

School Report 2023

Educators pioneering change: a spotlight on education in 2023



"Brilliant teachers spark joy in learners and their families; transform communities as well as classrooms; create foundations for brighter futures that impact every one of us, and the planet itself."

Sharon Hague, Managing Director, Pearson School Qualifications

Introduction

Last year, thousands read the insights and experiences of England's educators in our inaugural Pearson School Report. This second report in the series takes an in-depth look at life in schools in 2023 – from the collective perspective of over 6,000 educators and, new for this year, 1,000 students too. We dive into how opinions have changed or stayed the same, and share their invaluable insights on diversity, equity, inclusion, digital education, environmental action and more.

A common theme for many educators we surveyed this year was that of enduring challenges. Budgets, resources, recruitment, workload: the profession is experiencing unprecedented pressures from a range of angles. Nevertheless, so many educators remain steadfastly dedicated to supporting and educating the next generation.

In last year's Pearson School Report, I asked: "Where would we be without our brilliant teachers?". This year, that question is as pertinent as ever. Brilliant teachers spark joy in learners and their families; transform communities as well as classrooms; create foundations for brighter futures that impact every one of us, and the planet itself. Our 2023 report highlights this brilliance: it shows an education community committed to finding solutions and pioneering lasting change for their students.

We promoted last year's insights far and wide, engaging with educators and experts on the findings and creating free guidance and support on the issues raised. And this year, we'd like to take things even further, and have outlined our commitment to doing so in the conclusion. We're embracing the opportunity to encourage constructive conversation and drive forward change in education. Together, we can reflect on how our brilliant educators are striving to enhance education today and ask: 'where can we go further to support them?'.

Sharon Hague

Managing Director, Pearson School Qualifications



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Pearson commissioned a nationally representative external survey of primary and secondary teachers* in March 2023 to capture their views on education. On average, 6,000 teachers responded to the questions. Responses were collected by the polling organisation **Teacher Tapp** and weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics.

Student research was also conducted by **Censuswide** between 2 June and 6 June 2023, with 507 primary school children (aged 7–11 years) and 503 secondary school children (aged 11–16 years).

^{*} Teachers include classroom teachers, middle leaders, school leaders and headteachers working in schools in England.

Headlines at a glance

We asked more than
6,000 teachers and
senior leaders in England
to share their insights on
education in 2023...



Headlines at a glance 6

Challenges and solutions



- Budget pressures, teacher and school leader workload, and teacher recruitment and retention are the top three challenges facing schools over the next 12 months.
- Mental health, attendance, and support for students with SEND are expected to be the biggest barriers to student learning over the next six months.
- Three quarters of teachers are confident in their ability to support pupils with pastoral issues they face.
- To address school-wide challenges, teachers cited:
 - creating staff wellbeing and workload committees
 - 'getting creative' with recruitment and ways to generate income for schools
 - increasing training in line with growing challenges.

Sustainability and environmental education

- 9 in 10 schools are taking some action to help **protect the planet**.
- 3 in 5 teachers believe they have a powerful role to play in **shaping sustainably minded citizens**, yet 7 in 10 think the education system is not successfully nurturing this in students currently.
- 4 in 5 teachers say time pressures (a crammed curriculum) are expected to be the biggest challenge to delivering environmental education in school.
- Quality-assured, age-appropriate resources, and making climate education a legal requirement were the top two answers when asked what would most help teachers to drive positive environmental change through education.



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Diversity, equity and inclusion



- Almost 6 in 10 teachers say what is taught in schools today is more **diverse and inclusive** than it was five years ago.
- Only 1 in 10 teachers believe the education taught in schools today reflects the diversity of pupils' lives and backgrounds, while a quarter feel their own personal background is reflected in what is being taught.
- 9 in 10 schools have taken steps to support diversity and inclusion, with:
 - 7 in 10 celebrating diverse role models through assemblies and/or the curriculum
 - over half teaching empathy and tolerance and using more accessible resources to support students with SEND
- Of those who've taken steps to make their school more diverse and inclusive:
 - 2 in 5 have seen **increased pupil interest**
 - a quarter have seen increased pupil engagement levels.

Digital learning and innovation

- 1 in 2 teachers say that new technologies have helped them to improve their remote/flexible learning offer to students, while 1 in 3 say that it's aided student engagement as well as improved accessibility for learners with SEND.
- 3 in 5 teachers expect to see greater emphasis on digital and tech-enabled learning in education over the next 10 years.
- Around 4 in 7 secondary teachers expect to see an increased use of onscreen high-stakes assessment.
- 1 in 6 secondary schools across the country have no access to portable digital devices (1% of primaries said the same).
- Only half of secondary schools have access to reliable Wi-Fi across their whole school (in comparison to 60% of primary schools).



"While today's challenges are significant, so too is the sector's commitment to finding solutions and pioneer lasting change."

Sharon Hague, Managing Director, Pearson School Qualifications

Part One One year on:

challenges and opportunities

Building on the questions asked in the 2022 Pearson School Report, this section paints a picture of the issues and opportunities facing schools one year on.



Temperature check – trends and changes

Here are some trends and changes when comparing answers to questions asked in 2022 to 2023.

Going up



- Teachers witnessing a rise in pupil anxiety around:
 - mental health and wellbeing (now 61%, was 41%)
 - rising cost of living (now 36%, was 16%)
 - ocial injustices (now 18%, was 11%).
- 71% of teachers who think that the current education system is NOT developing tolerant, sustainably minded citizens of the future (was 61%).
- 64% of school leaders expect budget pressures to be a challenge to manage over the next 12 months (was 54%).
- ✓ 48% of school leaders expect teacher recruitment and retention to be a challenge to manage over the next 12 months (was 40%).
- ◆ 46% of school leaders expect supporting students with SEND
 to be a challenge to manage over the next 12 months (was 32%).
- ↑ 11% of schools are offering no interventions to support pupils with the issues facing them (was 5%).

Going down

- V Teachers witnessing a rise in pupil anxiety around:
 - **global conflict** (now 17%, was 61%)
 - ✓ climate change/environmental issues (now 15%, was 25%)
 - **Covid-19** (now 11%, was 51%)
 - **v** political decisions (now 9%, was 12%).
- ✓ 12% of teachers are dedicating time to exploring global affairs with students (was 42%).
- **27% of schools** have increased **working with parents** to support pupils with issues they face (was 43%).
- 36% of schools are providing staff training on early mental health indicators / safeguarding concerns (was 47%).
- **44% of schools** are providing **pupil counselling** (was 54%).





Challenges for 2023/2024

Challenges for 2023/2024

We asked teachers and school leaders to tell us what they expect the top challenges will be for their school to manage over the year ahead.

"It's been the hardest year of teaching in the 9 years I've been a teacher."

Primary Classroom Teacher

Budget pressures topped the list of challenges for all educators in 2023, followed by teacher and school leader workload and teacher recruitment and retention.

Top five challenges that teachers expect schools to manage over the next 12 months

- 1 Budget pressures (**59%**)
- 2 Teacher and school leader workload (52%)
- **3** Teacher recruitment and retention (**48%**)
- **4** Supporting pupils with SEND (**37%**)
- 5 Staff mental health and wellbeing / Pupil mental health and wellbeing (**34%**)



Budget pressures, teacher recruitment and retention, and supporting pupils with SEND are challenges to more school leaders in 2023 than they were in 2022. Meanwhile school inspections, performance measures and legacy impacts of Covid-19 are considered a challenge to fewer school leaders this year.

Challenges for 2023/2024

Interestingly, there were some differences when looking more closely at the breakdown across schools.

- Double the number of secondary school teachers expect **teacher recruitment and retention** to be a challenge to manage over this year compared to their primary counterparts (64% vs 32%).
- Double the number of primary teachers believe supporting students with SEND will be a challenge compared to secondary teachers (50% vs 25%).

- 52% of classroom teachers think teacher and school leader workload is a top challenge but only 33% of headteachers said the same.
- While budget pressures and supporting students with SEND are expected to be slightly more prevalent challenges in local authority (LA) community schools, teacher recruitment and retention appears to be a bigger challenge in large trusts.

Q: What do you expect to be the top challenges for your school to manage over the next 12 months?

	Primary	Secondary	Classroom teacher	Headteacher	LA community school	Large trust
Budget pressures	68%	50%	58%	72%	66%	57%
Teacher and school leader workload	52%	52%	52%	33%	53%	53%
Teacher recruitment and retention	32%	64%	45%	38%	38%	56%
Supporting students with SEND	50%	25%	40%	57%	46%	35%
Staff mental health and wellbeing	34%	35%	37%	28%	35%	32%

Covid-19 legacy

"The work on behaviour is slowly but surely bringing us back towards where we were pre-Covid which is good news, but we need more support to continue/ complete the journey."

Secondary SLT

While the number of school leaders who expect Covid-19 to be a challenge has halved since our 2022 report, the pandemic's legacy is still being felt in some areas of education.

- Academic ability is still being impacted significantly – particularly in primary schools (73% compared to 58% of secondary).
- A similar number of secondary schools say **pupil behaviour** is an issue (72% compared to just 57% of primary schools).

More than **8 in 10**

teachers say Covid-19 is still affecting pupils' social skills/maturity levels Covid-19 legacy 15

Q: In which of the following areas are the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic still being experienced in your school today?

Primary



Secondary



One year on...

- 7% of school leaders reported that Covid-19 was a challenge to manage in 2023, down from 15% of school leaders in 2022.
- The number of teachers reporting a rise in pupil anxiety over Covid-19 has fallen from 51% of teachers in 2022 to 11% in 2023.

"My school [made] me feel really at home. They helped me with my anxiety after Covid."

Primary Student

Pupil anxiety

To get a picture of pupil anxiety on certain topics, we talked to both educators and students. We asked educators the same question as we did in 2022 to get their views on how things have changed.

Educators have witnessed the largest increase in pupil anxiety around mental health and wellbeing. This is the same across primary, secondary, state, private schools, and when comparing those schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) (Q4) and those with the lowest proportion (Q1).

Q: Have you witnessed an increase in pupil anxiety around any of the following issues over the last year in your school?

	2023	2022
Digital safety / safeguarding concerns	19%	15%
Global conflict	17%	61%
Climate change / environmental issues	15%	25%
Racial inequality and movements	14%	19%
Political decisions	9%	12%
Covid-19 developments	11%	51%
Rising cost of living	36%	16%
Social injustices	18%	11%
Mental health and wellbeing	61%	41%
Physical health and wellbeing	13%	7%
LGBT+ inequality	18%	-
None of the above	17%	11%
Not relevant / cannot answer	6%	5%

In this year's survey, we also added the option for teachers to select increased pupil anxiety around LGBT+ inequality. Roughly 1 in 5 (18%) teachers said they had witnessed this.

Pupil **anxiety** 17



- Mental health and wellbeing: the percentage of educators who report seeing an increase in pupil anxiety around mental health and wellbeing has risen substantially from 41% last year to 61% this year.
- **Global conflict:** the number of teachers who have seen a rise in pupil anxiety around global conflict is down from 61% in 2022 to 17% this year.
- **Rising cost of living:** the proportion of teachers who have seen an increase in pupil anxiety over the cost of living crisis has more than doubled in 2023 (16% in 2022 vs 36% in 2023).

Teachers in schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM (vs Q1 schools) were more likely to witness an increase in anxiety here.

- Climate change/environmental issues: 25% of teachers reported seeing a rise in pupil anxiety over climate change/environmental issues in 2022; 15% say the same in 2023.
- Social injustices and racial inequality: this year, 18% of teachers report witnessing an increase in pupil anxiety over social injustices this is up from 11% in 2022. Rising anxiety over racial inequality is almost twice as prevalent in London schools in 2023 than it is in schools in the East of England (20% vs 11%).



When we asked students which topics they were feeling worried about, the top three were:

- **1** Rising cost of living (**39%**)
- 2 Mental health and wellbeing (34%)
- Climate change / environmental issues (31%)

Plus...

87% of students say **getting good grades** is important to them

94% say being happy and mentally and physically healthy is important to them

Barriers to learning 18

Barriers to learning

To better understand how some of the challenges facing schools, and external events, are impacting the classroom, we asked teachers to forecast the barriers to pupil learning over the next 6 months.



8 in 10 teachers

expect mental health to be a barrier to learning in the next 6 months Teachers' expected barriers to pupil learning in the next 6 months

	Primary	Secondary
Mental health	74%	83%
Attendance	67%	75%
Special educational needs and/or disabilities	74%	52%
Prior learning experience	52%	46%
Poverty	45%	44%
Hunger	33%	30%
Physical health	19%	20%
Social injustices	19%	20%
Accessibility	9%	12%
Lack of diversity and representation	10%	9%
None of the above	2%	2%



Mental health tops the list of expected barriers across all schools, with the top three options remaining in the same order of concern as last year: **mental health, attendance and SEND**.

Accessibility and physical health were considered by fewer teachers to be learning barriers in 2023 than in 2022.

Barriers to learning 19

Outlook across school types

- When comparing primary and secondary results, a greater proportion of teachers in secondary schools anticipate mental health and attendance to be barriers, whereas SEND was more commonly selected by primary teachers.
- There are regional differences, particularly with poverty and hunger being barriers to learning: teachers based in the North West and Yorkshire and the North East are more likely to cite poverty and hunger as barriers to learning than their colleagues in other parts of the country.
 - 52% of educators in Yorkshire and the North East listed poverty as a barrier compared to 41% of teachers in the South West.
 - 38% of teachers in the North West cited hunger as a barrier in comparison to 28% of teachers in both the South East and the South West.

Outlook for schools in more deprived areas

There were also some striking differences when comparing those schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM (Q4) and those with the lowest proportion (Q1).

- **70% of teachers** in Q4 schools say **poverty** will be a barrier to learning in the next 6 months (compared to 27% in Q1 schools).
- **51% of teachers** in Q4 schools say **hunger** will be a barrier to learning in the next 6 months (compared to 19% in Q1 schools).
- **30% of teachers** in Q4 schools say **social injustices** will be a barrier to learning in the next 6 months (compared to 15% in Q1 schools).

"Attendance is high on the agenda for everyone – it's a big pressure."

Secondary Teacher

Supporting students

Despite the range of issues facing students, most teachers (75%) are confident in their ability to support them. Many also have, or are planning to, put in place a range of interventions.

- Six in 10 teachers in both primary and secondary schools are advising students on how to use **social media** safely.
- 57% of secondary schools and 31% of primary schools are providing counselling, with small trusts and stand-alone academies more likely to provide this than large trusts or Local Authority community schools.
- Just over 1 in 3 primary teachers are **practising relaxation and mindfulness activities** with students. The same proportion of secondary teachers say their school has a nominated staff member as a **'mentor'** to support students with issues they face.

- Two thirds of headteachers plan to embed mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum by 2025 and just under 1 in 4 will build space in the curriculum to explore current affairs.
- Others cited prioritising training to ensure their learners with SEND are as supported as possible as well as providing free breakfast clubs.
- Some also mentioned 'poverty proofing' their school day a programme that involves speaking with the school community to identify what's working well to support children and families living in poverty and where the school can help further.



of teachers feel confident in their ability to support pupils with the pastoral issues they face

of students agree that their teachers are supportive and look out for them

Supporting students 21

Q: Has your school put in place any of these interventions to support your pupils with issues facing them today?

	Primary	Secondary
Advice on using social media safely	58%	59%
Counselling	31%	57%
Staff training to identify early indicators of mental health/safeguarding concerns	37%	35%
Relaxation/mindfulness activities	36%	24%
Nominated staff member as a 'mentor'	21%	36%
Increased working with parents	32%	22%
Extra-curricular social activities	19%	24%
Peer mentoring	7%	27%
Time dedicated to exploring global affairs	9%	14%
None of the above	13%	9%
Not relevant / cannot answer	4%	5%



When looking at year-on-year insights, there were some interesting differences:

- 27% of teachers said their school was working more closely with parents to support pupils, compared to 43% in 2022
- the number of teachers spending time
 exploring global affairs with their students
 has significantly fallen in 2023 (42% in 2022 vs 12% in 2023)
- in total, **fewer teachers** say they're doing any of the interventions listed compared to this time last year (92% in 2022 vs 85% in 2023).

"Our school is redesigning our curriculum provision to better support pupil mental health whilst balancing this with teacher workload."

Primary SLT

"To help address poverty and hunger among our students, we've implemented a free breakfast club for all children."

Primary SLT

Responding to school challenges

Educators are going to great lengths to support their students, but what steps are being taken to respond to staff and school-wide challenges? Teachers shared a range of initiatives that are being pioneered and trialled in their schools to help address some of the key challenges they face:

- Wellbeing and workload committees / steering groups to help prioritise and address these crucial issues and support staff retention.
- 'Getting creative' with teacher recruitment and ways to make an income for the school through 'open mornings', more 'social media advertising' and fundraising initiatives.
- Increasing training and CPD opportunities in challenging areas and regularly surveying staff to understand areas of need.

"We now have a 'Wellbeing Lead' on SLT who strategically looks at ways to develop a healthy workload and wellbeing culture."

Secondary SLT

"We are designing our own inclusion centre, training staff and sharing best practice on SEND adaptations."

Secondary SLT



"We are supporting staff mental health through early intervention and identification, and have an open door policy for staff to speak to leaders. We are also providing additional provision and expertise to support SEND and carefully planning the budget."

School Leader

"We are retaining key staff members by offering them wider opportunities within the trust and expressing that they're valued, as well as giving time back to staff to promote positive workload and wellbeing."

Middle Leader

Opportunities ahead 24

Opportunities ahead

We asked teachers what they're feeling most positive about in their school this year and their answers ranged from 'their colleagues' to 'the holidays', continued 'digital learning' and 'seeing how well (their) students achieve'.

Another common theme to emerge was their positivity around the curriculum, the changes they're planning and the impact they believe these will make.

"What am I feeling most positive about this year? The curriculum becoming more diverse."

Secondary Classroom Teacher

"My colleagues. They are so supportive and we always make time to laugh."

Secondary Teacher

"The passion and desire amongst all parts of the school community to learn, to do their best and to support one another."

Primary Headteacher

"Getting back to normal after Covid and students feeling more confident about exams."

Secondary Teacher

Opportunities ahead 25

Planning ahead

Elsewhere in the survey, headteachers and teachers shared their plans to teach climate change, diversify curriculum topics and embed life skills into the curriculum by 2025.

Despite the wide-ranging challenges facing them, teachers' commitment to their students' progress and enhancing education for the better remains steadfast.

"We go above and beyond for the children in our school."

Secondary Classroom Teacher

Headteachers' plans *in the next two years*

- 1 Embed mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum (68%)
- Take steps to be a more sustainable and eco-friendly school (67%)
- Teach climate change and sustainability (48%)
- Diversify curriculum topics to cover race/gender/disability/LGBT+ (46%)
- Enact positive change in your community (e.g. volunteering/ campaigning on local issues etc.) (39%)

65% of students we asked agree that what they learn about at school helps them with issues they are facing in life now, or may face in the future.

Pearson School Report 2023

Part two A closer look:

key themes

In this section, we delve into ever-evolving issues in education – from environmental action and diversity, equity and inclusion, to digital learning now and in the future.



"It's important to learn about how to protect the planet because it's going to be for our future and our future children."

Primary Student



The role of schools 30

The role of schools

The DfE published their Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy in 2022, but what are educators' and students' views on the role they should play in these areas now and in the future?



Schools have a powerful role to play in **shaping sustainably minded citizens**, according to 3 in 5 teachers. This figure was consistent no matter their age, what phase school they work in or what subject they teach.

"The planet is everyone's responsibility. Schools should do anything and everything they can."

Secondary Teacher

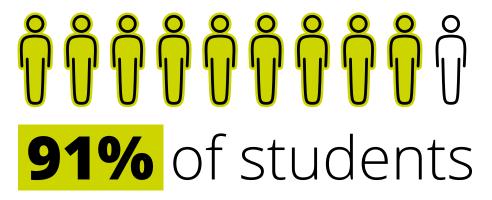
"We need to educate children that their choices have an impact. They need to learn about what the right choices are so they are able to choose [them]."

Primary Teacher

The role of schools 31



1 in 2 teachers also believe pupils should be climate literate when they leave school.



91% of students agree that it's **important to look after the** planet, nature and animals.

"Schools are [perhaps] the most important element for educating people about tackling climate change and protecting the planet. If we start early enough, we can educate future generations to be more eco-conscious and prevent further devastating impacts to our world."

Primary Teacher

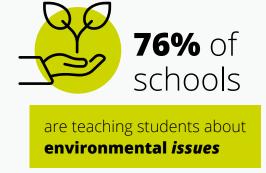
Positive action

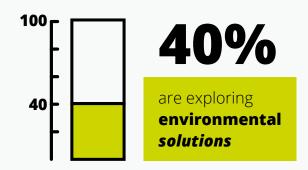
Earlier in the report, we learned how headteachers plan to make their schools more sustainable and to teach subjects like climate change by 2025; but what action is being taken by schools *now?*

- Teaching students about **environmental** issues is the most common action being taken by schools, with 3 in 4 teachers selecting this. This figure is broadly consistent across all schools, irrespective of phase, region, size and affluence.
- When it comes to exploring **environmental** *solutions* with learners however, 4 in 10 teachers are doing this (rising to 48% of teachers in private schools and 45% in stand-alone academies).
- 1 in 4 headteachers say they are running energy-saving and wastereducing initiatives and 1 in 5 are offering seasonal and local food produce in school.
- Other popular actions include, running **student eco-clubs** (47% of teachers selected this) and providing **green spaces** where learners can connect with nature (41%).



in England are taking some action to **protect the planet**





Positive action 33

Primary vs secondary differences

- Primary schools are significantly more likely to provide a **green space** for pupils (50% compared to 32% in secondary schools) and twice as likely to encourage **local biodiversity** through options like bird feeders and allowing wild plants to grow (38% vs 19%).
- Just 8% of all teachers said they were doing '**none**' of the options listed (7% primary; 10% secondary).

Q: Do you / your school do any of the following?

	Primary	Secondary
Teach students about environmental issues	79%	73%
Run a student 'eco-club'	45%	50%
Provide a green space where students can connect with nature	50%	32%
Teach students about environmental solutions	39%	42%
Run energy-saving initiatives	31%	27%
Encourage local biodiversity – i.e. birdfeeders / allowing wild plants to grow	38%	19%
Reduce waste ie addressing food waste, running a composting scheme, printer restrictions	30%	24%
Support environmental charities	14%	17%
Offer seasonal and local food produce in school	13%	11%
None of the above	7%	10%
Drive changes in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals	6%	4%
Not relevant / cannot answer	1%	1%

"We've seen students who have previously struggled with learning or attendance flourish as they gain a sense of meaning coming in early to feed our school goats and chickens. We see fewer exclusions and suspensions as children connect with nature each day through our outdoor curriculum and Forest School and are made to feel comfortable. I know not all schools will have the resources to do these things, but it starts with passion and by thinking how you can do things differently in your setting for the sake of learning, and for the planet."

Becki Huth, Forest School and Sustainability Leader, Cutteslowe Primary School Barriers to further progress 34

Barriers to further progress

"In our school we have declared a climate emergency and are setting up a steering committee with pupils involved to audit our practices. However, the audit is sitting with me – when I am busy it has to go on hold."

Secondary Teacher



Despite the positive steps being taken in schools, the majority of teachers do **not** think the education system is developing sustainably minded future citizens. Some of the barriers to delivering environmental education include:

- **time pressures** from an "already crammed curriculum" this was the top challenge, with more than 4 in 5 teachers citing this
- "not being a priority to SLT" was selected by 58% of classroom teachers but only 13% of headteachers
- 1 in 5 teachers say they expect "feelings of uncertainty and/or overwhelm" will affect their school's ability to provide this, with almost a third (31%) expecting "limited teacher knowledge" will also have an impact
- 14% of primary teachers and 10% of secondary teachers think "students getting anxious about the subject" is a challenge to teaching it.

Steps towards sustainability

We asked teachers to tell us what they thought would help them to drive positive environmental change through education.

Just 4% of teachers believe it is not schools' responsibility to drive positive environmental change; implying 96% believe it is.

Q: What would most help you / your school to drive positive environmental change through education?

- **1** Quality-assured age-appropriate teaching resources (**19%**)
- Making climate education a legal requirement (18%)
- Advice on how to effectively incorporate climate education into the curriculum (15%)

"With the time pressure of a packed curriculum, it's important for organisations to work with schools to demonstrate ways of integrating learning for nature and sustainability throughout the curriculum, leading to excellent outcomes for the future of our planet and of our young people."

Sam Kendall, Head of School Learning, Eden Project

"Young people need to be prepared to navigate the transition to a net zero world. The latest School Report findings show that there is strong support for our education system to fulfil this function [...] some schools have found ways to do this, and we can learn from them about what is feasible."

Rosalind Mist, Director of Education and Youth Engagement, WWF-UK

"I am autistic and [it helps] if the teachers [know] how my learning is and [teach] me a different way because [...] we all do not learn the same way."

Secondary Student

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Achieving authentic
diversity, equity and
inclusion in schools is a
high priority for educators
in England, but how can we
take it further?



Reflecting the world and its people

While the findings show that educators believe good progress has been made, there's still a long way to go to ensure education reflects the diversity of pupils' lives and the teachers delivering it.

Around 6 in 10

teachers say what is taught in schools today is more diverse and inclusive than it was five years ago

When asked which subjects should be evolved to better reflect the modern world and its people:

- 4 in 10 teachers said extended curriculum subjects such as IT, business, D&T
- a third said **humanities**, such as history and geography, and English / literacy
- only 8% of all teachers said subjects do **not** need to be evolved to better reflect the modern world and its people.



10% of teachers

say education in schools today reflects the diversity of pupils' lives / backgrounds

(up from 1 in 20 last year)

A quarter

of teachers **feel their own personal background is reflected** in what is being taught



"There has been a lot of progress, and a lot of training for schools on diversity and inclusion. It is heading in the right direction."

Secondary Teacher

"Lots of big strides and significantly different to when I was at school in the 90s, [but] a way still to go."

Secondary Teacher

"I think schools have made good progress in terms of representing different genders and races, but there's a long way to go representing people with disabilities (visible and invisible) and LGBTQ+ people."

Primary Classroom Teacher



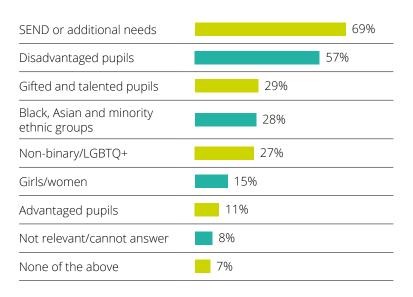
Pupil development 40

Pupil development

Thinking about the pupil experience, many teachers feel the current system is not effectively supporting certain learners to aspire and achieve.

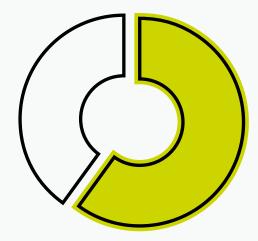
- More than two thirds of teachers say that pupils with SEND or additional needs are being ineffectively supported by the current education system.
- Just under three in five teachers say the same for disadvantaged pupils.
- 1 in 10 teachers say even advantaged pupils are being ineffectively supported by the current education system in terms of their aspirations and achievements.
- Around 1 in 4 teachers also think that LGBT+, Black, Asian and minority ethnicities, and gifted and talented students are also being let down.

Q: Which of the following groups do you think are ineffectively supported in their aspirations and achievements by the current education system?



"The school system puts everyone in the same category so you are unable to be yourself and study things important to you individually."

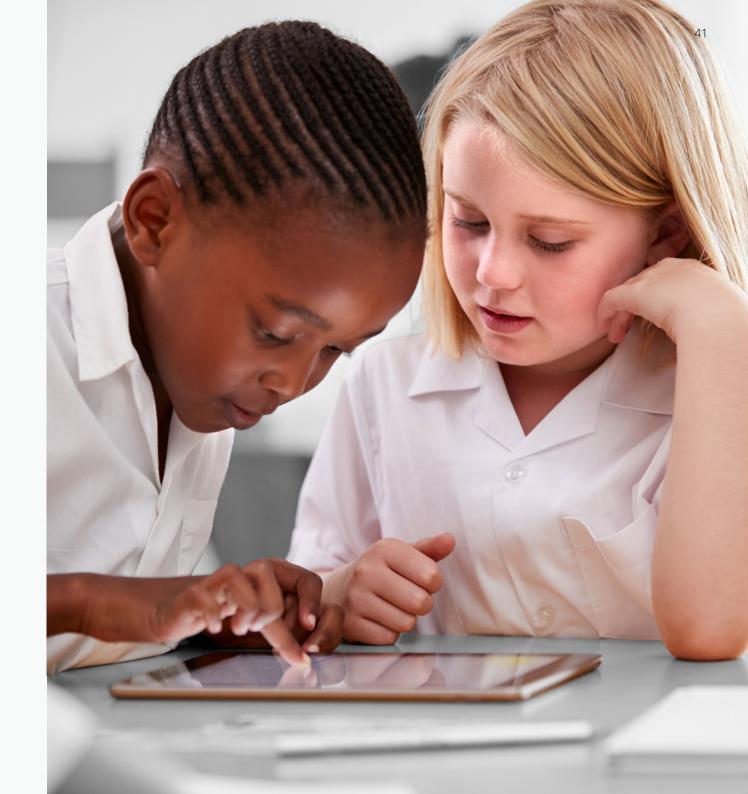
Secondary Student



6 in 10

say the national curriculum is designed to support pupils defined as 'normal' and not those on the margins

This was most notably reported by teachers in primary schools (62% as opposed to 49% in secondary schools), Q4 schools (60% as opposed to 53% in Q1), and classroom teachers (60% as opposed to 48% of headteachers).



SEND

When asked what could be done to help make mainstream schools more inclusive for children and young people with a broad range of additional learning needs or SEND, almost 2,500 teachers responded personally with their thoughts.

- Many spoke of the additional support they needed, either in terms of general support staff or in terms of additional training.
- Some specifically suggested more resources and funding for support – easier access to diagnostic testing, increased training for teachers and more Teaching Assistant support.
- Many stated that the biggest blocker to enabling support was a lack of funding, either for Teaching Assistant support or to facilitate smaller class sizes.

"What could be done to make things more inclusive? Better training, particularly supporting subject specialists in understanding how suggested strategies might look on their subject."

Secondary Middle Leader

"We need access to more professionals for free. No long waiting times for a diagnosis! More funding for 1:1 support or for resources."

Primary Teacher

"Funding is the biggest issue. Without adequate funding to staff and [providing] appropriate resources, these pupils are suffering."

Primary Teacher



"These findings reflect what we are seeing across education. Overall, we're caught between increased complexity of SEND, and issues with both funding and recruitment. Driving up high quality school practice in SEND in this context is challenging."

Malcolm Reeve, National SEND Leader, Whole School SEND Driving change 44

Driving change

Encouragingly, more than 90% of schools say that they have taken steps to support diversity and inclusion.

"Much has been done but things need to become properly embedded rather than just focused on for a special month/day. However, this will take time and teachers seem positive about helping to make these changes."

Secondary Middle Leader

9 in 10 schools

have taken steps to support diversity and inclusion





A third of teachers

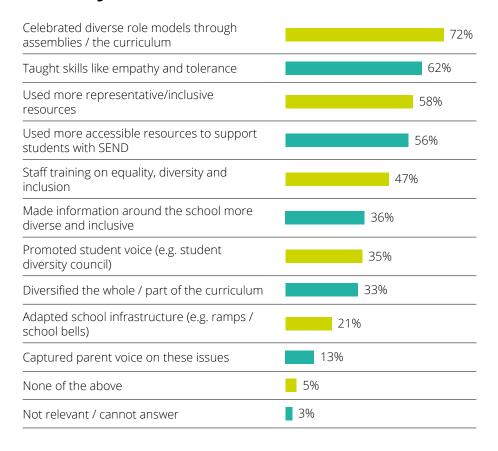
say they have diversified all or part of the curriculum

- The most popular step taken, true across both primary and secondary, was the **celebration of diverse role models** through assemblies and/or the curriculum, chosen by 70% of all respondents.
- Other popular steps include teaching **empathy and tolerance** (54%), using more **accessible resources** to support students with SEND (52%), providing **staff training** on equity, diversity and inclusion (51%) and using more **representative and inclusive resources** (50%).
- A third of teachers have diversified all or part of the **curriculum**, with teachers in state-funded schools (34%) or small trusts (37%) slightly more likely to have done this than those in private schools (29%) or very small schools (30%).

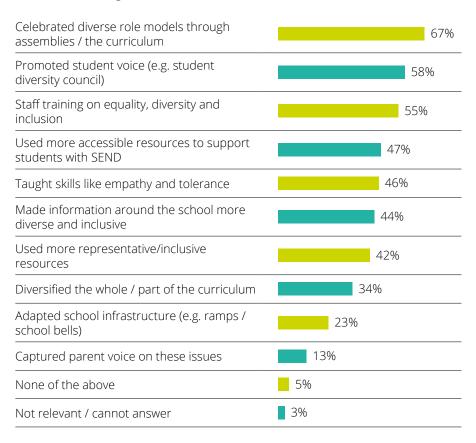
Driving change 45

Q: Have you / your school done any of the following to support diversity and inclusion?

Primary



Secondary



While almost half of all teachers have sought to promote **pupil voice** on these issues (e.g. running a student diversity council), just 13% of teachers say their school has captured **parental voices** and less than a quarter (22%) say their school has adapted its **infrastructure** (e.g. ramps / school bells).

The **impact**

Of the teachers who reported having taken steps to make their curriculum more diverse and inclusive:

- 38% reported seeing increased pupil interest, 30% reported seeing improved pupil empathy, and 25% reported seeing increased pupil engagement levels as a result
- among primary teachers, 36% said that diversifying the curriculum had improved empathy (23% of secondary teachers said the same), while 27% of all teachers said it was too early to say what the benefits might be.

The top 5 benefits of making the curriculum more diverse and inclusive

- 1 Increased pupil interest (38%)
- 2 Improved empathy (30%)
- Increased pupil engagement levels (25%)
- Improved pupil confidence (20%)
- 5 Improved wellbeing (17%)



Spotlight on students' views



64% of students

agree that they learn better if they see people like them/from their background reflected in what they learn at school

78% of students

agree that they feel accepted and like they belong at school – more primary school students believe this (85%) than secondary school students (70%)

86% of students

say being prepared for their future in a global world i.e. understanding and learning about different cultures is important to them

Building teacher confidence

Building teacher confidence

Overall, teachers feel confident speaking to students about broad and varied issues ranging from gender equality to racial injustices and poverty.

"I feel we've had a lot more training around these topics. So I am far more aware of covering different topics."

Primary Classroom Teacher

Q: Which of the following are you confident speaking to your students about?

	Primary	Secondary
Gender equality	72%	71%
Mental health	74%	66%
Teacher strikes	64%	74%
Racial injustices	61%	55%
Poverty	58%	56%
Disability	64%	49%
Sustainability	58%	54%
Neurodiversity	58%	46%
LGBT+ injustices	45%	54%
LGBT+ gender identity definitions	31%	40%
None of the above	5%	7%
Not relevant / cannot answer	4%	2%

- While these figures are encouraging with almost 6 in 10 teachers feeling confident speaking to students about disability, poverty and racial injustices, for example – they also indicate that more than 40% of teachers do not feel confident in these areas.
- There were also differences by phase. Primary teachers, for example, were more confident than secondary teachers talking about disability, neurodiversity and mental health.

Spotlight on LGBT+ gender identity definitions

LGBT+ gender identity definitions is the topic that teachers feel least confident speaking about.

1 in 3 teachers

are confident **speaking to students about LGBT+**gender identity definitions



91% of students:

agree that technology plays a big role in their lives now and will continue to.

say that being prepared for their future in a digital world is important to them.

Pearson School Report 2023

Embracing digital innovation

When it comes to education's digital evolution, what do teachers and students think of the positives, problems to solve and possibilities ahead?



Digital solutions in action

This academic year, an overwhelming majority of educators are regularly using digital tools and solutions in the classroom and beyond.



More than half of teachers have been using

virtual classrooms and digital learning platforms and services this academic year

Data tracking

- Two thirds of teachers have been using management information systems (for example, to take attendance and add data).
- More than 6 in 10 teachers have been using manual progress data tracking, such as spreadsheets although this is more common among secondary teachers (68%) compared to primary teachers (57%).

Lesson delivery

- Virtual classrooms are being used by two thirds of secondary teachers, compared to 42% of primary teachers.
- More than half of teachers (53%) have been using learning platforms/services to deliver lessons, homework, assessments, etc.
- Online textbooks and revision guides are being used by 1 in 4 schools.
- Just 10% of teachers say they use **adaptive learning technologies** and this didn't differ between phases.

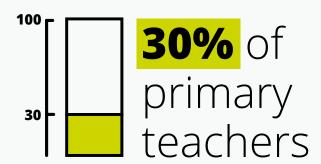
Digital solutions in action 53

Top 10 digital solutions teachers are using in 2022/23

	Primary	Secondary
MIS systems (e.g. take attendance, add data)	62%	69%
Manual progress data tracking (e.g Excel / spreadsheets)	57%	68%
Virtual classrooms (e.g. Teams & Classroom)	42%	65%
Learning platforms / services (delivering lessons, homework, assessment and performance data)	44%	62%
Resources-sharing websites	48%	48%
Digital assessment (online quizzes / tests)	38%	54%
Automated progress data tracking systems (e.g. online platform)	41%	26%
Online textbooks and revision guides	10%	40%
Software specifically to support SEND/ additional needs	30%	12%
Adaptive learning tech which personalises learning	10%	10%
None of the above	6%	3%
Not relevant / cannot answer	3%	1%

Spotlight onsupporting students with SEND

When it comes to digital solutions for SEND learners in particular, the use of software supporting pupils with additional needs is almost **three times** more prevalent in primary schools than secondary schools (30% primary; 12% secondary). Overall, just one in five teachers are using such software.



are using software specifically to support pupils with SEND/additional needs

Improvements through edtech

Teachers across all phases and roles identified a range of improvements they have seen from the use of technology in their school in the past two years.



of teachers say **technology** has improved overall **student engagement** and the same proportion say it has improved **accessibility** for learners with SEND since 2021

Top 5 improvements seen through using new technologies since 2021

- 1 Remote and flexible learning (48%)
- 2 Student engagement (**34%**)
- Accessibility for learners with SEND (34%)
- Workload and admin requirements (31%)
- **5** Pupil performance tracking (**30%**)

Parental engagement, personalised teaching and creative teaching were also experienced by more than one in five schools.

We also asked teachers to tell us what they found most valuable about digital learning and technology in schools today:

"The most valuable thing today is the ability to teach and learn remotely, including assessing understanding."

Secondary Teacher

"The ability to bring things to life for children who don't experience anything outside of their area."

Primary Teacher

"Remote parents' evenings have engaged more hard-to-reach families."

Primary Teacher



Digital developments in the next decade

62% of teachers

45% of teachers

expect to see a

greater emphasis on tech-enabled/ digital learning expect to see an increased use of Al in schools, e.g Chat GPT

in the next 10 years

Looking to the future of digital in schools, teachers shared their expectations for the next 10 years:

- more than 6 in 10 teachers expect to see a greater emphasis on **tech-enabled/digital learning** by 2033 (rising to almost three-quarters in private schools).
- more than half expect to see a greater emphasis on digital literacy and digital skills.

The top five things teachers expect to see in education in the next 10 years

	Primary	Secondary
Greater emphasis on tech-enabled/ digital learning	63%	60%
More emphasis on digital literacy and digital skills	53%	48%
Increased use of onscreen tests for high-stakes assessment	44%	55%
Increased use of Artificial intelligence (Al), e.g. Chat GPT	40%	50%
More parent communication tools	42%	38%

54% of students



would like to learn more about technology and digital skills at school

"[I'd like schools to] show us how to use a laptop properly for spreadsheets etc so we know how to use them in the future."

Primary Student

Lower down on the list of predictions, though still expected to feature in the next decade by a significant number of educators:

- a third of teachers expect to see automated data and insights on student performance and personalising learning
- a quarter of teachers expect to see more remote learning
- a fifth of teachers expect to see **greater flexibility** in future teaching roles, e.g. working from home, teaching remotely online, etc
- 16% of teachers expect to see metaverse / immersive technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR).

"I'd like to see more digital literacy as while they're great at TikTok, half my students can't save a Word document without help!"

Secondary Teacher

Assessments of the future

With digital solutions being a mainstay in classrooms today, and emphasis on digital learning expected to grow, how could technology influence how students show what they know and can do in assessments?

49% of teachers

expect to see an **increased use of onscreen tests** for high-stakes
assessment in the next 10 years

When it comes to considering assessments in the next 10 years, educators expect that technology will have an ever-increasing role to play.

- Almost half (46%) of teachers would like to see adaptive, personalised testing incorporated into assessments – e.g. artificial intelligence (Al) selecting questions based on students' prior answers.
- More than a third (37%) would like onscreen assessments, rather than on paper.
- More than a fifth (22%) would like to incorporate digital badge certification to recognise skills.
- While 1 in 5 teachers would also like to see virtual assessments with **remote invigilation**.



Assessments of **life and social emotional skills**, and of **teamwork**, were identified as areas of interest for many teachers.

This followed a key theme of the 2022 School Report, in which teachers told us they wanted to see the topics of life skills, social skills and relationships incorporated into the national curriculum with as much time and emphasis as core subjects. This year, skills were of particular interest to primary school respondents (28%).

Assessments of the future 5

"It's wonderful to see that most students (62%) want to learn more life skills at school. A quarter of teachers even want to see life skills assessed, and – perhaps more practically – over one in five think digital badges should be awarded to recognise life skills.

Employers are looking for related attributes like adaptability, self awareness, empathy and teamwork, as AI and tech increasingly handle manual and repetitive tasks. Being able to demonstrate life skills achievements with digital badge certification will set candidates apart."

Pete Read, CEO, Persona Education

Q: Which of the following would you like to see incorporated into assessments in the next 10 years?

	Primary	Secondary
Adaptive, personalised testing – e.g. Al selecting questions based on students' prior answers	46%	47%
Onscreen assessment (rather than on paper)	34%	40%
On-demand testing – e.g. high-stakes exams taken when students are ready	22%	35%
Coursework or project-based assessments	31%	28%
Assessment of life and social emotional skills	28%	21%
Digital badge certification to recognise skills	21%	24%
Collaborative assessment (teamwork)	24%	17%
Virtual assessment with remote invigilation – e.g. exams not taking place in an exam hall	15%	25%
Virtual reality and immersive tech e.g. enabling science experiments without leaving the classroom	24%	16%
None of the above	11%	12%
Gamification	9%	8%

Assessments of the future 60

Spotlight on secondary assessment



- More than half of secondary school teachers (55%) expect to see an **increased used of onscreen** for 'high-stakes' assessment (rising to 70% in private secondary schools.)
- Almost two in five teachers say they would like to see onscreen assessment used rather than paper assessment in the next 10 years. However, there are many steps to make this a reality in all schools.

49% of secondary students



would like to take exams/tests on computers rather than on paper

Teachers shared their thoughts on how digital learning and technology could change teaching and assessment in the next 10 years:

"There is so much scope for collaboration, immediate assessment and feedback, broader skills and automated progress tracking."

Primary Teacher

"Digital learning provides an exciting opportunity for developing and diversifying forms of assessment in the future."

Secondary Teacher

"What would be the most valuable digital learning change to happen in the next 10 years? Reforming exams."

Secondary Middle Leader

"The most valuable thing in the next 10 years will be integration of AR and VR in my opinion."

Secondary Teacher

"Al could revolutionise learning but has many potential problems too."

Secondary <u>Classroom Teacher</u>



Digital divide: school resources, Wi-Fi and support

To make the possibilities for digital learning and assessment become a reality, we first need to bridge the digital divide affecting schools, homes and communities.

Teachers told us about the digital resources they currently have available in schools:

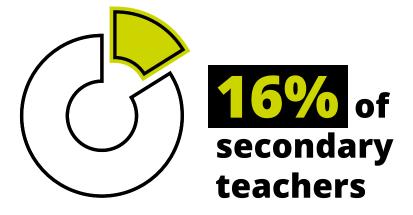


have one portable device per student in class

"Action is needed to ensure the equitable provision of devices and connectivity across all classrooms. Additionally, the report highlights the insufficiency of support available to educators to integrate digital tools into the teaching and learning experience. Harnessing technology can provide significant opportunities to improve education quality and build critical digital skills."



have **one device per two** students



have **no access to portable digital devices** for students to work on in lessons

Just 1% of primary teachers have this issue.

"Effective tools that enable even the least well-off students to compete with everyone else would be great."

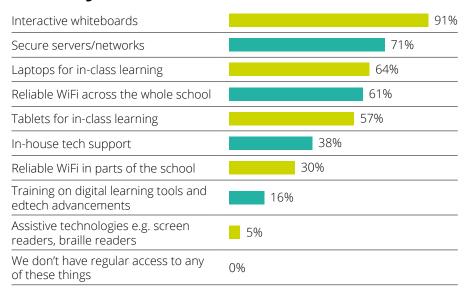
Secondary Middle Leader

"I would love our primary schools to reflect the world we live in technology-wise."

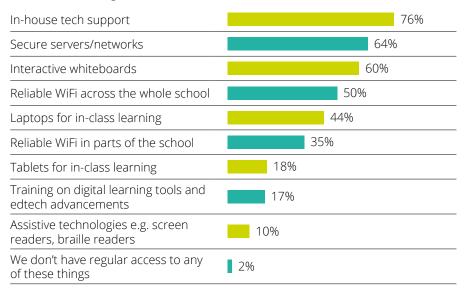
Primary SLT

Q: Which of the following do you have access to in your school?

Primary



Secondary



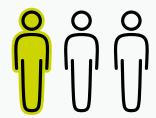
While 88% of schools told us they had access to Wi-Fi...



Just over half A third

of teachers say that they have reliable Wi-Fi across the entire school

of teachers say Wi-Fi is only reliable in parts of the school



Digital divide: School resources, Wi-Fi and support

When taking a closer look at access to portable devices and infrastructure, there are significant differences between school types and regions.

- 64% of primary schools have **access to laptops** for in-class learning, compared to 44% of secondary schools.
- Similarly, 57% of primary schools have **access to** tablets for in-class learning compared to just 18% in secondary schools.
- 9% of secondary teachers say that they **only have** devices available in computer suites.
- In one in 10 secondary schools, pupils use their own personal devices in class.
- Where teachers say they **don't have access to** portable digital devices for students can work on:
 - 4% of LA schools said this compared to 15% of stand-alone academies and 12% of small trusts
 - 6% of London teachers say this, compared to 10% in the North West and 11% in the Midlands.
- 68% of teachers say they have **secure servers and/** or networks.



- The proportion of secondary schools which have access to in-house tech support (76%) is double the proportion of primary schools (38%).
- Meanwhile, in terms of supporting students, fewer than 1 in 10 teachers overall have access to assistive technologies, including braille readers.

educators

receiving training on digital learning

(just 17%) are

tools and edtech advances

1 in 5 1 in 20

primary

teachers have

access to assistive technologies for students including braille readers

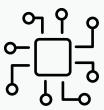
What the next generation said...

What the next generation said...

We asked 1,000 students what they'd like to see in schools to set them up for success in a digital world.

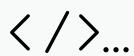
48% of students

would like to do more learning on digital devices



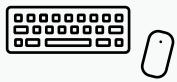
"We don't have many
IT lessons and I
think these would
be important to my
future."

Secondary Student



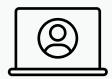
"More computer learning, coding"

Primary Student



"Lessons on how to use the technology"

Primary Student



"Could do more digital work at home"

Primary Student

What the next generation said... 67



"More laptops and tablets"

Primary Student



"I think the school should have more forums regarding digital activities and events, so that children can learn more about the future of the country."

Secondary Student



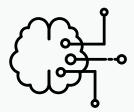
"More computerbased lessons"

Secondary Student



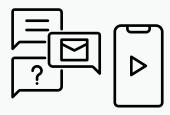
"More on social media responsibility"

Secondary Student



"Better training in programming and AI"

Secondary Student



"I'd like to learn about apps and know how to use them. Imagine if you didn't learn about the digital world and didn't know about any apps."

Primary Student

Conclusion

As we draw this year's Pearson School Report to a close, the next chapter is already beginning.

With thousands of educators and students having shared their views, we take our responsibility seriously to help ensure their words are heard. There's plenty here to inspire positive change, impacting every corner of every school.

The passion and optimism from so many teachers and school leaders are nothing short of inspiring. So, what can we do now to follow their lead? To go further for our teachers, for the pupils they influence and for the communities they enhance?

Our **pledge**

We're proud of the steps we took and the support we shaped after the 2022 Pearson School Report and, this year, we'd like to take our commitment to educators even further.

Building on these insights, we've outlined **four key areas** that we'll explore in depth with teachers, learners, experts, parents, policy makers and more in the year ahead.

Through free roundtable discussions, digital events, guidance, partnerships and internal reviews, we'll seek out further engagement, conversation and – most importantly – change across the education community in response to the following questions.

1) How can we facilitate further collaboration around some of the key challenges being experienced within the education community?

From budgets and workload to recruitment and retention – what are some of the practical innovations and solutions being implemented by schools, trusts and beyond to address these challenges, and how can we at Pearson shine a light on these?

2) How can we help every school to shape sustainable and brighter futures?

Continuing to expand innovations, opportunities and partnerships that fuel optimism, address barriers and support positive change for people and the planet

3) How can we accelerate progress to ensure all learners and educators feel included in education?

Building a system where every person feels that they belong and can flourish in the classroom and beyond

4) How can we collectively tackle the digital divide?

Uniting collective knowledge, passion and experience to help make embracing technology and reaping its rewards equitably a reality

Join us

As this report shows, while today's challenges are significant, so too is the sector's commitment to finding solutions and pioneering lasting change. We're calling on all those in education and beyond to join us in striving to explore these and other key questions.

Together, we can work to drive positive change in education for our brilliant educators, students and communities.

Sign up to our School Report 2023 community:



go.pearson.com/JoinSchoolPledge

Have your say

Add your voice to shaping the future:

- @PearsonSchools
- **f** @PearsonUKSchools
- in @Pearson UK & International Schools
- # #PearsonSchoolReport

Thank you

Thank you

We'd like to say a huge thank you to all those who shared their invaluable insights for this report or supported its creation. We would also like to express our appreciation in advance to all who have read and engaged with it.

And a special thank you to all the educators making an impact and pioneering change for our young people.

Here's what students had to say:

"Thank you for being kind and listening to me when I need support."

Primary Student

"Thank you for helping me be included in everything and dealing with my emotions."

Primary Student

"For pushing me in maths. It was hard at first but now I'm more confident."

Secondary Student

"Mum says that with this teacher I've started having the desire to learn again and I have to thank her for that."

Primary Student

"Thank you for helping with my dyslexia, making it easy for me to be included."

Secondary Student

"Thank you for making school fun."

Secondary Student



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Have your say

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