long learners' received the largest amount of personal endorsement from teachers, with notably high nominations from primary school teachers and those in management positions.

Teachers were also invited to reflect on their actual experience and indicate what level of priority is given to each of the eight versions of pupil achievement presented in the previous item. A majority (70%) of teachers registered that pupil achievement as 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' was afforded too high a priority. Two particular views of pupil achievement – life-long learning and working creatively – were often deemed to be given insufficient priority in practice. Other versions of achievement considered to be lacking the attention they deserve included 'capacity to work collaboratively with others', 'learning to learn', and 'capacity to be active citizens'.

In item 7 of the questionnaire, teachers were asked how closely a series of statements reflected their personal beliefs on pupil achievement. In item 8 they were invited to rate each of the statements presented in the previous item according to their actual experiences of the level of priority given to them. This chapter presents findings for both these items separately and then compares them to explore any relationship between (i) teachers' beliefs about what

pupil achievement should be; and (ii) their experience of the priorities afforded different aspects of achievement. In this way, teachers' values about eight views on pupil achievement can be examined in relation to their perceptions of the priorities each of the eight views receives in practice.

## 2.1 Personal beliefs about pupil achievement

There are many different ways of defining or conceptualising 'achievement' and eight were chosen for inclusion in an item that began, 'How closely do the following statements reflect **your personal beliefs** about pupil achievement?' Pupil achievement at school **should** be thought of mainly in terms of:

- a achievement across the whole curriculum;
- b capacity to be active citizens;
- c becoming life-long learners;
- d progression to the next stage of education or training;
- e capacity to work collaboratively with others;
- f capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems;
- g learning to learn; and
- h good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested.

Teachers were asked to indicate how far they thought these statements reflected their personal beliefs, by ticking one response category for each statement, ranging from 'reflects completely', 'reflects quite closely', 'reflects somewhat', 'does not reflect at all' through to 'unable to comment'.

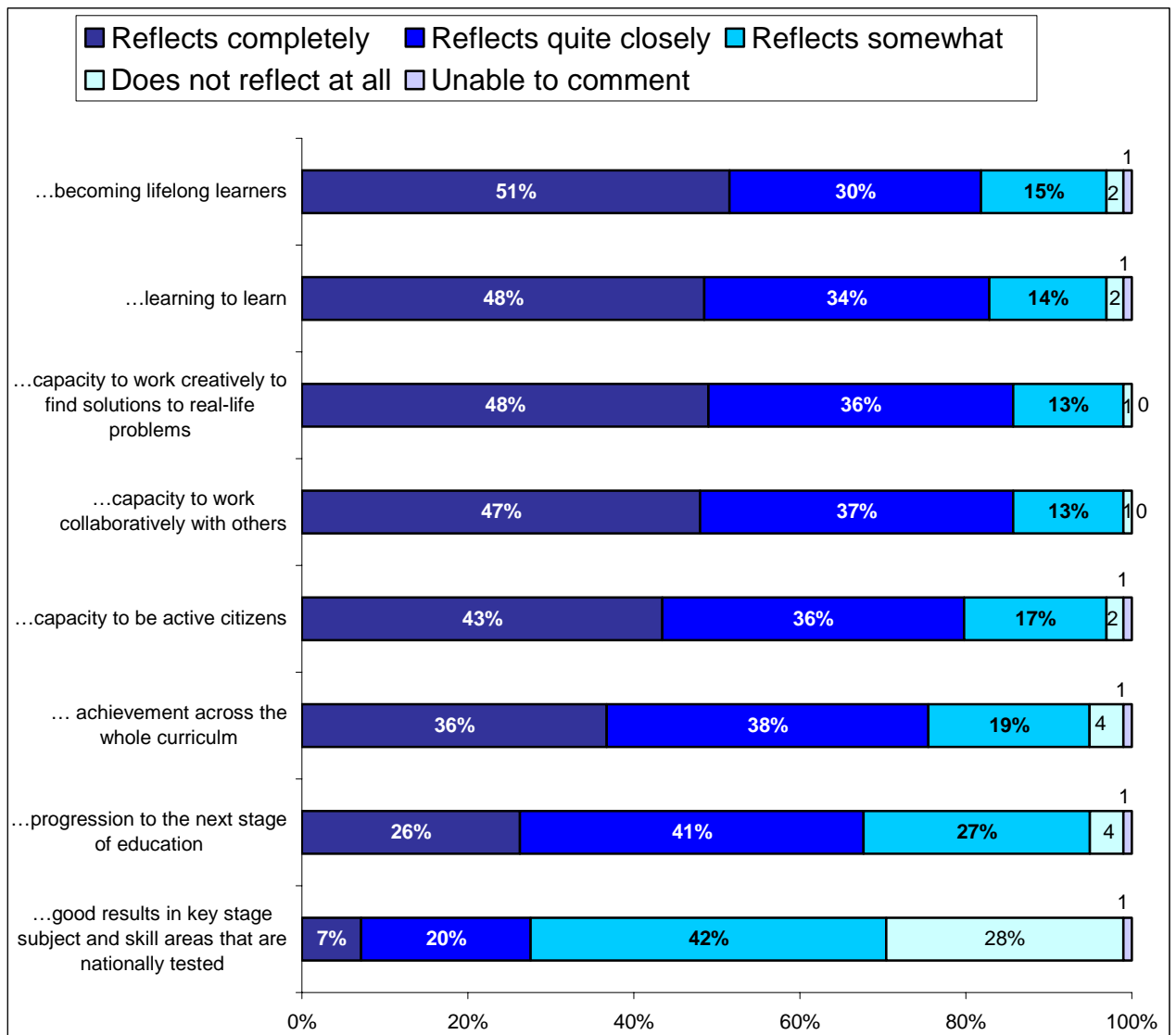
As demonstrated in Figure 2.1, a majority consensus clearly emerged. Most teachers:

- thought that pupil achievement should be seen as multifaceted and pluralistic;
- valued generic skills highly;
- considered that achievement across the whole curriculum should be accentuated rather than emphasise a small number of specific subjects;
- emphasised the importance of long-term learning achievements; and
- placed higher value on achievement areas other than those that are currently prioritised by national testing.

Over three-quarters of teachers indicated that six of the eight achievement statements reflected 'completely' or 'quite closely' their personal views on what pupil achievement should be. These six statements highlighted the importance of generic cross-curriculum skill areas, as well as learning outcomes that would aid children throughout the rest of their lives. In contrast, a seventh statement that focused on the short-term goals of preparing children for the next stage of education or training received reduced support, though even here two-thirds (67%) of teachers signalled that this version of achievement reflected their personal beliefs 'completely' or 'quite closely'. Thus, seven of the eight statements attracted at least two-thirds of teachers' support.

For the eighth statement, 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested', the trend percentages were turned on their head: a minority of teachers (27%) suggested that this reflected their personal beliefs 'completely' or 'quite closely', while a similar percentage (28%) indicated that this view of pupil achievement did not reflect their beliefs at all. Hence, this definition of pupil achievement – undoubtedly, the most dominant and pervasive one in practice – did not garner the ringing endorsement given to all the other statements and was the only one to be rejected by a sizeable percentage of teachers.

**Figure 2.1 Extent to which various aspects of achievement reflect teachers' own views**



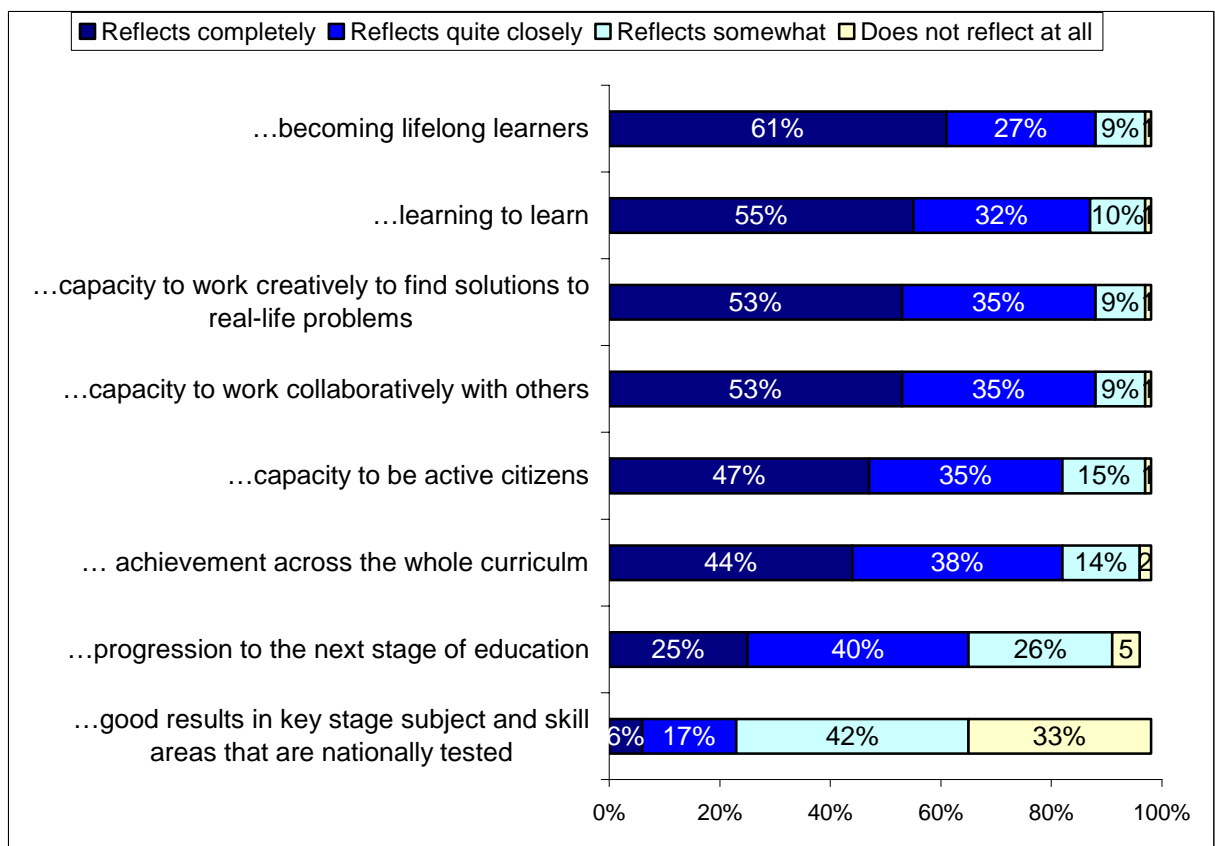
(Base = 2489)

Note: The row percentages do not add up to 100 because, in order to aid clarity, the small percentages for 'missing' (ie from 0% and 2% per bar) are excluded.

### Phase of education

Figures 2.2 and 2.3 provide a comparison of results by phase and demonstrate that 'becoming life-long learners', 'learning to learn', 'capacity to work creatively', 'capacity to work collaboratively' and 'achievement across the whole curriculum' are more aligned with the views of primary than secondary school teachers. By contrast, teachers in secondary schools were slightly more likely than those from primary schools to say that 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' reflected their personal view. One-third (33%) of primary teachers said that good results in national tests did not reflect at all their personal view about what achievement should be. Overall, most primary teachers viewed the development of pupils' learning and social skills to be important aspects of their achievement, along with achievement across the whole curriculum, suggesting that these aspects have a particular importance in primary schools.

**Figure 2.2 Extent to which various aspects of achievement reflect teachers' own views – primary teachers**

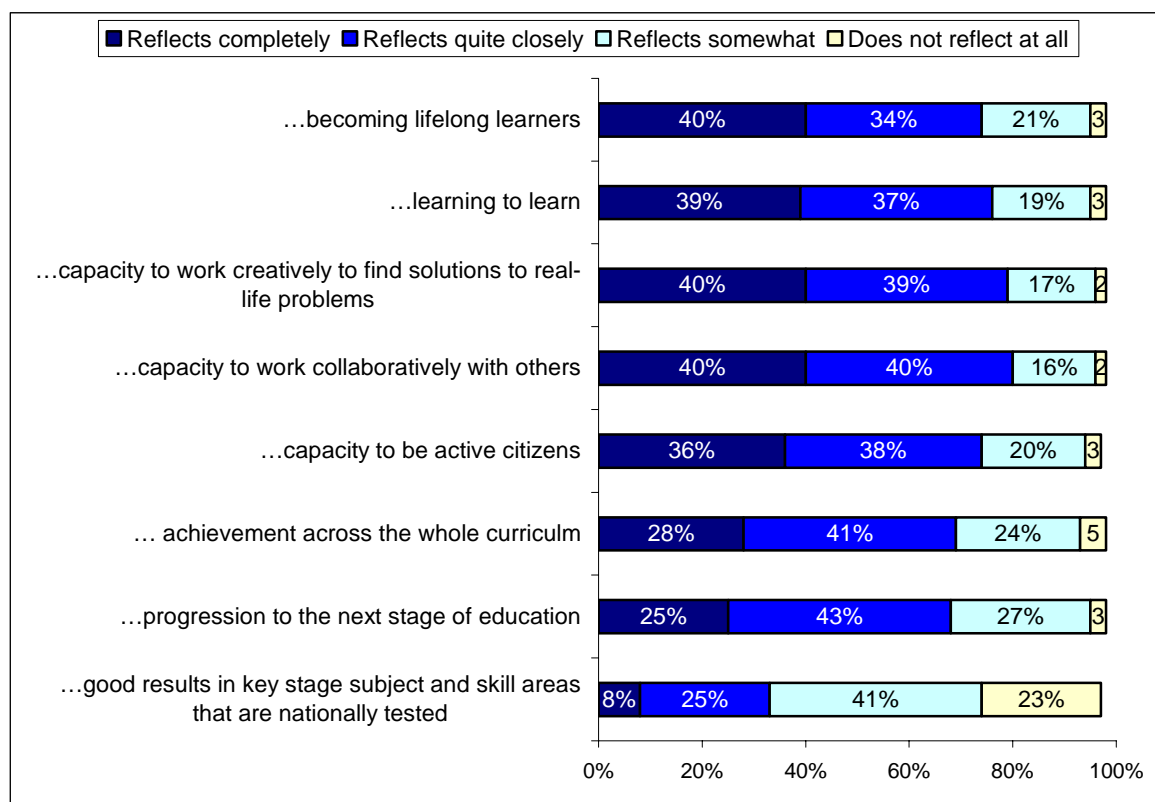


(Base = 1191)

Note: The row percentages do not add up to 100 because, in order to aid clarity, the percentages for 'unable to comment' and 'missing' (ie from 0% and 2% per bar) are excluded.



**Figure 2.3 Extent to which various aspects of achievement reflect teachers' own views – secondary teachers**



(Base = 995)

Note: The row percentages do not add up to 100 because, in order to aid clarity, the percentages for 'unable to comment' and 'missing' (ie from 1% and 4% per bar) are excluded.

Although the large majority of secondary teachers said that almost all aspects of achievement reflected their own views 'completely' or 'closely' (68% to 80%), compared to primary school teachers, secondary teachers were less positive overall.

### Groups of teachers most likely to hold certain beliefs about pupil achievement

To further examine the data, a series of advanced statistical analyses were carried out on the results. Through factor analysis and regression analysis, the findings were analysed to see whether teachers responded to the statements concerning personal beliefs about pupil achievement in a similar patterns. By way of example, if respondents said that 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' reflected their view completely, would they also be likely to believe that achievement should be seen in terms of progression to the next stage of education or training? The analysis then looked across the complete sample of 2489 respondents and grouped those who responded in a similar pattern. The factor analysis identified two main groups:

1. **'Individuals' learning for life'** – this category consists of 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems', 'capacity to work collaboratively with others', 'becoming life-long learners', 'learning to learn', 'capacity to be active citizens' and 'achievement across the curriculum'.
2. **'Outputs as measured by the education system'** – this category consists of 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested', 'progression to the next stage of education or training', and 'achievement across the whole curriculum. Note

that in both groups this last aspect of achievement was not nearly as strongly correlated to the other statements, but had a weaker correlation in both groups.

Linear regression techniques were then applied to the results. Regression allows us to look at a whole range of different variables at once to see which ones have the greatest effect. This helps us to profile the characteristics of teachers most likely to answer questions in a particular way.<sup>2</sup>

This analysis confirmed that the differences by phase that were highlighted in Figures 2.2 and 2.3 are very important. It also substantiated the interpretation that gender is not as important as phase in determining how teachers responded to statements within the grouping 'individuals' learning for life'. It was interesting to note that primary teachers were found to be more likely than secondary teachers to say that 'individuals' learning for life' closely reflected their beliefs. Also, secondary teachers were more likely than primary teachers to register that defining achievement through statements associated with 'output as measured by the education system' reflected their beliefs closely. Men in primary schools were the least likely group to say that these statements reflected their views.

Furthermore, class or subject teachers were less likely to say that 'individuals' learning for life' reflected their views closely, compared to head teachers, assistant and deputy heads, and teachers in 'other' roles. Class teachers were more likely than teachers in 'other' roles to say that 'output as measured by the education system' reflected their views more closely.

In addition to phase, gender and role, the regression modelling examined a range of other background variables. All important background variables are identified in the summary below.

- Groups of teachers that were more likely to say that 'individuals' learning for life' reflected their views about what achievement should be were: primary teachers, women, white teachers with longer lengths of service and in senior roles, and in schools with higher linguistic / socio-economic challenges.
- Groups of teachers more likely to say that 'output as measured by the education system' reflected their own personal beliefs were: secondary teachers, class teachers, those with longer lengths of service.

## **2.2 Teachers' experiences of the level of priority given to each aspect of pupil achievement**

In item 8 of the survey, teachers were asked: 'In your **actual experience**, what level of priority is given to each of the eight versions of pupil achievement' presented in the previous item? The results are displayed in Figure 2.4.

The majority of respondents considered three aspects of achievement to be given 'about the right priority': 'progression to the next stage of education'; 'capacity to work collaboratively with others'; and 'achievement across the whole curriculum'.

For one aspect of achievement – 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' – the responses were very different from all other aspects of achievement. Here, 70% said that it was given too high a priority. In sharp contrast, very few teachers (less than 5%) indicated that each of the following was given too high priority: collaboration; citizenship; life-long learning; and working creatively.

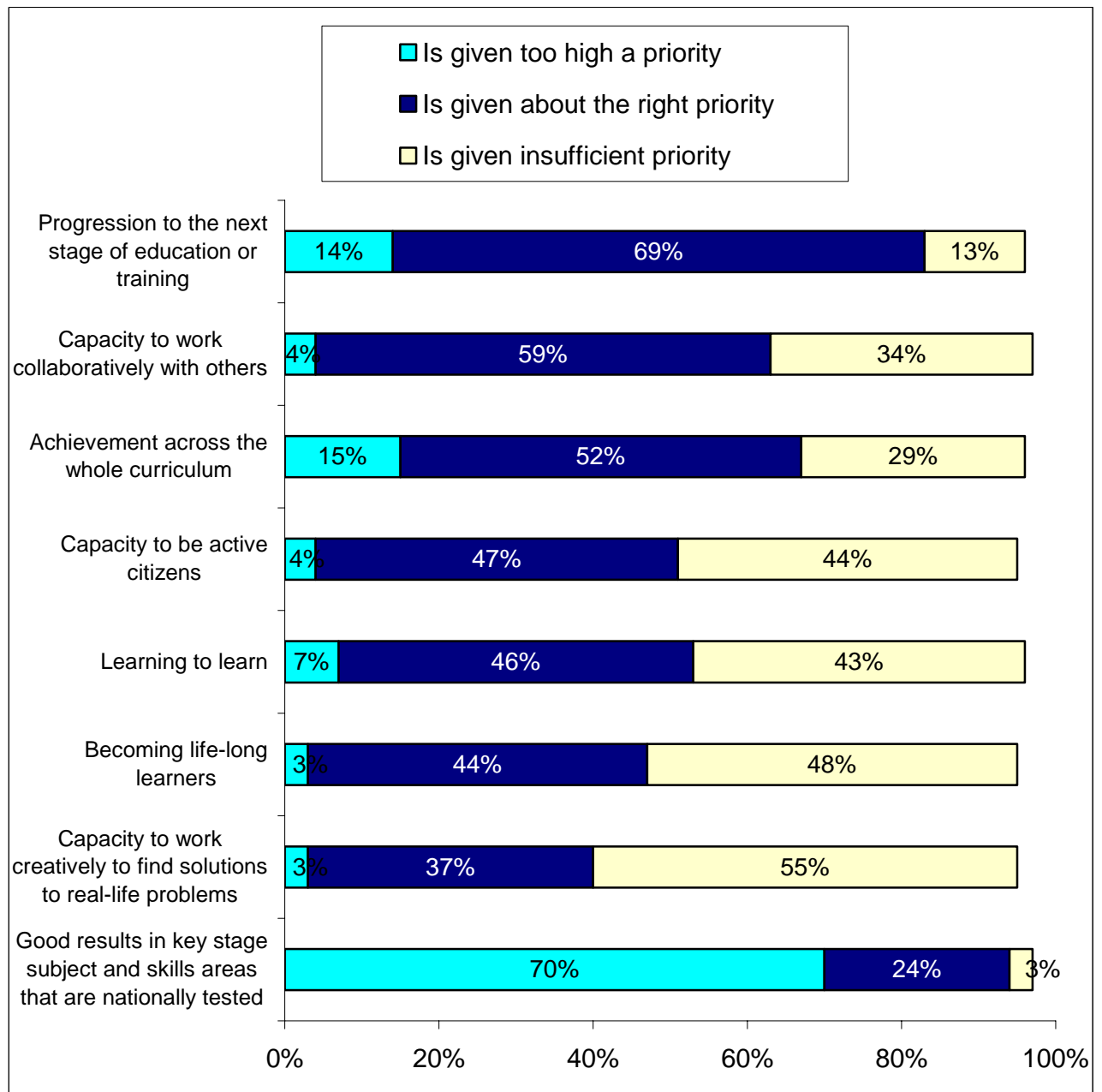
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<sup>2</sup> Further information on both factor analysis and regression analysis conducted for this research can be found in Appendix A, Methodology.

Over one-third of respondents said that the following were given insufficient priority: collaboration; citizenship; learning to learn; life-long learning; and working creatively. With just under (48%) and just over half (55%) of the teachers respectively nominating them, the latter two dimensions in particular were often considered to be lacking the attention they deserved.

Figure 2.4 ranks aspects of achievement from top to bottom according to the percentage of teachers who agreed that the element 'is given about the right priority'.

**Figure 2.4 Teachers' perceptions about the level of priority given to aspects of achievement**



(Base= 2489)

Note: The row percentages do not add up to 100 because, in order to aid clarity, the percentages for 'unable to comment' and 'missing' (ie from 0% and 3% per bar) are excluded.

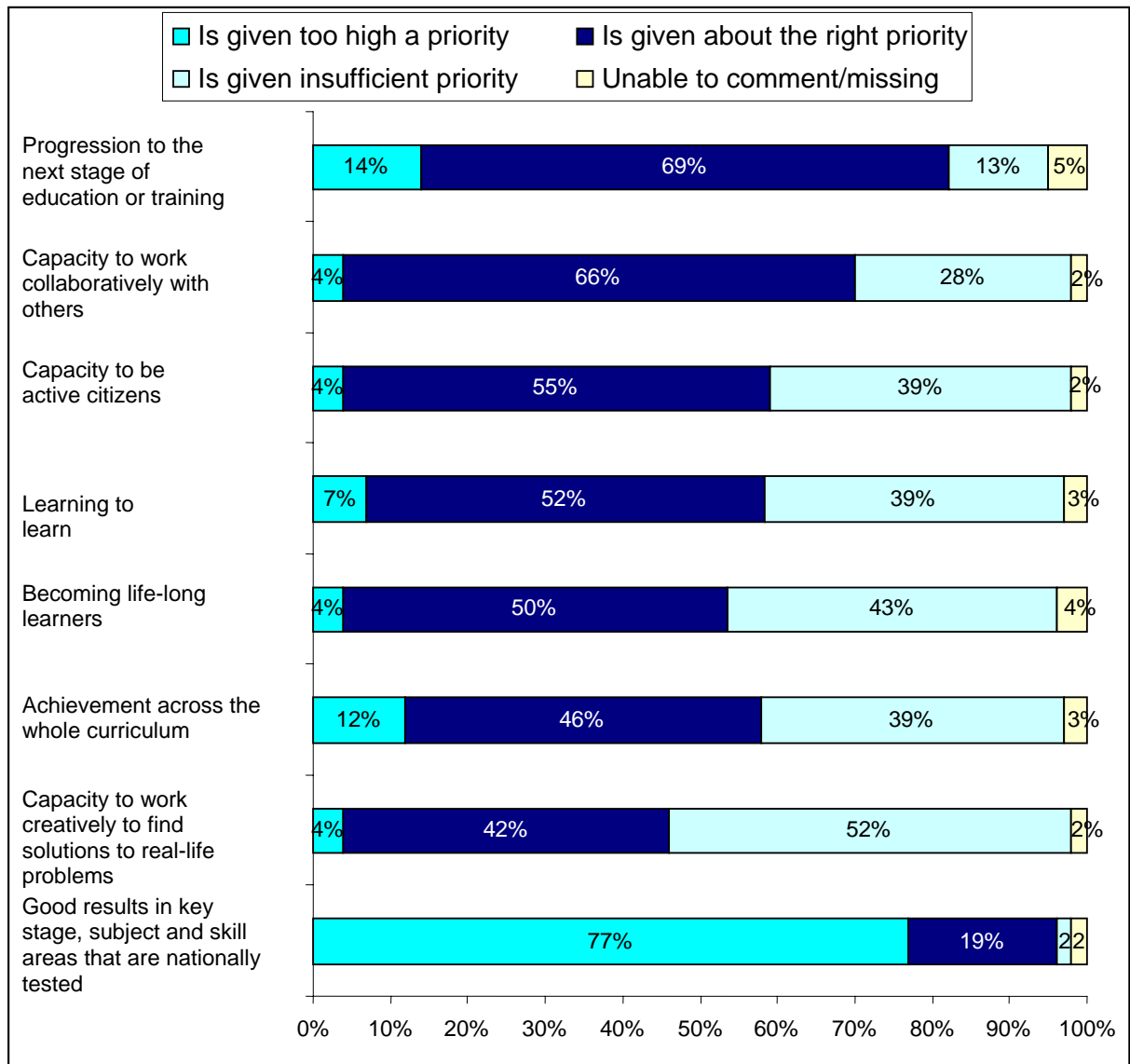
### **Phase of education**

There were many notable differences between primary and secondary school teachers in terms of their actual experience of the level of priority given to each aspect of pupil achievement included in the survey (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6). Important differences were found between the following aspects of achievement: collaboration; citizenship; achievement across the whole curriculum; good results in nationally tested subjects; life-long learning; learning to learn; and creativity.

For collaboration, citizenship, lifelong learning, learning to learn and creativity, a higher percentage of secondary school teachers signalled that these aspects of achievement were given insufficient priority.

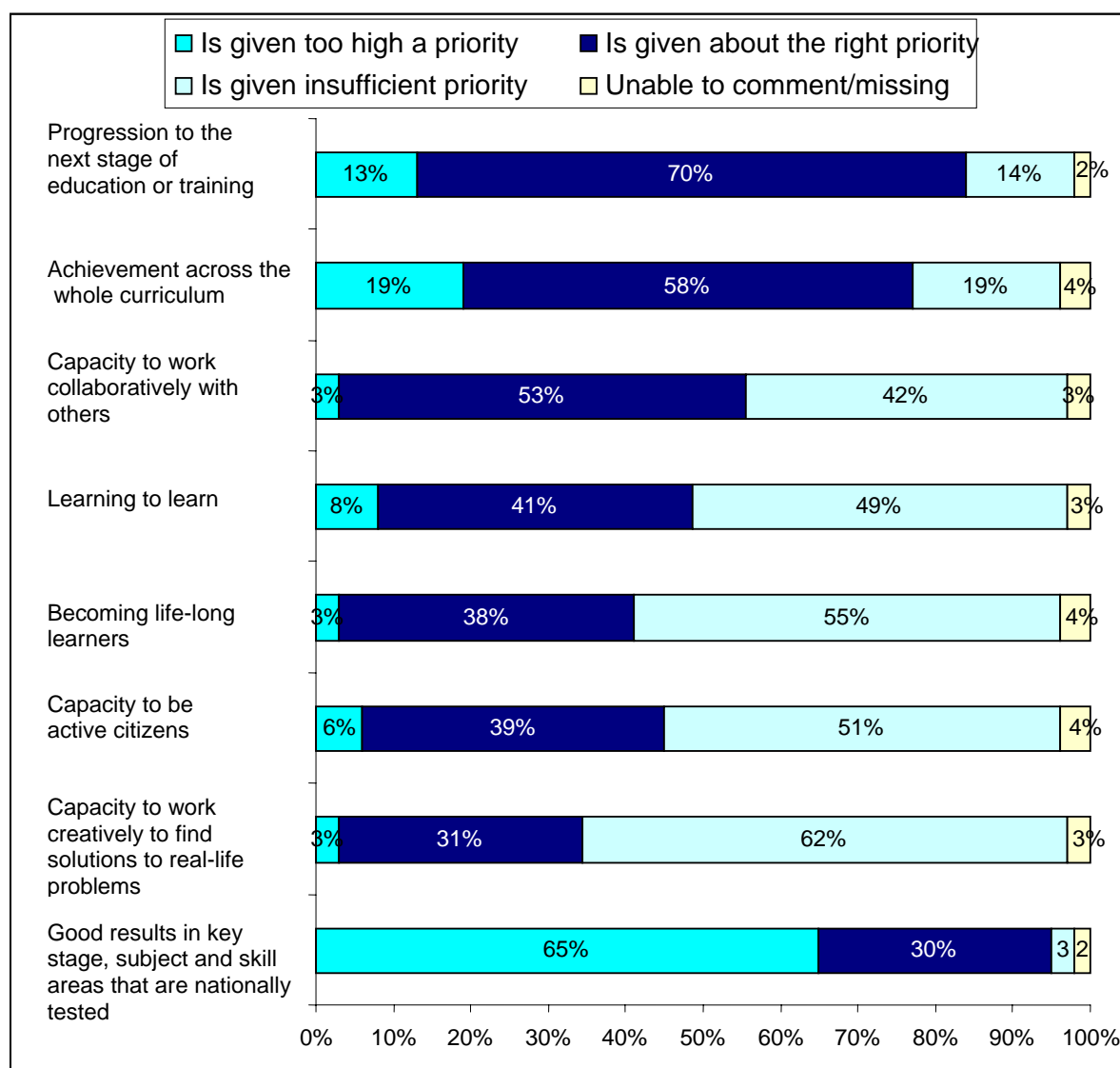
For achievement across the whole curriculum, it was primary school teachers who were more likely to flag this up as receiving insufficient attention and less likely to see it as being given too high a priority. Again, primary teachers were more likely to associate 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' with too high a level of priority.

**Figure 2.5 Primary teachers' perceptions about the levels of priority given to aspects of achievement**



(Base = 1191)

**Figure 2.6 Secondary teachers' perceptions about the levels of priority given to aspects of achievement**



(Base = 995)

### Groups of teachers most likely to have had similar experiences of pupil achievement

To further analyse the data, a series of statistical analyses were carried out on the results. An explanation of the approaches taken can be found in section 2.1 and in Appendix A that accompanies this report. The results of the factor analysis were as follows:

- **factor 1 'individual pupils learning for life'** – this category consists of 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems'; 'capacity to work collaboratively with others'; 'becoming lifelong learners'; 'learning to learn'; and 'capacity to be active citizens';
- **factor 2 'outputs as measured by the education system'** – this category consists of 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested'; 'progression to the next stage of education or training'; and 'achievement across the whole curriculum'; and
- **factor 3 'achievement across the whole curriculum'** – this statement was not related to any of the above and is therefore the sole constituent of this grouping.

These findings are very similar to those discovered in relation to teachers' personal beliefs on aspects of achievement, except that 'achievement across the whole curriculum' is distinct from other statements.

Further statistical analysis was then carried out using linear and logistic regression techniques, to help to profile the characteristics of teachers most likely to answer questions in a particular way.

In summary, primary class teachers with longer length of service and working in schools with relatively lower academic / SEN challenge were more likely to say that 'individual pupils, learning for life' is given too high a priority in the education system as a whole. Class teachers were more likely to say that 'individual pupils, learning for life' was given too high a level of priority, compared to head teachers, assistant and deputy heads. Also, in primary schools, women were more likely than men to say that this aspect was given too high a level of priority.

Groups of teachers more likely to say that 'output as measured by the education system' was given too high a priority were primary teachers and teachers working in schools other than in London. Groups more likely to say that this was given insufficient priority were secondary teachers, those from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, and those in schools that have a relatively high level of academic / SEN challenge.

Finally, some groups were more likely to say that 'achievement across the whole curriculum' was given too high a priority: secondary teachers and those in cross-school roles as opposed to class teachers. Groups more likely to say that this was given insufficient priority were: primary teachers, men, those working full time, and those in schools with higher levels of academic / SEN and linguistic / socio-economic challenge.

## 2.3 Comparison of teachers' beliefs about and experiences of achievement

In almost all cases, as one might expect, the percentage of teachers who signalled that an aspect of achievement was given too high a priority tended to **decrease** as the extent to which it reflected their own views **increased**. Similarly, the percentage of respondents who indicated that an aspect of achievement was given insufficient priority tended to be higher among those registering that it reflected their personal beliefs completely. For example, over one-third of teachers said that the following were, in their experience, given **insufficient priority** within the wider school system:

- collaboration;
- citizenship;
- learning to learn; and
- life-long learning and working creatively.

It was, therefore, unsurprising to find that the large majority of teachers (around 8 in 10) said that each of these aspects of achievement reflected their own personal beliefs completely or quite closely.

Running slightly counter to this trend, among those teachers who 'completely' or 'quite closely' endorsed pupil achievement as good results in nationally tested subjects, a substantial group still considered that it was given too much priority in practice. Of the 682 individual teachers who said that good results in national tests reflected their personal views completely or quite closely, nearly half (49%) said that it was given too high a priority. Additionally, of the 1035 teachers who said that this somewhat reflected their personal

views, a clear majority (74%) recorded that it was given too high a priority. Somewhat less surprisingly, therefore, of the 708 teachers who said that this does not reflect at all their personal views, almost nine out of ten teachers (88%) indicated that this was given too high a priority.

To provide further insight into teachers' views and experiences, teachers were invited to provide 'any other comments' at the end of the questionnaire. A small number of comments focused on achievement in national tests results – none of them supported this view of achievement. Comments included:

*Key stage tests do not reflect the way in which we are trying to educate children. We are trying to build their thinking and problem solving skills ... to make them good citizens ... to make them responsible people who can work cooperatively with other people ...*

*At present I feel that there is far too much emphasis on conveying knowledge to children for SATS [standard assessment tests and tasks], league tables and schools getting good results compared to other schools. There is not space for children to be creative, to spend time exploring areas which interest them, to spend time being children.*

*Everything seems results driven.*

In this chapter, the concept of achievement has been explored through teachers' personal beliefs of what it should be and their perceptions of the priorities each of the different versions are afforded in current practice. In the chapter that follows, teachers' experiences of using teaching and learning strategies to support pupil achievement are examined.



## Chapter three

# The application of teaching and learning strategies for different aspects of achievement

### Summary

This chapter considers the research question, what teaching and learning strategies are deemed by teachers to be effective in supporting the aspects of achievement discussed in the previous chapter? It focuses on teachers' experiences of the effectiveness of four teaching and learning strategies for supporting the various versions of achievement.

The strategies examined were: thinking skills / cognitive acceleration; assessment for learning; structured group discussion; and pupils as researchers.

All four teaching and learning strategies were found by the majority of teachers to be effective in supporting pupils to attain most, although not all, aspects of achievement. Proponents of thinking skills / cognitive acceleration could make a case for this approach as the most universally effective strategy, in that at least half of the teachers gave it a positive rating for all of the eight aspects of achievement. At the other end of the spectrum, assessment for learning had four achievement areas that failed to reach a 50% consensus of positive responses. However, it was seen as the most effective strategy for achieving good results in national tests. It appeared that the strategy of pupils as researchers was more likely to be outside the experience of more teachers than the other three strategies.

Notable minorities of teachers registered that the four teaching and learning strategies were less than effective in supporting 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested', with, for example, one-quarter of teachers indicating that this was not assisted by structured group discussion or pupils as researchers.

Differences between results from primary and secondary school teachers were consistent enough to suggest that all four strategies were found by more primary than secondary school teachers to be effective ways of supporting pupil achievement, almost regardless of the type of achievement.

Finally, in addition to the four teaching and learning strategies studied in this survey, teachers were asked to portray other approaches to teaching and learning that they had created for themselves. Many teachers highlighted how effective classroom practice comes from using a range of different strategies, and that strategies (or combinations of them) are adapted for effective use with particular groups of pupils. In terms of other approaches to teaching and learning, peer learning, personalised learning, cross-curricular teaching, ICT-related strategies, making the curriculum relevant, and peer assessment were cited by appreciable numbers of teachers.

### **3.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies for different aspects of achievement**

Teachers' experiences of the effectiveness of four preselected teaching and learning strategies – judged by independent research to be effective in supporting achievement – to support pupil achievement were sought. The strategies were:

- thinking skills, cognitive acceleration;
- assessment for learning;
- structured group discussion; and
- pupils as researchers.

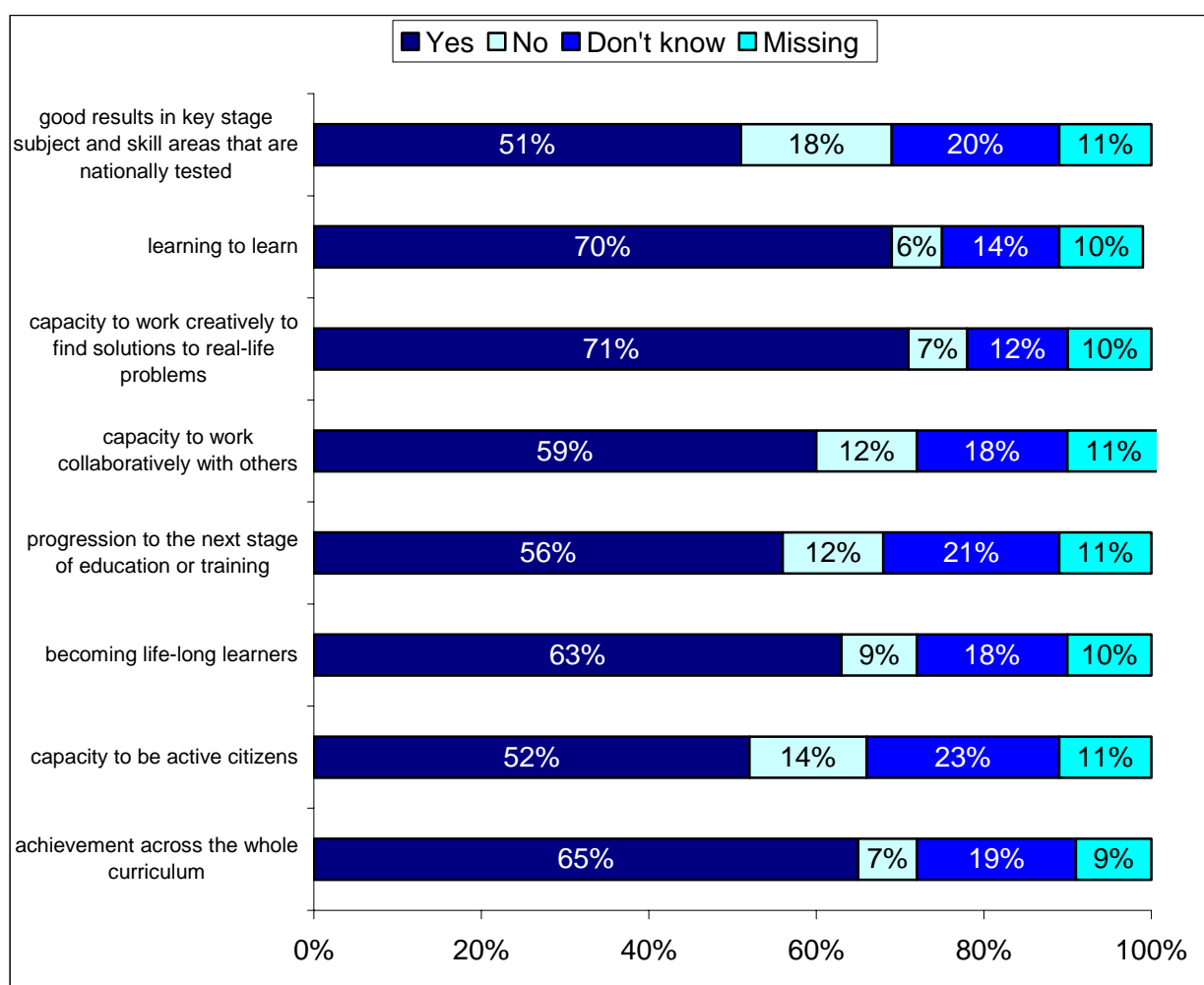
For each teaching and learning strategy, teachers were asked (in item 9) whether it had, in their experience, been effective in supporting pupils to attain each of the same eight aspects of achievement that were the focus of the previous chapter. The results are set out in Figures 3.1 to 3.4. As highlighted in these figures, significant numbers of teachers ticked the 'don't know' boxes or left the individual statements in the item unanswered (ie as shown in the 'missing' column). (In general, more teachers with fewer than five years' length of service said 'don't know', as did more part-time and supply teachers.) In view of the pattern of responses to the other achievement items in the questionnaire and the wording of item 9, it would seem reasonable to assume that most of the 'don't know' and missing responses denote these teachers' lack of experience in the particular strategy on which to base a confident assessment of its efficacy for a specific achievement outcome. In the light of this, the cumulative percentage of those responding 'yes' or 'no' can be read as an indication of the proportion of teachers using – or having knowledge of colleagues using – the four teaching and learning strategies for a particular aspect of achievement. Thus, the item is useful in gauging the relative usage levels of different strategies for supporting various areas of achievement, as well as in providing data on perceptions of their effectiveness.

#### **Thinking skills, cognitive acceleration**

Figure 3.1 suggests that teachers were more likely to have experience of, or at least to know about, the use of thinking skills / cognitive acceleration to support the two aspects of achievement, 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems' (78% responded 'yes' or 'no') and 'learning to learn' (76% did likewise). On the other hand, the area of achievement least likely to be associated with this strategy was 'capacity to be active citizens' – though a majority (66%) still felt able to evaluate it for this type of achievement.

The two achievement areas most commonly associated with the use of thinking skills / cognitive acceleration (ie 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems' and 'learning to learn') also received the highest number of votes for efficacy (71% and 70% respectively). The areas that posted the lowest percentage of 'yes' and highest percentages of 'no' responses were 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' and 'capacity to be active citizens' – though, even here, it should be noted that about half (51% and 52% respectively) of the teachers considered that they were effective in these aspects of achievement.

**Figure 3.1 Whether the strategy of thinking skills, cognitive acceleration is perceived to be effective**



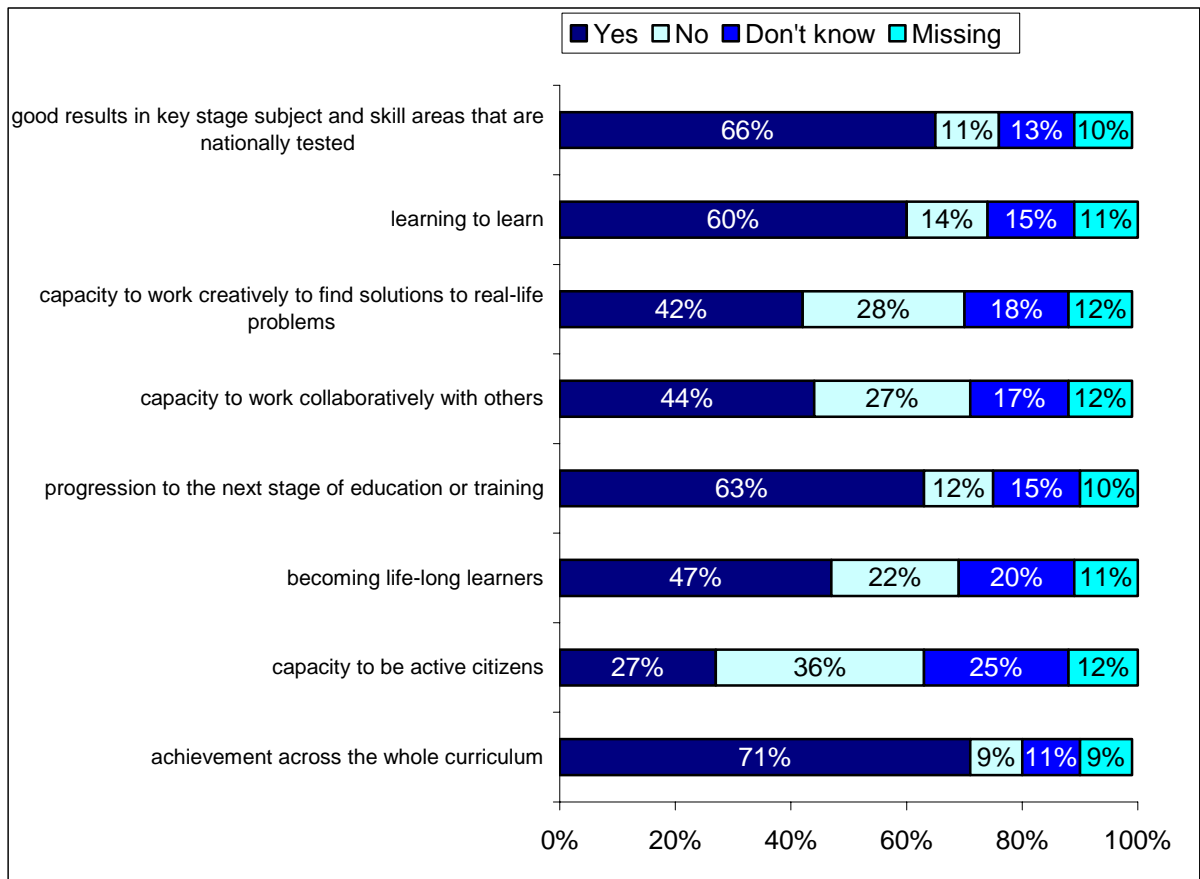
(Base = 2489)

### Assessment for learning

As suggested by the results shown in Figure 3.2, teachers were most likely to have experienced the strategy of assessment for learning in support of the two areas of achievement, 'achievement across the whole curriculum' and 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested', with 80% and 77% respectively giving either a positive or negative answer to the question. Indicating lower levels of application, 63% did so for 'capacity to be active citizens', perhaps because assessment is seen as less appropriate in the domain of citizenship education.

The achievement areas most commonly linked to assessment for learning (i.e. 'achievement across the whole curriculum' and 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested') also attracted the most positive responses for effectiveness. Similarly, assessment for learning was seen as effective in developing 'capacity to be active citizens' by only just over one-quarter (27%) of respondents.

**Figure 3.2 Whether the strategy of assessment for learning is effective**



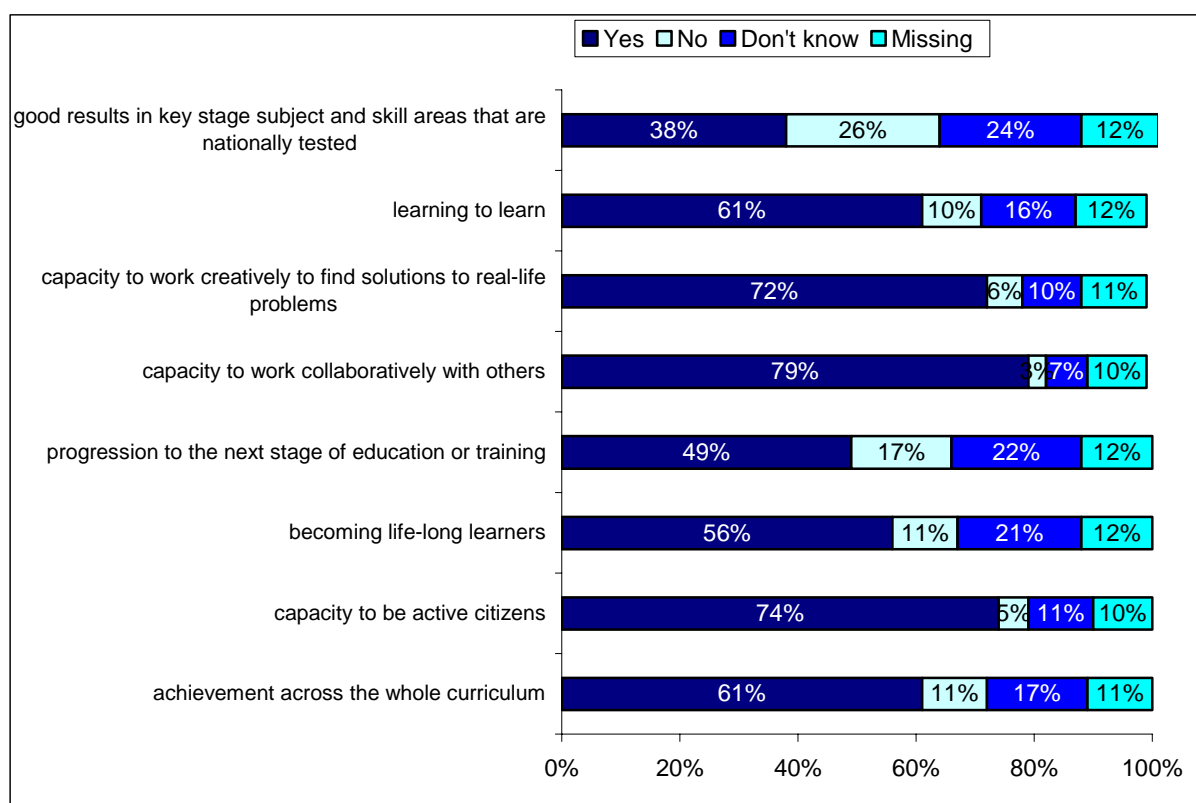
(Base = 2489)

### **Structured group discussion**

Perhaps not surprisingly, the strategy of structured group discussion was most commonly associated with the achievement area, 'capacity to work collaboratively with others', and was most frequently considered effective in this regard, with 79% registering a positive response. It was also received high votes for efficacy in the areas of working creatively and citizenship.

At the other end of the scale, structured group discussion was judged to be effective for 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested' by only 38% of respondents and over one-third (36%) indicated that they 'didn't know' or left the question blank.

**Figure 3.3 Whether the strategy of structured group discussion is effective**



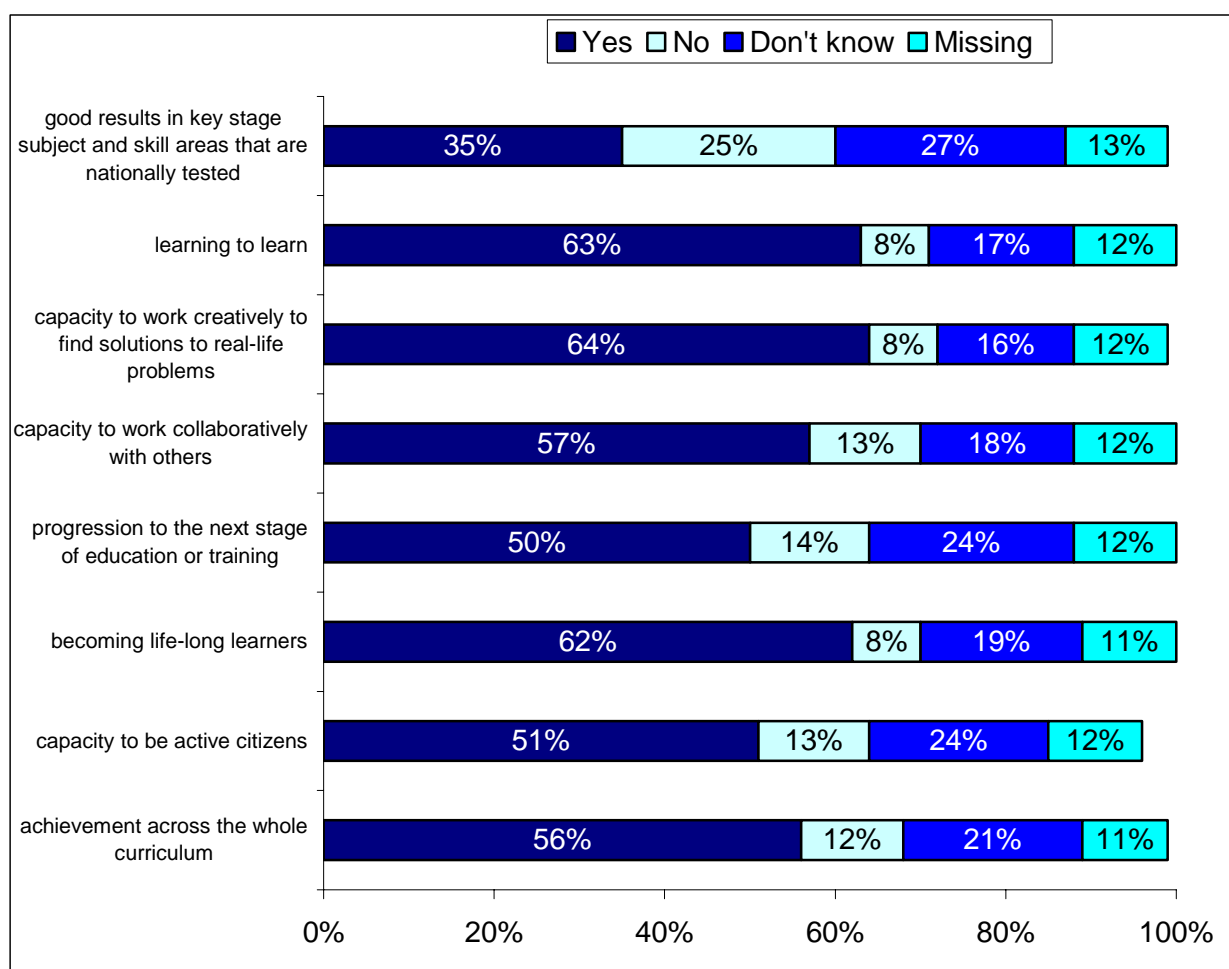
(Base = 2489)

### **Pupils as researchers**

Interestingly, this teaching and learning strategy was left unanswered or ticked 'don't know' by much higher percentages (ranging from 28% to 40%) than the other strategies. It was most likely to be associated with 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems' and least likely to be related to 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested'. In the latter respect, it was perceived in a similar way to structured group discussions, hinting perhaps that teachers felt that the pressures to prepare children for national tests left little time for these strategies.

Pupils as researchers was deemed to be especially effective in the areas of 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems', 'learning to learn' and 'becoming life-long learners'. Commensurate with the finding on experience in this area, it was considered least effective for 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested', for which one-quarter (25%) signalled that it was not effective.

**Figure 3.4 Whether the strategy of pupils as researchers is effective**



(Base = 2489)

### Overall

Arguably, thinking skills / cognitive acceleration was perceived as the most universally effective strategy in that at least half of the teachers gave it a positive rating for all of the eight aspects of achievement. At the other end of the spectrum, assessment for learning had four achievement areas that failed to reach a 50% consensus of positive responses: 'capacity to be active citizens'; 'capacity to work creatively to find solutions to real-life problems'; 'capacity to work collaboratively with others'; and 'pupils becoming life-long learners'. However, it was seen as the most effective strategy for achieving good results in national tests. As mentioned above, it appeared that the strategy of pupils as researchers was more likely to be outside the experience of more teachers than the other three strategies.

A notable minority of teachers said that the four teaching and learning strategies were not effective for supporting certain aspects of achievement. By far the strongest findings were in relation to 'good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested':

- just under one-fifth (18%) of teachers said that this was not effectively supported by thinking skills / cognitive acceleration;
- over one-quarter (26%) said that this was not effectively supported through structured group discussion; and

- one-quarter (25%) also said that was not effectively supported by the approach ‘pupils as researchers’.

### Phase of education

There were differences in responses by phase. Across all teaching and learning strategies and aspects of achievement, primary school teachers were more positive than secondary school teachers. For example, with regard to thinking skills / cognitive acceleration, almost twice as many secondary as primary teachers said that this strategy **did not** help support all aspects of achievement. Similarly, of those who said that thinking skills / cognitive acceleration was not effective in supporting pupils to become active citizens, 33% were primary and 67% were secondary teachers – a 34% difference. Again, while roughly the same proportions of primary school respondents considered that assessment for learning was or was not effective in supporting pupils to become active citizens (35% and 39% respectively), the proportion of secondary school teachers registering that it was not effective (44%) was higher than that of those indicating that it was (27%). Overall, the findings suggest that all four strategies were found by more primary than secondary teachers to be effective ways of supporting pupil achievement, almost regardless of the type of achievement.

## 3.2 Other teaching and learning strategies perceived to be effective for supporting pupil achievement

Teachers responding to the survey were asked for details of any teaching and learning strategy that they **had created themselves** over and above the four presented in item 9. This was an open question, item 10 on the questionnaire. There were no prompts in the question as to the themes of responses, and thus there was the potential for responses to address a very wide variety of themes.

Although teachers were encouraged to give details of strategies that they had created for themselves, in the main most identified approaches that had been developed by others but then adapted for their own classroom or school. Indeed, some respondents made this point explicitly, saying that “*nothing is new*” or that “*this is not my own idea but I use it effectively in the classroom*”. Many stated or indicated in their comments that they found the best effect to come from using a range of different strategies. ‘Strategies’ is loosely defined, as many of the suggestions appeared to be at the philosophical, rather than the more practical and tactical end of the ‘strategy’ spectrum. The following approaches were mentioned with some frequency:

- **peer learning or modelling** – some used these actual terms, while others mentioned “*partnered learning*”, “*talk partners*” or “*pupils as teachers*”; in the latter vein, one teacher commented, “*pupils as instructors. Pupils are taught a particular aspect of a topic, which could incorporate a practical skill in a small group, by the teacher, and then each of them teach[es] another small group of pupils*”;
- **personalising learning** – although these comments shared some affinities with assessment for learning (eg target setting), they were generally described in terms of a discourse about individuating learning (eg “*developing an atmosphere of first respect in which students are able to discuss their learning needs*”);
- **cross-curricular teaching** – the term itself was nearly always used, and occasionally respondents also referred to literacy and mathematics across the curriculum;
- **ICT-related strategies**, including interactive learning, working online with students, electronic learning platforms and “*modern technologies to engage individuals with interactive learning tools and to facilitate networks of learners*”;
- the broad strategy of **making the curriculum relevant to the real lives of pupils**, eg “*importance must be placed on the real world / environment around them*” and using “*children's own cultural experiences and knowledge*”;

- **peer assessment**, though again, for many, this would be seen as part of assessment for learning; and
- **the importance of “behaviour for learning”** – these comments highlighted the role of effective behaviour management for the learning environment (eg “good classroom management” and “clearly defined behaviour boundaries”).

It should be noted that many teachers who work in special needs schools or with a SEN specialism said that the four stated teaching and learning strategies (and other aspects of the questionnaire) did not always relate to their pupils, especially those with severe learning difficulties.

In their comments at the end of the questionnaire, some teachers gave a little more insight into their professional craft as they shared their thinking about effective teaching and learning strategies and related broader approaches to good practice in the classroom. Several teachers highlighted in a variety of ways the importance of flexibility and taking account of the needs of individual children, which again echoed central ideas in the concept of ‘personalised learning’.

*Linking theory, practice, knowledge and understanding to life skills needed for the world of work and employment. [Also] flexibility towards the needs of learners and linking in cross-curricular learning through drama – in addition to the skills and practice of performance.*

*I try to keep individuals’ needs and learning styles in mind to plan, teach and assess. I have seen change in the learning attitude due to this approach. Pupils are more engaged during lessons. Pupils are becoming good critics of their own learning and thinking skills. Pupils are able to self-assess and say what they need to do next to get better. Pupils are not afraid to say when they find something difficult. They know that I will try to find other ways of explaining ... Recently, I have noticed that some children in my class are becoming confident in extending their own learning.*

*I think the foundation stage guidance allows teachers the flexibilities to follow the children’s ideas.*

Several commented on what they thought teachers themselves should do to support achievement, and some indicated that this was how all good teachers ought to be:

*Positive learning atmosphere, well-prepared, enthusiasm for the subject, good relationships, disciplined / caring approach, being approachable.*

*I believe that teachers need to be enthusiastic about what they teach.*

So far in this report, beliefs and experiences relating to pupil achievement have been explored, and perceptions of teaching and learning strategies to support pupil achievement have been garnered. The next chapter attempts to add further to our understanding of teachers’ perspectives on achievement, this time by focusing on the identity and characteristics of underachieving pupils.



## Chapter four

# Underachieving pupils: who are they and why are they underachieving?

### Summary

This chapter reports findings from two open questions asking teachers which groups of pupils are, in their experience, most at risk of underachieving and what the main barriers to achievement are for these groups of pupils.

Teachers identified many different groups at risk of underachievement. Most responses could be grouped into one of seven themes:

- parenting and the influence of parents;
- ability / achievement / attainment;
- gender and ethnicity;
- special educational needs;
- individuals' motivations to learn and disaffection;
- family economic background; and
- home and family conditions.

Teachers' responses about the barriers faced by underachieving groups fell into two main categories: those to do with the characteristics of pupils and their background, and those relating to the social, economic and familial contexts in which the children are located and the influence that these factors have upon them.

In more detail, a notable minority of teachers said that the particular frames of mind and behavioural traits of individual pupils were one of the main barriers to achievement for underachieving groups. Included here was peer pressure, negative attitudes towards learning, and low personal motivation, expectation and aspiration in life in general.

Lack of parental support was identified by many teachers as impacting on pupil achievement.

Teachers also identified school-related barriers, which included insufficient staff in appropriate roles, large class sizes, and time and other resources with SEN pupils, leading to others getting 'overlooked' within schools. A few teachers mentioned the perceived inflexibility of the wider education system in accommodating groups of learners at risk of underachieving.

All UK governments in recent times have wrestled with the problems of underachieving groups in our schools – to mention but a few, the ROSLA (Raising of the School Leaving Age) group in the early 1970s, Sir Keith Joseph's 'bottom 40 per cent' in the late 1980s, and 'vulnerable children' in the 1990s. While it is well known which groups nationally are currently deemed to be underperforming (ie achieving less-good results than their peers for no intrinsic reason), the GTC wanted to hear from teachers about their perceptions of underachieving groups.

### 4.1 Groups of pupils at most risk of underachieving

Item 12 of the survey invited teachers to say, in their experience, which groups of pupils, were most at risk of underachieving. This question was open in format so that respondents were free to write what they wished in their own words.

Many of the respondents to this item provided multiple answers, and many individual teachers identified several groups at risk and/or risk factors. Hence, collectively the respondents identified numerous different groups at risk of underachievement due to a variety of factors and influences.

*I cannot generalise about this. I visit many schools in the course of my work and the access I have to their data shows many different trends and patterns.*

The above comment is worth reflecting upon a little longer. In it is an implicit suggestion not only that the underlying reasons behind underachievement vary from school to school, but it also introduces a way of thinking about the meaning of the term 'underachievement' that is reflected in teachers' actual experiences. That is, underachievement can be seen as a measured level of achievement by a pupil that is below the level that would have been expected for other pupils in comparable educational settings. At this early stage in the chapter, it is also worth noting that 'underachievement' is not the same as 'low achievement', as many of the respondents quoted in this section also recognise.

Moving on to discuss the main body of the data, most responses could be grouped into one of seven themes. These are displayed in Table 4.1. Each theme comprises a number of subcategories or codes. In this table, only results where at least 1% of all teachers said the same thing are reported. The percentages for the seven themes in Table 4.1 are all 10% or above, which is substantial when considering that this was an open question. Below the seven themes, the table shows other groups that did not reach the 10% mark.

The seven themes presented in the table tend to fall into two broad overarching types of underachieving groups. The broad type with the largest percentage of nominations focuses on the personal characteristics and attributes of the children themselves (ie themes 2, 3, 4 and 5 – ability, achievement and attainment, gender and ethnicity, SEN, and motivation towards learning). Shifting the definitional spotlight away from the individual child, the second broad type targets the social, economic and familial contexts in which the children are located, and the influence that these factors have upon them (ie themes 1, 6 and 7 – parenting and families, the economic background of the family and the home or family conditions). Interestingly, a third overarching way of constructing underachieving groups – at-risk groups defined by the prevailing education, curriculum and assessment systems – was limited to a very small minority of teachers (eg one noted, "*those kids that don't fit the standardised model of curriculum we serve them*"). For most teachers, the main source of underachievement lay elsewhere than in the schooling system itself, though, as we shall see, the system is perceived to set up some barriers to supporting achievement in these groups.

One of the ways that the education system has been seen to contribute inadvertently to pupil underachievement is through the process of teachers' self-fulfilling prophecies: underachievement is extended by teachers expecting, and therefore accepting, that all members of risk groups will not realise their full potential. However, it should be stressed that there were very few indications of such assumptions in teachers' responses to this question. Indeed, several of those who did respond conveyed a sense of their commitment to address the needs of the underachieving groups they identified (eg "*the disaffected and unhappy cannot achieve their full potential. Pupils need to feel valued and safe*").

The pupils most commonly reported by teachers to be at risk of underachievement were those with parents not seen to be actively supporting the educational process (27%). This 27% was made up of 17% who cited the general reason of 'lack of parental / home support'. An additional 10% were more specific, noting: parents who do not value education, have low aspirations for their child's achievement at school and in life and/or have themselves got educational and/or parenting skills needs.

**Table 4.1 Teachers' nominations of groups most at risk of underachieving and/or risk factors**

Themes	Subcategories(codes)	%
1. Parenting and influence of parents (27%)	• Lack of parental / home support	17
	• Parents who do not value education	5
	• Parents who are under-educated / have poor functional literacy	2
	• Parents with poor parenting skills	2
	• Parents with low aspirations / expectations of their child	1
2. Ability, achievement and attainment (26%)	• Below- average and low ability / achievers	10
	• Talented and gifted / high ability / achievers	8
	• Middle ability / achievers	8
3. Gender and ethnicity (24%)	• Boys	13
	• BME boys and girls	6
	• White boys and girls	5
4. Special educational needs (19%)	• Special educational needs (general)	10
	• Emotional, social and behavioural difficulties	9
5. Individuals' motivation to learn and disaffection (12%)	• Low self-expectations / aspirations / aims in life and unmotivated, including lack of a role model	5
	• Disaffected pupils	3
	• Low self-esteem / lack of confidence	3
	• Not valuing education	1
6. Family economic background (11%)	• Pupils from deprived areas / backgrounds	7
	• Pupils from low-income families	4
7. Home / family conditions (10%)	• Family-related problems, including domestic violence	6
	• Single parent families and where pupils have been through their parents' divorce	4
Communication in English (4%)	• English as an additional language	4
Basic skills needs (4%)	• Literacy and numeracy levels very low for pupils' ages	2
Well behaved / quiet (2%)	• Quiet / well behaved pupils in class	2
Looked-after children (2%)	• Children looked after / in care	2
Move schools a lot (2%)	• Travellers and others who move school frequently	2
Attendance (2%)	• Truancy	2
Class size (1%)	• Large class sizes	1
Peer pressure (1%)	• Pressure from peers	1

Notes: 10% non-response. Total of 6% 'other' not included in Table 4.1 due to less than 1% per code. Multicode.

## **Parenting and influence of parents**

One teacher summarised their experience of those most likely to underachieve as:

*Children whose parents are not involved enough in their development, through lack of understanding, time, or commitment.*

This multifaceted comment was quite typical. Another example of the interplay of different aspects of parental influence is detailed in the following comments:

*In my experience, the children who are at most risk of underachieving are those from backgrounds / homes where there is no, or limited, support or guidance. Many of the children in my classes who are struggling come from families whose parents are poorly educated themselves, or who put no importance on education. They tend to not support their children through homework, reading at home, learning of tables, help with projects or attending parent's meetings / evenings. There can, at times, be a feeling that some parents do not model the importance of education and there is an ethos of a lack of respect from some parents towards school.*

## **Ability, achievement and attainment**

Almost equally as common as parental influence was a broad theme about an individual learner's level of attainment (26%). Teachers used a variety of terms to describe this group, for example, "more able", "middle ability", "lower than average achievers", "below expected levels of attainment". It is interesting to note that approximately equal number of teachers said that pupils who tended to achieve at higher, medium / average and lower levels were at most risk of underachieving. In creating this broad grouping, which includes the distinct concepts of ability / attainment / achievement at higher / middling / lower levels, it is acknowledged that a great range of pupils are encapsulated.

*The more able groups, as the SEN groups and target groups get a lot of support and their underachievement is identified, but the higher attaining groups are left as long as they are reaching a certain standard and therefore are underachieving their potential.*

*The 'middle-group' / slightly below-average children. Gifted and talented children.*

*Low to middle ability pupils who are able to 'coast' through the education process.*

*The gifted and talented group and lower ability (not SEN though).*

*Low achievers who need boost in confidence.*

*Children who are slightly below expected levels of attainment.*

## **Gender and ethnicity**

This grouping was identified by teachers, some of whom cited just 'boys' (13%), while others cited the following combinations of ethnicity and gender: boys and girls from BME backgrounds (6%), and boys and girls who are white (5%).

*Black boys are at risk of underachieving in particular. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in general.*

*Boys – mainly from ethnic backgrounds, but increasingly lower-middle class white boys.*

*In my subject, it is mostly white working-class boys who underachieve.*

*Low ability boys, high ability girls.*

### **Special educational needs**

As illustrated by the observations presented below, teachers emphasised learning difficulties and behavioural needs, and the challenges that pupils consequently face in accessing the curriculum.

*Those with undiagnosed SEN, for example, ADHD [attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder], dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia or Asperger's. Where the school is unwilling to assess pupils' potential for learning, ie cognitive abilities, or screen for learning difficulties that create barriers to learning at the mainstream pace of delivery.*

*Pupils with behavioural problems.*

*Low ability pupils who cannot access the curriculum fully due to SEN (or EAL [English as an additional language]).*

*Pupils with autism.*

### **Individuals' motivation to learn and disaffection**

There are several dimensions to this broad group, including disaffection, self-esteem and aspiration. All were found to have an impact on pupils, increasing the risk of underachievement.

*The disaffected and unhappy cannot achieve their full potential: pupils need to feel valued and safe.*

*Disaffected and vulnerable students.*

*Unmotivated children who are perceived to be 'difficult' but actually just need to be inspired!*

### **Family economic background**

The teachers who highlighted this group wrote of pupils from poor working class backgrounds, who are socially and economically deprived.

*Children from low income households.*

*Children whose backgrounds are less privileged, in economic terms.*

### **Home / family conditions**

Another theme was to do with the home background, but focused on circumstances at home that were not conducive to the emotional stability that pupils require for effective learning.

*Pupils who have problems at home that mean they are unable to participate in school properly.*

A small number of teachers indicated that some groups of pupils were adversely affected by ways in which schools and teaching are organised, and are therefore at greater risk of underachievement.

*Those who fall below average continue to progress below average due to limited TA [teaching assistant] support and large class sizes.*

*Children who find the rigidness of classroom teaching hard to deal with, specifically those who need more individual attention due to personal circumstances / family environment.*

*[Children who] don't fit the standardised model of curriculum we serve them.*

*There are children that I teach that will never achieve a Level 4 at KS2 because they are not capable of doing so – we need to recognise that and work at things that they can achieve so they don't become disaffected.*

*Those children who are naturally clever though for different reasons find the education system boring and not very challenging for them to make the effort.*

Some teachers' comments suggested that "quiet girls" and those who "don't struggle overly and don't always look for a challenge" can "go unnoticed in the classroom" by teachers, or are "left to get on with it". The following contribution expands on this view:

*Children working in the middle groups in a class because children working in the bottom third of the class are highlighted and programmes are created to support them (support groups) and children working in the upper third of the class are stretched. It always seems to be the middle group that mosey along coping with the work and therefore no support or extension is provided.*

## **4.2. Barriers faced by underachieving pupils**

In item 13, teachers were asked what the main barriers were to the group(s) of pupils that they had previously identified as being at risk of underachievement. A total of 2440 separate comments were provided by teachers – some gave several different answers in this multicode question, and 12% of respondents gave no answers.

Teachers' responses fell into two main categories: those to do with the characteristics of the pupils and their background and those presented by school organisation, resources or the education system. Teachers also highlighted features of the school and education system that made it difficult for them to support the achievement of 'at-risk' groups.

### **Pupils' personal and background characteristics**

Lack of support from parents / home was most frequently cited as a barrier to tackling underachievement (23%), and a further 5% referred to parental attitudes to education, learning and/or school. Additional comments focused on parents' / carers' level of education – poor parenting skills (4%) and 'uneducated' or with poor functional literacy (2%) – and parents' / carers' low expectations and aspirations of their children (2%).

A further 4% mentioned lack of stability or other problems at home, which is probably, but not definitely, also influenced by parents / carers.

The particular frames of mind and behavioural traits of individual pupils were cited by many teachers as barriers facing underachieving pupils. Results most worthy of note follow:

- 14% of responses were about pupils' low self-expectations, aspirations and ambition, lack of interest and motivation in life in general;
- 6% of comments mentioned pupils who are low in confidence and self-esteem;

- a further 15% of responses referred to pupils' personal characteristics within educational settings – negative attitudes to learning and low levels of concentration / listening skills;
- 8% of responses were about behaviour problems, disruptive and antisocial behaviour; and
- 7% of responses referred to peer pressure and a further 4% of responses mentioned that a lack of role models was a barrier facing underachieving pupils.

Far fewer teachers (9%) said that the quality of socio-economic background that children experience presented a barrier, compared to parental influence or individual children's attitudes and characteristics. Socio-economic background factors were low family incomes and deprived neighbourhoods.

### **School organisation and resources and the education system**

Other responses focused on school-related barriers. These could be categorised as follows:

- teaching quality, time for teachers to support underachieving pupils, a lack of support staff in classrooms – 28% of responses:

*Lack of parental support to aid learning. Few TAs.*

*Lack of support in the classroom.*

- class size and challenges faced by teaching mixed ability classes – 10% of responses:

*Too large class sizes.*

*Having to provide support for the weaker children because you want them to enjoy learning and be able to access the curriculum.*

*Extending the brighter children to ensure that they achieve their full potential.*

- overemphasis on national tests and rigidity of the education system and curriculum – 10% of responses:

*National agenda geared elsewhere*

*Lack of an engaging and relevant curriculum*

*Curriculum requirements are too rigid especially at GCSE – the exam structure is too prescriptive and at times irrelevant to these students.*

This is the final chapter in Section A of the report, which has explored perceptions and experiences relating to achievement, including underachievement. Attention is turned in Section B to effective ways of supporting pupils to achieve.





## **Section B**

### **Supporting achievement: national policies and local actions**



## Chapter five

### Impact of national policies

#### Summary

This chapter explores teachers' perceptions of the level of impact of different policies. Teachers' views were sought in relation to 16 current national policies and initiatives. They were asked in their experience what impact 16 different policies had on supporting achievement.

Most, but not all, national policies had, in most teachers' experience had a positive impact on supporting achievement. For example, of those who had actually experienced the policies, over 80% registered that the following initiatives had led to a positive impact in support of pupil achievement: investment in ICT; enhancing teacher development; new school buildings; and assessment for learning. In addition to those, over half of all respondents said that the following policies had produced a positive impact: collaboration and networking; developments in school leadership; Every Child Matters (60%); and personalised learning (54%).

In general, the policies that the greatest percentages of teachers considered had had a negative or no impact focused on external and internal accountability (ie school inspection; performance tables; and performance management), and the choice agenda (extending parental choice and diversifying types of school).

Head teachers and assistant or deputy heads were frequently more positive than other teachers about the impact of many policies.

#### 5.1 Impact of policies on supporting achievement

In item 14, teachers' views were sought on 16 current national policies and initiatives. They were asked 'in your experience, what impact have the following policies had on supporting achievement?'.

A summary of these results is provided in Table 5.2. For several policies, a substantial minority of respondents said that they did not personally have experience of the policy. For example, a large minority (40%) of teachers said that they had no experience of diversifying types of schools (and a further 5% did not respond to this question); this may be because the status of their school had not changed. Further, about one-quarter of teachers had no experience of extending parental choice (27%), new school buildings (27%), or extended school provision (25%), and one-fifth had no experience of personalised learning. In order to avoid any distortion of the percentages caused by including the 'no experience' and missing responses, Table 5.2 offers the percentages derived from both the inclusion and exclusion of these data. Where the percentages for 'no experience' and missing responses are relatively high, the effect of basing the percentages on those who had experience of a particular policy can be quite substantial. For example, based on the inclusion of these two data types, 41% of teachers indicated that diversifying types of schools had either had 'no impact' or 'negative impact'. When those percentages are based only on respondents who had experienced this policy, 75% of those who had experienced school diversification registered that it had had either 'no impact' or a 'negative impact'.

Over half of the teachers reported that eight out of these sixteen policies had had a positive impact on supporting achievement:

- over three-quarters (77%) of teachers said that investment in ICT had had a positive impact;

- about seven in ten said that assessment for learning and enhancing teacher development had had a positive impact (71% and 68%, respectively);
- as percentages of those who had actually experienced the policies, four attracted positive impact ratings of over 80%: investment in ICT; enhancing teacher development; new school buildings; and assessment for learning; and
- over half (but less than two-thirds) said that the following five policies had a positive impact: collaboration and networking (62%); developments in school leadership (60%); Every Child Matters (60%); new school buildings (57%); and personalised learning (54%).

At the other end of the range, over half (56%) of teachers said that performance tables had had a negative impact on supporting achievement. It should be noted that performance tables have been renamed 'DCSF school and college achievement and attainment tables' since the survey took place.<sup>3</sup> Also, one-third (34%) of teachers said that school inspection had had a negative impact.

In terms of negative impact, on 10 out of the 16 policies, fewer than 5% said that they had a negative impact. In general, the policies that the greatest proportions of teachers said had had a negative or no impact focused on external and internal accountability (ie school inspection, performance tables and performance management) and the choice agenda (extending parental choice and diversifying types of school). Over one-third of teachers said that each of the following policies had had 'no impact' on supporting achievement: performance management (39%); recently introduced changes to the duties of teachers (38%); and equalities legislation (37%)<sup>4</sup>. This indicates that substantial numbers of teachers have experienced the policies, but have not felt any positive impact to changes implemented in these areas.

It is also possible that individual teachers responding to this survey have not had to make any such adjustments due to existing practices and facilities and/or the nature of the community that is served.

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<sup>3</sup> New achievement and attainment tables have a contextualised value added (CVA) measure which adjusts predicted achievement to take account of not only prior attainment, but also a range of other factors observed to impact on performance which are outside a school's control.

<sup>4</sup> In recent years, parliament has passed a variety of equalities legislation. This legislation puts an onus on public authorities, including schools, to promote and ensure equality of opportunity and elimination of discrimination. Specific duties have been introduced for schools on race equality (2000), disability equality (2006) and gender equality (2007). We might expect that some schools have not yet had time to embed more-recently introduced duties.

**Table 5.2 National policies and their perceived impact on supporting achievement (%)**

	<b>Positive impact</b>	<b>No impact</b>	<b>Negative impact</b>	<b>No experience</b>	<b>Missing</b>
Investment in ICT	77 (84)	12 (13)	3 (3)	5	3
Assessment for learning	71 (81)	14 (15)	3 (4)	8	4
Enhancing teacher development	68 (82)	14 (17)	1 (1)	13	4
Collaboration and networking between schools	62 (76)	17 (21)	2 (3)	15	3
Development of school leadership	60 (73)	19 (23)	3 (4)	14	4
Every Child Matters	60 (67)	28 (31)	2 (2)	6	4
New school buildings	57 (82)	12 (17)	1 (1)	27	3
Personalised learning	54 (71)	20 (27)	2 (2)	20	4
Equalities legislation	39 (48)	37 (47)	4 (5)	16	4
Performance management	38 (42)	39 (43)	14 (15)	5	4
Extended school provision	37 (52)	31 (43)	3 (4)	25	4
Recent changes to duties of teachers	34 (41)	38 (45)	12 (14)	11	5
School inspection	31 (34)	26 (29)	34 (37)	5	4
Extending parental choice	15 (22)	30 (44)	23 (34)	27	5
Diversifying types of schools	14 (25)	24 (44)	17 (31)	40	5
Performance tables	12 (13)	24 (26)	56 (61)	5	3

Note: the figures in brackets represent the relevant percentage when the 'no experience' and 'missing' cases are excluded from the calculation.

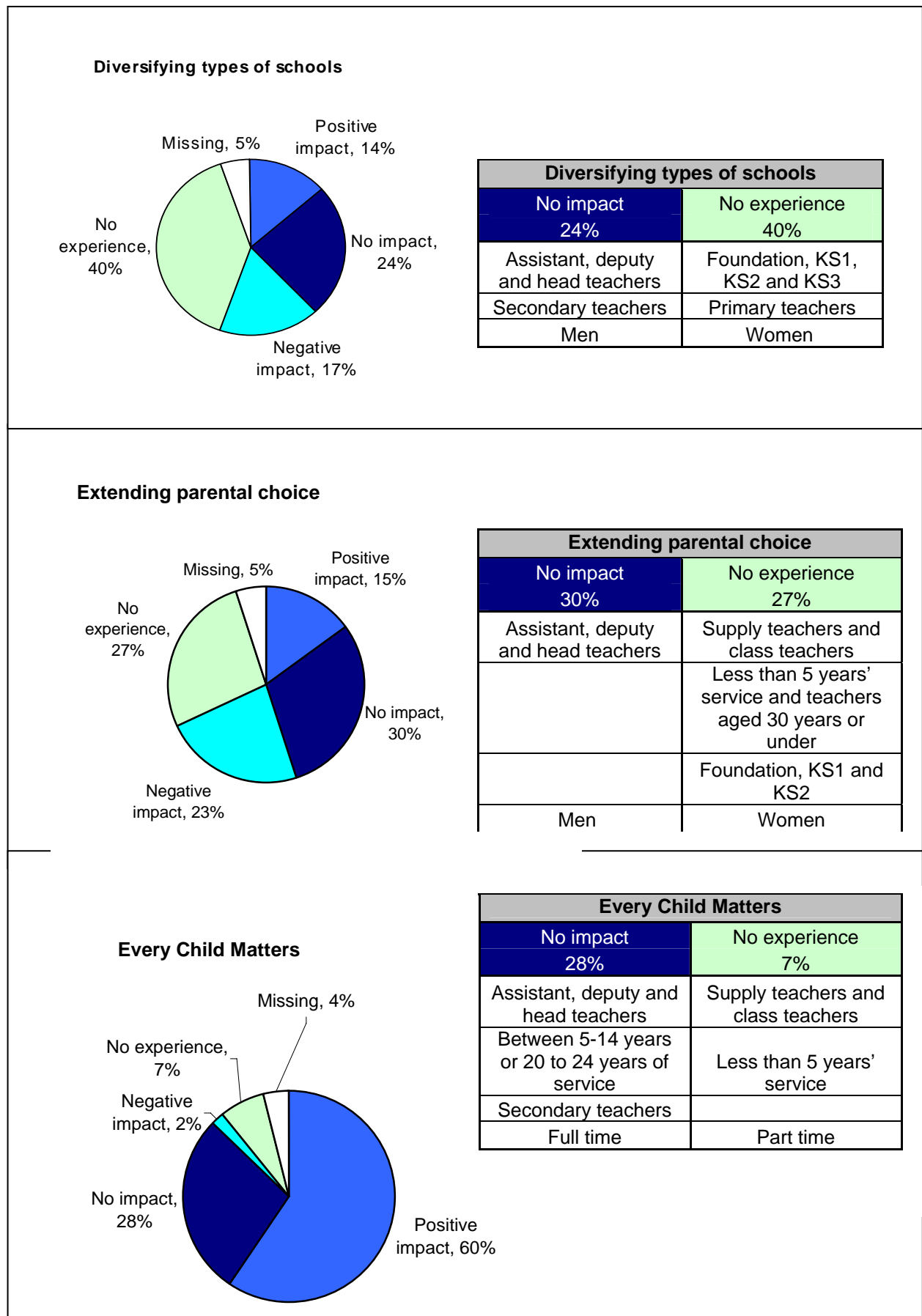
Teachers were much closer to a consensus about some policies than others. On a few policies, no single view dominated. The evidence that follows shows how some policies are reaching some teachers more than others, and how the perceived impact of a policy on pupil achievement can differ between teachers.

- positive impact** – assistant, deputies and head teachers were invariably more positive about the impact of the following policies than other teachers:
  - Every Child Matters;
  - extended school provision;
  - assessment for learning;
  - enhanced teacher development;
  - collaboration and networking between schools;
  - developing school leadership;
  - performance management;
  - school inspection; and
  - investment in ICT;
 in addition, assistant, deputies and head teachers were more likely than class or subject teachers (but not supply teachers) to have found that personalised learning had a positive impact;

- **no impact** – assistant, deputies and head teachers were more likely than class or subject teachers (with and without special responsibilities) and supply teachers to have found that the following policies had no impact:
  - extended school provision;
  - equalities legislation;
  - diversifying types of schools; and
  - extending parental choice;
- **no impact** – class or subject teachers (with and without special responsibilities) were more likely than assistant, deputies and head teachers to have found that the following policies had no impact:
  - enhanced teacher development;
  - developing school leadership; and
  - investments in ICT;
- **negative impact** – there was less consistency in results here, but the significant differences are still worth noting:
  - more head teachers than supply teachers, class or subject teachers (with and without special responsibilities) and assistant and deputy heads said that extended school provision had had a negative impact on supporting achievement;
  - more head teachers and assistant and deputy heads than supply teachers and class or subject teachers (with and without special responsibilities) said that extended parental choice had had a negative impact;
  - more head teachers than class or subject teachers (with and without special responsibilities) said that changes to the duties of teachers had had a negative impact on supporting achievement; and
  - More class or subject teachers (with and without special responsibilities) said that developing school leadership had had a negative impact on supporting achievement.

Figure 5.1 shows full results for diversifying types of schools, extending parental choice and Every Child Matters (in the pie charts), together with those groups that were statistically significantly more likely to have said that they had ‘no experience’ of the policy or that it had ‘no impact’ (in the tables). Diversifying types of school was the policy where the greatest number of teachers said it had no impact or they had had no experience of it. Extending parental choice was also found to have had no impact or was not experienced by a relatively large number of teachers. (This finding is of particular interest in the light of the results on parental involvement which are discussed the next chapter.) Results for Every Child Matters are also shown: they are positive in contrast to the former policies, but still over a quarter of teachers – mainly those in senior roles and in secondary schools – said it had no impact on their work to support pupil achievement.

**Figure 5.1 Full results and breakdown by groups saying ‘no impact’ and ‘no experience’ for three policies**



## Length of service

When establishing which teachers had no experience of the national policies, it was discovered that length of service was an important factor. In detail (see Table 5.2 for a breakdown of responses from teachers with less than 5 years' service):

- teachers with less than five years' length of service were more likely than those with five years and over to say that they had no experience of the following policies: extending parental choice (41% versus 24%); developments in school leadership (24% versus 11%); equalities legislation (21% versus 14%); recently introduced changes to the duties of teachers (18% versus 8%); performance management (11% versus 3%); school inspection (13% versus 3%); and performance tables (9% versus 3%); and
- teachers with less than five years' length of service were more likely than those with five to nine and 25 to 35 years' length of service to say that they had no experience of the following policies: Every Child Matters; new school buildings; and enhancing teacher development.

**Table 5.2 Teachers with less than five years' length of service saying that they had no experience of policies**

Policies	Total (frequency)	Total (%)
Diversifying types of school	249	43
Extending parental choice	224	41
New school buildings	184	32
Extended school provision	166	29
Development of school leadership	136	24
Personalised learning	117	20
Equalities legislation	119	20
Recent changes to the duties of teachers	105	18
Collaboration and networking between schools	99	17
School inspection	73	13
Performance management	61	11
Every Child Matters	56	10
Enhancing teacher development	109	10
Performance tables	54	9
Investment in ICT	45	8
Assessment for learning	41	7

(Base = 573)

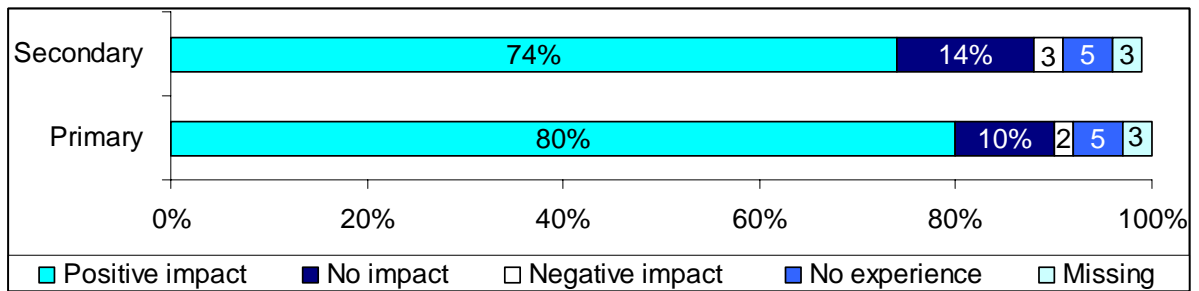
## Phase of education

While there was broad agreement across primary and secondary school teachers on the positive impact of some policies on achievement – see Figure 5.2 for three examples – there were important differences on others, and these have been outlined in Figure 5.3. In the latter, however, it is important to note that for diversifying types of school and new school buildings, the largest differences are between the 'no experience' responses – primary school teachers were less likely to have experienced these than their secondary colleagues. Consequently, the apparent differences between their positive ratings diminish somewhat if the percentages are based on those with experience of these policies.

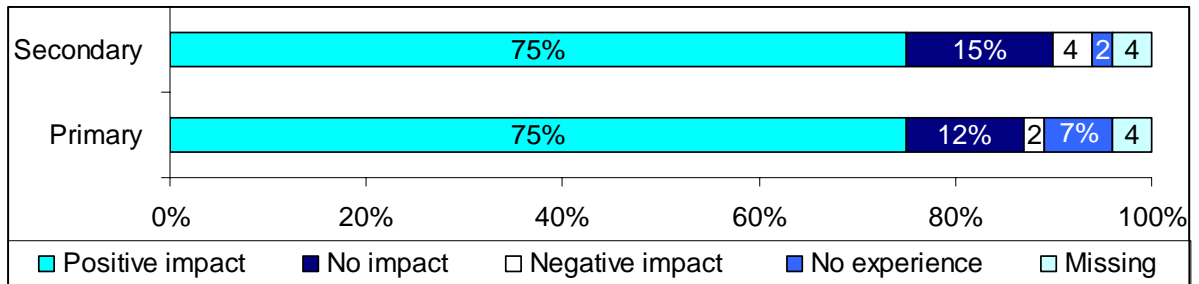


**Figure 5.2 National policies that most teachers from both phases agreed were positive**

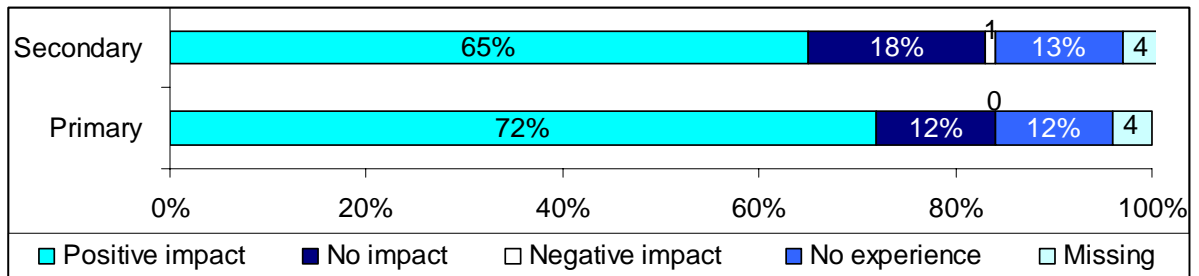
Investment in ICT



Assessment for learning

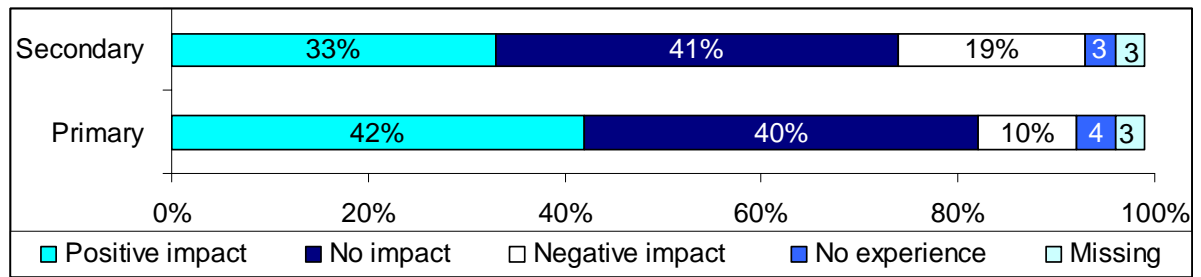


Enhancing teacher development

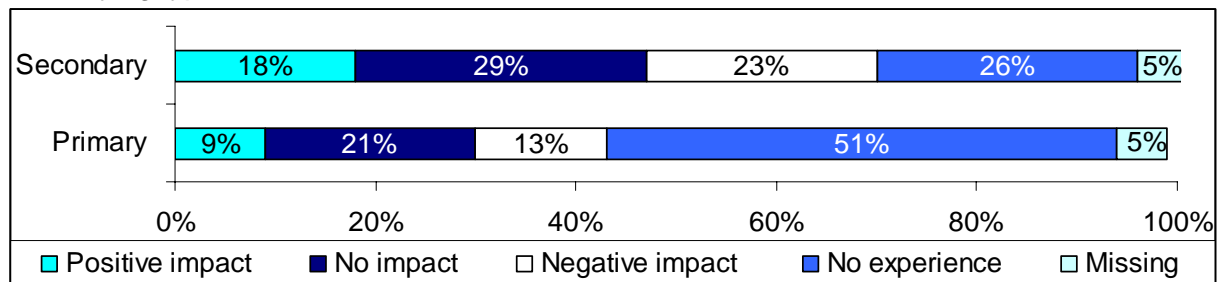


**Figure 5.3 National policies on which primary and secondary teachers had different views**

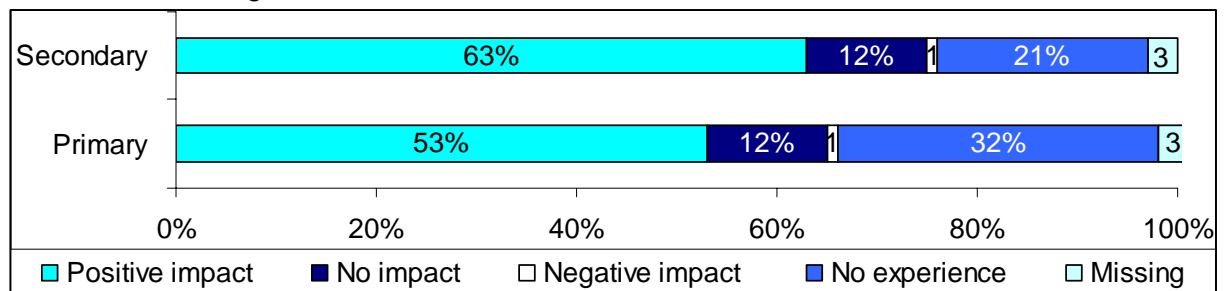
Performance management



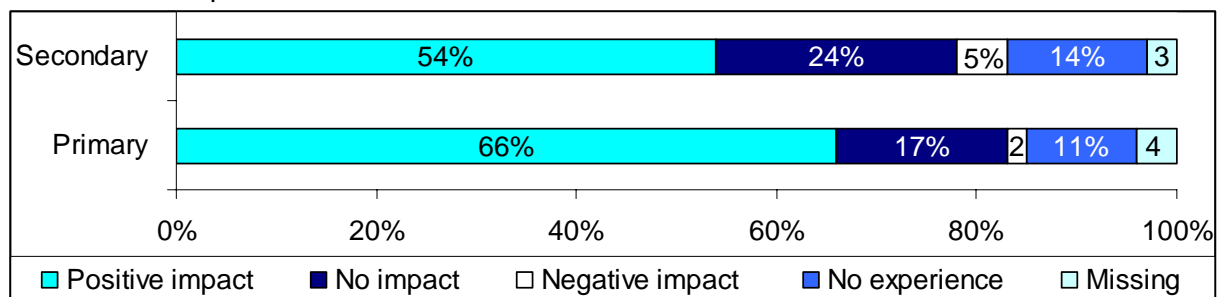
Diversifying types of school



New school buildings



School leadership



### **Groups of teachers most likely to have similar experiences of policies**

To further analyse the data a series of advanced statistical analyses were carried out on the results – factor analysis and regression analysis<sup>5</sup>.

1. One grouping that emerged can be called ‘learning practices and resources’ and comprised the following policies:

- assessment for learning;
- Every Child Matters;
- personalised learning;
- extended school provision;
- equalities legislation;
- new school buildings;
- investment in ICT; and
- collaboration and networking between schools. It should be noted that this policy was only linked weakly to the rest of the policies in this group.

Those more likely to say that policies relating to learning practices and resources had a positive impact were:

- women rather than men, and primary teachers rather than secondary teachers;
- teachers in urban local authorities, compared to other local authorities; and
- when accounting for the interaction of phase and gender, assistant and deputy heads and head teachers were found more likely to say that policies addressing learning practices and resources had a positive impact, compared to class teachers.

2. Another group that emerged was entitled ‘public accountability and parental choice’ and comprised:

- performance tables;
- extending parental choice;
- school inspection; and
- diversifying types of school.

Those more likely to say that policies relating to public accountability and parental choice had a positive impact were:

- women, secondary school teachers and teachers with shorter lengths of service;
- teachers in schools with higher linguistic / socio-economic challenge, compared to those in schools facing lower linguistic / socio-economic challenge; and
- white teachers, compared to those from BME backgrounds.

3. A further grouping of policies that emerged was characterised by ‘teacher development and performance’ and comprised:

- performance management;
- development of school leadership;
- enhancing teacher development; and
- recently introduced changes to the duties of teachers.

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<sup>5</sup> Further information on both factor analysis and regression analysis conducted for this research can be found in Appendix A, Methodology.

Those more likely to say that policies relating to teacher development and performance had a positive impact were:

- women, primary teachers and those with shorter length of service;
- assistant, deputy and head teachers, compared to class teachers;
- teachers in non-urban local authorities, compared to those in urban local authorities; and
- teachers in schools with lower than average academic / SEN challenge.

## Chapter six

### Addressing underachievement: local action

#### Summary

This chapter considers the research questions, what local resources and support strategies to address underachievement have teachers experienced and used and how important are these, in their experience?

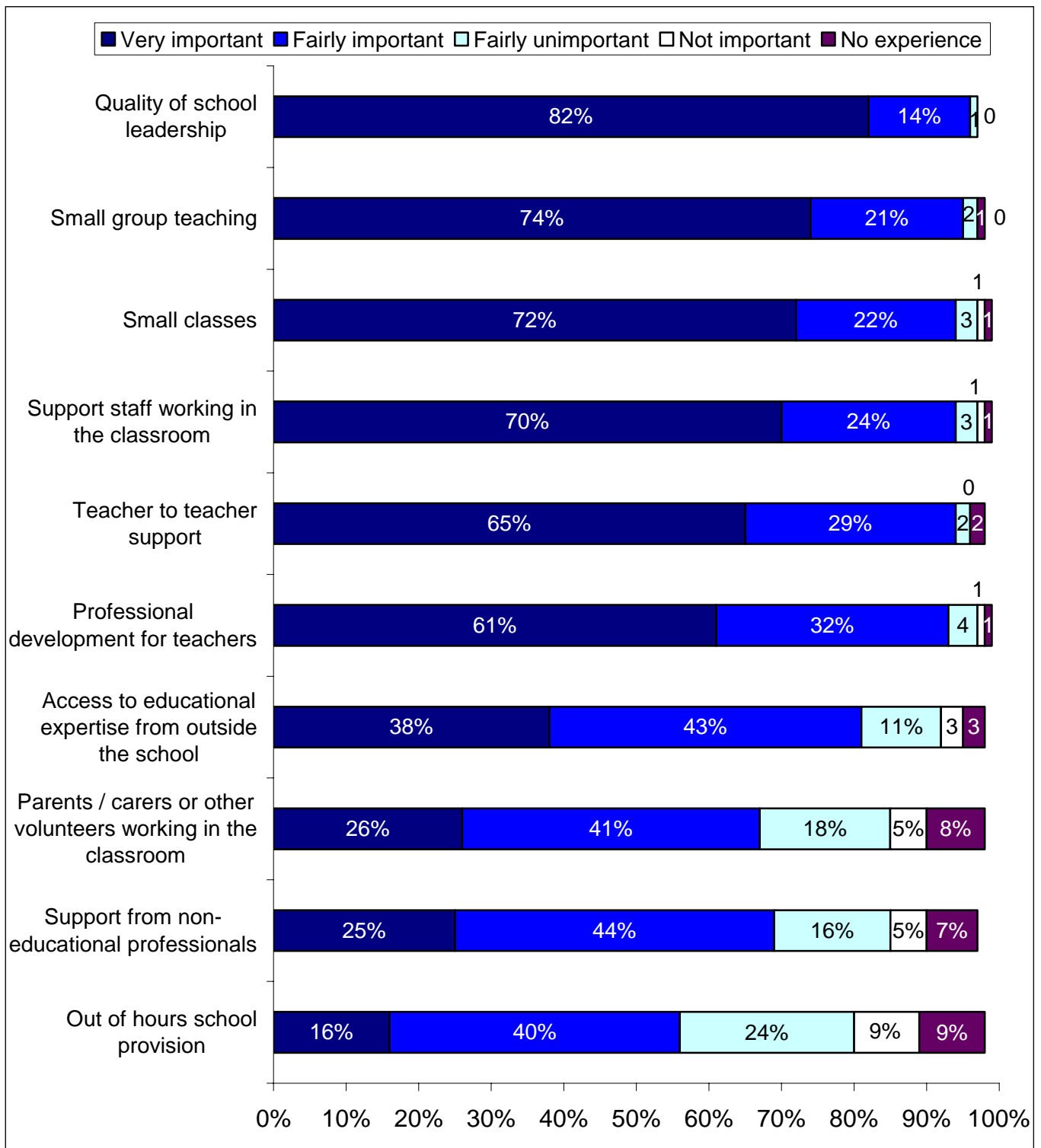
All of the 10 factors included in the survey were said to be important by the majority of teachers, suggesting that a combination of a wide range of approaches has been found effective. In particular, the vast majority of teachers affirmed that the quality of school leadership was very important. Most teachers also said that small group teaching, small classes and support staff working in classrooms were very important. Teacher to teacher support and professional development were also believed to be important for addressing underachievement.

Respondents from primary schools were significantly more likely to give higher importance to a greater number of factors when compared with secondary school teachers. There was also evidence to suggest that teachers in secondary and primary schools with higher levels of challenge were more likely to rate out of school hours provision more highly than those in schools with lower levels of challenge.

In item 11, teachers were asked how important in their actual experience each of a range of factors had been in addressing underachievement.

While all of the 10 factors included in the survey were said to be either 'very' or 'fairly important' by the majority of teachers, some broad types of support were viewed to be more important than others (see Figure 6.1). A large majority (82%) of teachers said that the quality of school leadership was 'very important', and a further 14% said that it was 'fairly important'. Most teachers also said that small group teaching, small classes and support staff working in classrooms were 'very important' (70-74%). There is a common theme to these three aspects in that they all help decrease the staff:pupil ratio. Another aspect which was rated as 'very important' by the majority of teachers, but by slightly fewer than before, were teacher to teacher support (65%) and professional development for teachers (61%), which are both about teacher development.

**Figure 6.1 Teachers' experience of the importance of factors in addressing underachievement**



(Base = 2489. Missing 1-2%, not shown on Figure 6.1 to aid clarity.)

In teachers' experiences, notably less important for addressing underachievement were the following four areas: out of hours school provision; support from non-educational professionals; parents / carers or other volunteers working in the classroom; and access to educational expertise from outside the school. However, it should be taken into

consideration that these factors had larger numbers of teachers indicating no experience of each area than other factors posed in the item.

### School context – level of challenge

Out of hours school provision stood out as the main factor where more teachers from secondary schools facing higher levels of challenge overall said that it was important for addressing underachievement. This same factor had also been found to be very important by primary teachers facing higher levels of linguistic / socio-economic challenge. Also, parents / carers in the classroom were more likely to be very important among secondary teachers facing higher levels of academic / SEN challenge. Fuller details are set out in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1 Differences between teachers from schools facing lower and higher challenge (proportions (%) of teachers saying a factor was very or fairly important)**

Factor very important in addressing underachievement	Type of challenge	Phase	Lower challenge		Higher challenge		n
			1	2	3	4	
Out of hours school provision	Academic / SEN	Secondary	21	23	24	31	249
Out of hours school provision	Academic / SEN	Primary	19	22	28	31	121
Out of hours school provision	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	22	20	24	33	249
Parents / carers or other volunteers helping in the classroom	Academic / SEN	Secondary	20	25	25	29	215

### Phase

Looking at the results according to phase, respondents from primary schools were significantly more likely to give higher importance to a greater number of factors when compared with secondary school teachers. In further detail, respondents from the primary phase were more likely to give the following greater importance:

- parents / carers or other volunteers working in the classroom (primary 76% versus secondary 57%);
- access to educational expertise from outside the school (primary 86% versus secondary 75%);
- support staff working in the classroom (primary 98% versus secondary 89%);
- teacher to teacher support (primary 96% versus secondary 91%);
- professional development for teachers (primary 96% versus secondary 91%); and
- small group teaching (primary 97% versus secondary 93%).

However, more secondary than primary teachers said that out of hours school provision was important (secondary 69% versus primary 47%). Also of interest was the similar level of agreement between respondents across phases on the importance of: school leadership; small classes; and support from non-educational professionals.

### **Groups of teachers likely to say that particular factors are highly important**

Again, advanced statistical techniques were used to discover patterns in responses.

1. One close grouping that emerged can be described as 'support from beyond the classroom' and comprised:

- out of hours provision;
- parents / carers or other volunteers working in the classroom;
- support from non-educational professionals; and
- access to educational expertise from outside the school.

Overall, support from beyond the classroom was found to be more important to women than men but not to primary more than secondary teachers. However, it was more important to male primary teachers compared to male secondary teachers.

2. A second grouping can be described as 'pupil:staff ratio' and comprised:

- small group teaching;
- small classes; and
- support staff working in the classroom.

This was found to be more important to women and men in primary schools than women or men in secondary schools. It was also more important to those with a longer length of service and to class teachers rather than assistant, deputy and head teachers, and also to teachers in schools with lower than average academic / SEN challenge.

3. The grouping can be described as 'teacher development and leadership' and comprised:

- professional development for teachers;
- quality of school leadership; and
- teacher to teacher support.

This was more important to primary teachers in general, but within this phase it was more important to men than to women. Also, teacher development and leadership was more important to teachers in cross-school roles and to assistant, deputy and head teachers than it was to class teachers, and to full-time as opposed to part-time teachers.

### **Comparison with 2006 results**

Some parts of the items addressing underachievement were asked in the Survey of Teachers in 2006. For two factors where the question wording was exactly the same or very similar, a higher percentage of teachers said that the factors shown in Table 6.2 were 'very important' in 2007 than in 2006. Both of these concerned adults other than teachers supporting teachers in the classroom. The results may signal a growing recognition of the need and value of such support, especially when seen against the background of changes in working contexts. However, given that both the 2006 and 2007 reports note that primary school teachers were more likely than their secondary counterparts to see these two factors as 'very important', the differences between the two years may also be affected by the 2007 non-response biases, which included the over-representation of primary school teachers.



**Table 6.2 Comparison of 2007 and 2006 results (%) – two factors**

Support staff working in the classroom

	Very important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Not important	No experience	No response
2006	59	31	5	2	1	3
2007	70	24	3	1	1	1

Parents (carers in 2007) or other volunteers working in the classroom

	Very important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Not important	No experience	No response
2006	9	34	28	15	9	6
2007	26	41	18	5	8	2

This penultimate chapter of the report has explored teachers' perceptions of the relative importance of different factors that may help address underachievement. The final chapter investigates another way in which pupil achievement can be supported, by teachers working with parents.



## Chapter seven

# How schools and teachers help parents / carers to support their child's achievement

### Summary

This chapter presents the findings on the final research questions: what approaches have teachers experienced and used to enable parents and carers to support children's achievement? Which of these have a positive impact, in their experience?

According to the survey results, communication is the key. Nine out of ten teachers said that improving communications between themselves and parents has had a positive impact on pupil achievement. Also within the communications vein, over three-quarters of teachers affirmed that initiatives to draw on parents / carers' knowledge of their child, and an open door policy for parents / carers had proved beneficial.

Notable minorities of teachers had no experience of certain ways of working with parents. For example, well over one-third had no experience of supporting parents in improving their own subject knowledge, and one in five teachers had no experience of providing opportunities for parents to learn about learning.

More primary than secondary teachers were positive about all ways of involving parents, and more secondary school teachers than primary school teachers had no experience of each aspect of parental / carer involvement. Furthermore, the higher the level of linguistic / socio-economic challenge faced by the school, the more teachers said that the stated way of involving parents had had a positive impact on achievement.

In response to an open question, teachers identified five main ways to help parents / carers to have a positive impact: (i) promoting high-quality, regular communication between teachers and parents / carers; (ii) home visits; (iii) supporting parents' language skills; (iv) supporting parenting skills; and (v) helping parents to learn about learning and to develop their subject knowledge.

For many years, the government has pursued policies that aim to strengthen parents' and carers' decision making about their children's education, as well as to expand parental involvement in supporting pupil achievement at school. Examples of such policies have included increasing parental choice of schools; providing parents with more information on schools; and encouraging parents and members of local communities to access a range of services through extended school provision. The recently published DCSF 10-year blueprint, *The Children's Plan: building brighter futures* sets out further details on initiatives to advance this goal: the expansion of school-based parent support advisors; the provision of a personal progress record on each child's development; and the extension of parents' councils. The paper states that 'partnership with parents is a unifying theme of the *Children's Plan*', and commits the government to '... set out and consult on a new relationship between parents and schools'. Against this background, it is clearly an opportune moment to report on teachers' views and perspectives on the most effective ways of enabling parents and carers to support their children's achievement.

Item 17 invited teachers to indicate from their experience the impact of various ways to help parents / carers support their child's achievement.

Overall, there was a strong consensus that all ways of working with parents / carers had a positive impact on pupil achievement (see Table 7.1). The overwhelming majority (90%) of teachers said that improving communications between themselves and parents had had a positive impact on pupil achievement. Only 5% of teachers indicated that they had experience of this, but that it had had no impact on pupil achievement.

Other factors deemed by large majorities to have had positive effects on pupil achievement were: drawing on parents / carers' knowledge of their child (77%); having an open door policy for parents / carers to contact school (76%); and inviting parents to take part in the life of the school(73%). About two-thirds of teachers said opportunities for parents to learn about learning (66%); and holding social events at the school (63%) also had a positive impact. Between 5% and 17% of teachers disagreed, saying that these ways of working with parents / carers had had no impact.

**Table 7.1 Impact of enabling parents / carers to support their children's achievement (%)**

	Positive impact	No impact	No experience	Missing
Improving communication between parents / carers and school	90 (95)	5 (5)	2	3
Drawing on parents' / carers' knowledge of child	77 (89)	9 (11)	10	4
Providing an open door policy for parents / carers to contact school	76 (87)	11 (13)	9	4
Inviting parents / carers to participate in the life of school	73 (86)	12 (14)	12	3
Providing opportunities for parents / carers to learn about learning	66 (87)	10 (13)	21	3
Holding informal and social events for parents / carers in school	63 (79)	17 (21)	17	3
Ensuring buildings are physically accessible for parents / cares	56 (78)	16 (22)	24	5
Providing opportunities for parents / carers to develop their own subject knowledge	45 (81)	12 (19)	39	3

(Base = 2489)

Note: the figures in brackets represent the relevant percentage when the 'no experience' and 'missing' cases are excluded from the calculation.

It should be taken into consideration that for some of the methods for involving parents / carers outlined in Table 7.1, a noteworthy number of teachers had no experience of the process. (For this reason, the figures in brackets show the percentages when the 'no experience' and 'missing' data are excluded.) Well over one-third (39%) had no experience of supporting parents in improving their own subject knowledge, and one in five (21%) teachers had no experience of providing opportunities for parents to learn about learning. For these and other factors with sizeable 'no experience' and missing data, the percentages indicating positive impact rise to the levels of all the other ways of working with parents / carers once they are seen as a percentage of those who had experienced the ways concerned.

## **Phase**

Figure 7.1 shows the contrast in results by phase for the four ways of working with parents / carers where there were the greatest differences. These focused on parent / carer education and their participation in the school community. The aspects of parental involvement with the greatest differences in percentages saying impact was positive and that they had no experience are shown. This figure shows graphically how more secondary school teachers than primary school teachers had no experience of each aspect of parental / carer involvement. It also shows that more primary than secondary teachers were positive about all ways of involving parents. For example, almost twice as many teachers in primary (58%) as secondary (30%) schools said that providing opportunities for parents / carers to develop their own subject knowledge had a positive impact. This probably reflects the tendency for some parents to be more closely engaged with primary schools on a day-to-day basis than secondary school parents, as well as the opportunities for a single class teacher to have more regular and sustained contact with some parents than numerous subject teachers can at secondary level.

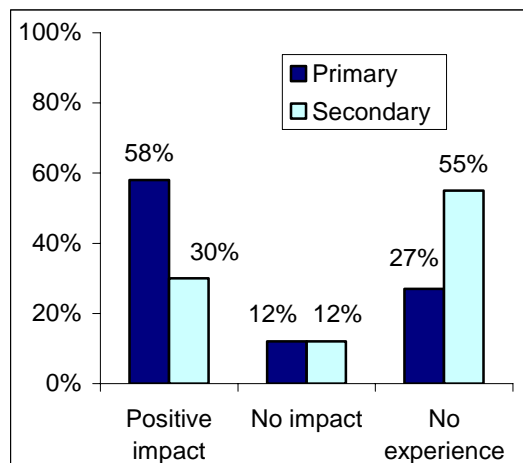
Overall, primary teachers more likely than secondary teachers to say that the all the following had had a positive impact on pupil achievement: drawing on parents' / carers' knowledge; having an open door policy; inviting parents / carers to participate in the life of the school; holding events inside the school; providing opportunities to learn about learning; helping parents / carers to develop their own subject knowledge; and physical accessibility. However, these results were influenced by many more secondary teachers having had less experience of such activities than primary teachers. For example, secondary teachers were more likely than primary teachers to say that they had no experience of drawing on parents' knowledge of their child and inviting parents to participate in the life of the school.

## **School context – levels of challenge**

Table 7.2 shows only those results where there were clear patterns, which were always in relation to linguistic / socio-economic challenge and secondary schools rather than academic / SEN and primary schools. These are selected results from a systematic analysis of all areas of parental involvement by the level of linguistic / socio-economic and academic / SEN challenge in primary and secondary schools. In all instances, the higher the level of linguistic / socio-economic challenge, the more teachers said that the stated way of involving parents had had a positive impact on achievement.

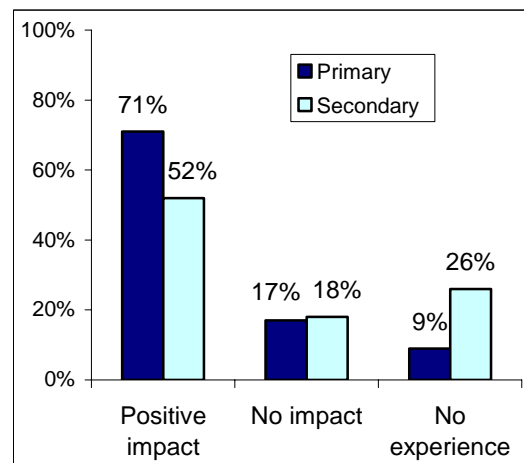
**Figure 7.1 Impact of parental involvement – by phase**

Providing opportunities for parents / carers to develop their own subject knowledge



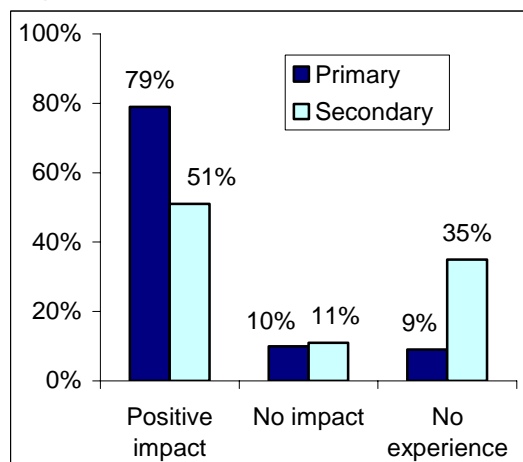
(Base = 2489)  
Missing: primary 3%; secondary 4%

Providing opportunities for parents / carers to learn about learning



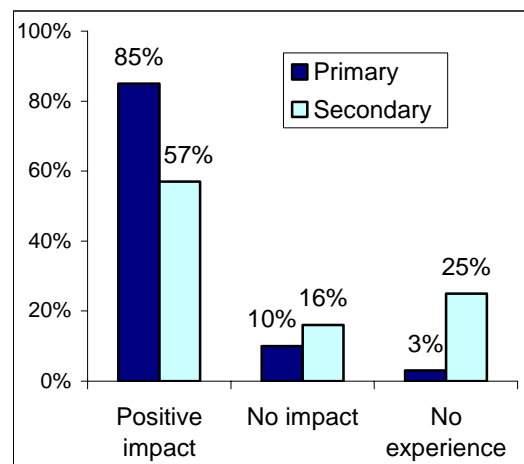
(Base = 2489)  
Missing: primary 2%; secondary 3%

Holding informal and social events for parents / carers in the school



(Base = 2489)  
Missing: primary 3%; secondary 3%

Inviting parents / carers to participate in the life of the school



(Base = 2489)  
Missing: primary 2%; secondary 3%

**Table 7.2 Positive impact of parental involvement (%) – by levels of school challenge**

Ways parents / carers can be supported to help their child's achievement	Type of challenge	Phase	Lower challenge		Higher challenge		n
			1	2	3	4	
Drawing on parents' / carers' knowledge of their child	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	24	25	25	27	666
Improving communication between parents / carers and the school	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	24	25	25	26	867
Providing an open door policy for parents / carers to contact the school	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	23	25	26	27	644
Inviting parents / carers to participate in the life of the school	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	21	24	27	28	566
Holding informal and social events for parents / carers in the school	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	23	24	24	29	521
Providing opportunities for parents / carers to develop their own subject knowledge	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	18	27	26	30	297
Ensuring buildings are physically accessible for parents / carers	Linguistic / socio-economic	Secondary	22	26	25	27	452

(Bases = 297-1002)

The findings presented so far in this chapter have been in relation to eight possible ways of involving parents / carers that were included in the questionnaire. After responding to these items, teachers were asked in an open question to write down other ways of involving parents that have, in their experience, had a positive impact on pupil achievement.

Some said they found it difficult it to get parents involved. In the teachers' own words:

*It is very difficult to engage parents in the welfare and learning of their children.*

*Many parents are difficult to engage despite trying all of them above [in item 15] to involve parents in their children's achievement.*

Some recognised that it can be difficult for some parents as well, particularly for those whose own experience of education had not been a positive one (a factor identified in Chapter 4 as putting their children at risk of underachievement):

*Generally our parents are apathetic towards any opportunities to access further learning or support opportunities. They do their best but they don't take up the opportunities provided. Maybe there is a stigma attached!?*

*In my experience many of the parents lack skills and self-esteem themselves.*

*All have been offered but not taken up by majority of parents in socially deprived areas.*

*Often the parents you require in school are the ones that never come no matter how you try.*

Others indicated that they had seen some positive impact and were committed to continuing this work, but were also realistic about the challenge this presented:

*It has had an impact when parents or carers take a positive interest, yet there are many who do not see this as important and are unwilling to become involved.*

*We are working extremely hard to break down our own families' barriers to learning – this is a long-term aim.*

*Family learning initiatives can be very useful but it's very difficult getting parents involved.*

In addition to general comments about involving parents in their child's education, there was a wide range of more specific comments about approaches that teachers had found to be helpful, from which some themes emerged:

- some teachers returned to the theme of promoting high-quality regular communication – to develop deeper understanding among both teachers and parents / carers;
- home visits;
- support for parents' language skills;
- support for parenting skills; and
- some teachers returned to the themes of helping parents to learn about learning, in order to better support their children, and to develop their subject knowledge.

Examples of approaches within each of these themes are given in Table 7.3.



**Table 7.3 Other ways of involving parents that have a positive impact on their child's achievement**

Broad theme	Teachers' comments
Promoting high-quality regular communication – to develop deeper understanding among both teachers and parents / carers	<p><i>“Establishing a partnership with parents promotes a positive work ethic amongst the pupils and a relationship where all experience the pleasure of success.”</i></p> <p><i>“Regular contact with parents via notes or by telephone regarding work or behaviour issues – I have found this to be very beneficial for children when necessary, and the parents have appreciated the contact and for being made aware of what is happening in school. I am aware that this takes up our time to make the contact, but I believe that the benefits outweigh the extra 10 minutes or so taken up in our day to make that extra bit of difference to a family.”</i></p> <p><i>“Treating parents politely and showing a genuine concern for their children’s welfare. Offering hospitality when they visit school. Not looking down on them. Listening to their concerns. Working together. Having a way they can express concerns without feeling intimidated and made to feel inadequate.”</i></p> <p><i>“All forms of communication with the school which help parents / carers have a positive and helpful understanding of teachers in school.”</i></p> <p><i>I have open door policy. Parents know that they can contact me if they have any concerns or worries. The relationship I have created with the parents has helped a lot. Parents are keen to ask us how they can support their child’s learning.</i></p>
Home visits	<p><i>“We visit each child before admission.”</i></p> <p><i>“... providing opportunities for education and other professionals to visit parents / carers in their homes.”</i></p>
Support for parents' language skills and needs	<p><i>“... language classes for parents.”</i></p>
Support for parenting skills	<p><i>“... parenting classes.”</i></p> <p><i>“... parents’ support group.”</i></p>
Helping parents to learn about learning and to develop subject knowledge	<p><i>“... parents / children workshops learning together.”</i></p> <p><i>“... teaching parents to use the same methods at home as are used in school.”</i></p> <p><i>“... providing opportunities for children and parents to learn together.”</i></p>

## Chapter eight

### Conclusion

Within the limitations arising from a low response rate, the sample of teachers who responded to this survey contained some substantial majorities whose views were in close agreement on a number of issues. Running through their responses to the various items on pupil achievement, and underachievement in particular, some clear messages from large numbers of teachers clearly emerge.

From the outset, respondents flagged their opposition to policies that accentuate the view that pupil achievement should be primarily concerned with good results in key stage subject and skill areas that are nationally tested. The results also suggested that the imperatives and pressures associated with the preparation of pupils for national tests made it difficult to apply with good effect well-regarded teaching and learning strategies like structured group discussions or pupils as researchers. In response to open questions, some teachers drew attention to the perceived inflexibility of the wider education system in accommodating groups of learners at risk of underachieving. Moreover, a large majority of teachers indicated that the policy on performance tables had produced no or negative impact on the efforts to address underachievement.

While the survey results highlighted the extent of teachers' criticisms of these aspects of national policies, they also demonstrated teachers' support for many national initiatives and strategies, as well as teachers' constructive insights into ways of working and forms of support that have been found to be beneficial in tackling underachievement.

Rather than narrowly prioritising achievement as gauged through national testing, most teachers saw achievement in much broader and multifaceted terms, emphasising the value of generic skills, lifelong learning and the importance of recognising achievement across the curriculum. The survey respondents also recognised the value of having a repertoire of strategies at their disposal. Similarly, they presented a wide and inclusive perspective on the many different groups of children at risk of underachievement. Large majorities of teachers registered that several national initiatives had been instrumental in supporting the raising of pupil achievement: investment in ICT; enhancing teacher development; new school buildings; and assessment for learning; as well as collaboration and networking; developments in school leadership; Every Child Matters; and personalised learning.

Finally, a high percentage of teachers displayed a very positive attitude towards seeking greater cooperation between themselves and the parents and carers of children. In so doing, the adoption of new and highly valued methods of building stronger partnerships between professional teachers and parents / carers (eg providing opportunities for parents / carers to develop their own subject knowledge) was a conspicuous feature.

### **About the General Teaching Council for England**

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is the independent professional body for teaching in England, with a legal duty to maintain a register of qualified teachers, enable the teaching profession to regulate itself, and provide advice to government and other agencies on principal matters affecting teaching and learning. The GTC works for children, through teachers, and is committed to securing the highest possible standards of learning and achievement for young people.

The GTC pursues this commitment in several ways. It works to:

- promote education policies based on teachers' understanding of pupil needs
- support teachers to influence and lead change
- enable teachers to set and maintain high standards of conduct and competence that characterise the profession
- make a career in teaching professionally fulfilling, so that teachers can thrive and will stay in teaching
- improve the quality of teachers' initial training and their access to continuing professional learning and development opportunities
- help the public understand the contribution that teachers make to society.