

School **Report**

Schools Today, Schools Tomorrow

Views on education in England –
2022 and beyond

June 2022



How do we ensure that the wellbeing, knowledge and talents of our educators are truly sustained, and enable them to continue enhancing the lives of future generations?

We start by actively seeking their views, and sharing the details and nuances of their experience.

Introduction

Where would we be without our brilliant teachers? Their compassion, dedication and expertise are vital in nurturing the children and young people in today's classrooms who will be at the heart of the communities and workplaces of the future.

That's why, especially amid some of the most challenging times this sector has ever known, we at Pearson continue to make it our priority to listen to teachers' experiences, hearing their challenges, recommendations and hopes as they report back from the frontline of education.

In this important report, we present the latest insights from a huge variety of schools and settings. The result is an inclusive representation of schools in England today from the teacher perspective – focusing on world events, the national curriculum, sustainability, wellbeing and much more.

Alongside this you'll also find thought-provoking expert commentaries on how we can build a future-proof system for tomorrow. Together, we're creating a picture of what's needed to shape a system that fully reflects the diversity of all learners, and the teachers supporting them.

We know this is a continuing journey, and one that won't reach its destination overnight. But we're committed to working with every part of the sector to make it happen.

We hope you find the research as insightful as we have and look forward to continuing this crucial conversation in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Sharon Hague
*Managing Director,
Pearson School Qualifications*



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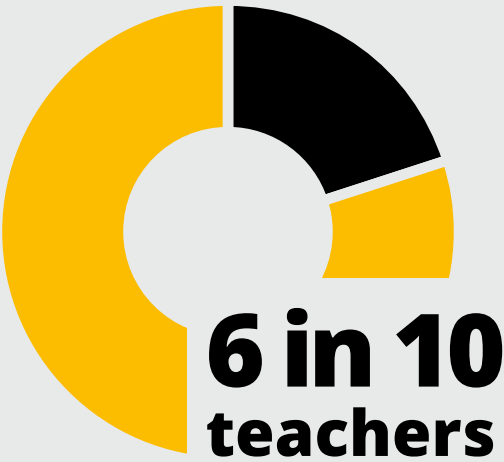
Headlines **at a glance**

We asked almost **7,000 teachers and senior leaders** in England to share their insights on education in 2022 and beyond, with a focus on the curriculum, challenges, pupil and community experiences, and the role of schools and teaching more generally



Pupil **development**

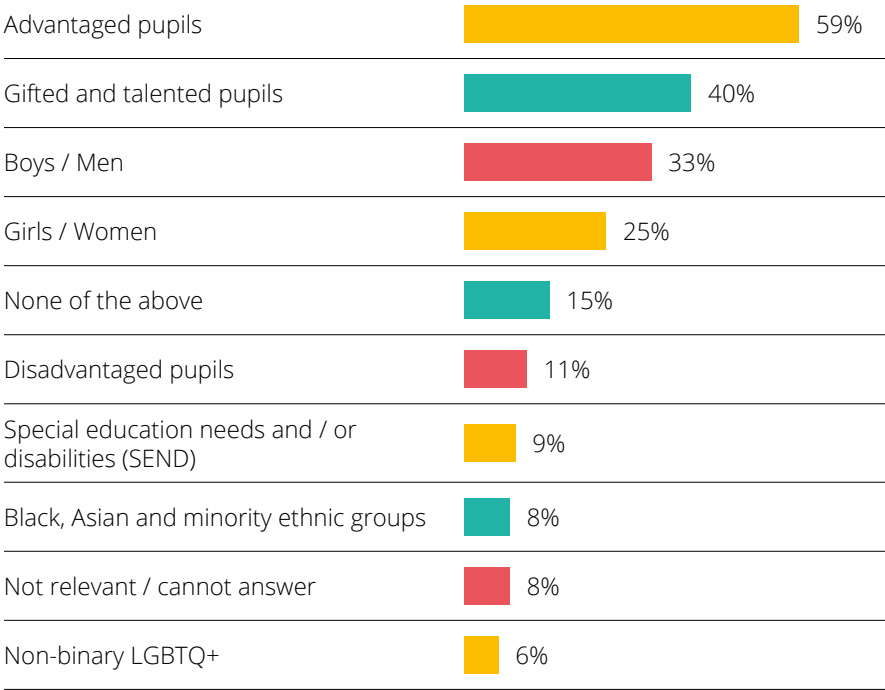
Thinking about the impact schools have on long-term pupil development, most teachers feel there is more work to be done.



do not think that the current education system is developing tolerant, sustainably minded citizens of the future.

- Approximately 40% of teachers think that the current education system **does not effectively support aspiration and achievement** among even advantaged pupils, with other minority groups disproportionately affected.

***Q:** For which of the following groups do you think the current education system effectively supports aspiration and achievement?*



- Three-quarters of teachers think **the curriculum's approach to life skills and readiness for adult lives could be changed** to better support pupils.

Top five characteristics teachers would like a future national curriculum to develop among their pupils so that they can thrive in 2022 and beyond

1

Resilience (63%)

2

Kindness (61%)

=

Self-esteem (61%)

4

Tolerance of diverse opinions (58%)

5

Social and cultural awareness (57%)

Social and emotional skills

There is a widespread appetite for change to consider the 'whole child' during their school journey, with 8 in 10 teachers saying that **pupils' social and emotional development is as important as their academic development.**

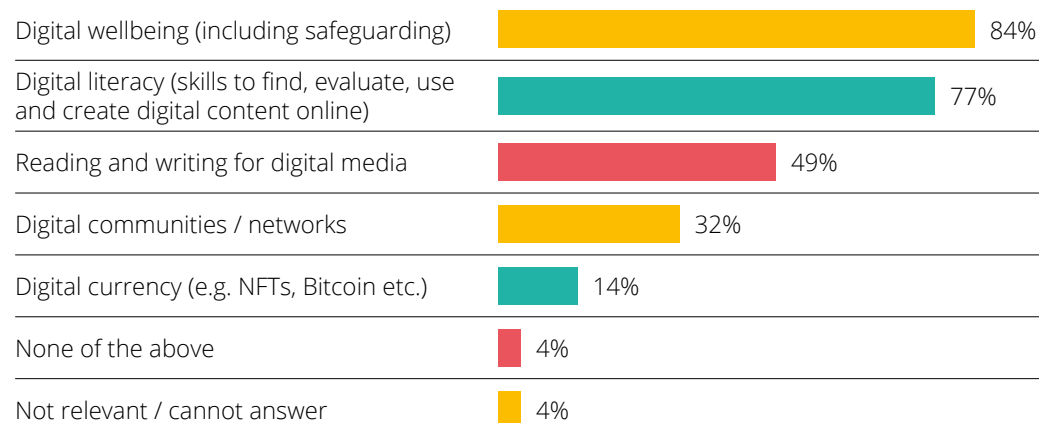
- When asked, over half of teachers responded that they spent **less than 30 minutes of a working day** developing pupils' social and emotional skills.
- 27% of teachers spent **no time in a working day** developing pupils' social and emotional skills.
- 66% of primary teachers, and 34% of secondary teachers, **would like to spend more time each day** developing pupils' social and emotional skills.

Evolving the curriculum

The majority of teachers would also like to see an increased attention given to developing mental health and wellbeing in the curriculum, as well as **skills to match global working trends**.

- Overall, 57% of educators say teachers need more freedom to **enrich pupils' skills beyond academics**.
- Over half of teachers say that a **better "digital curriculum" is needed** to prepare pupils for an online world.
- 6 in 10 teachers say schools **should offer more vocational qualifications**.
- Digital wellbeing (including safeguarding)** is the digital element that most teachers believed should be incorporated into the curriculum.

Q: Which of the following digital elements do you think should be incorporated into the curriculum over the next 5–10 years?



6 in 10
teachers want

mental health and wellbeing incorporated into the curriculum.

World events

At the same time, teachers are also concerned about the **effect of ongoing world events** on learners.

- Teachers report that **learning loss and catch-up requirements** caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are still being experienced in 82% of primary schools and 67% of secondary schools.
- **Staff absence caused by the pandemic** continues to be experienced in almost 9 in 10 schools at the time of asking.
- Meanwhile, **global conflict tops the list of issues that teachers have seen increase pupil anxiety**, with as many as 70% of all teachers witnessing this in schools over the last year.

Barriers to learning

Over the next six months, almost three-quarters of teachers think attendance will be a barrier to pupil learning in their school. In addition, the **rising cost of living is causing concern**.

- Half of teachers think **poverty will be a barrier to pupil learning** in their school in the next six months.
- In deprived schools, half of teachers think **hunger will be a barrier to pupil learning** in their school in the next six months.

“A lot of the things I see in the media can be quite upsetting or confusing... I think being able to discuss this sort of stuff with a teacher would really help us gain a different perspective and understand the world we live in a bit better.”

Sophia Papasouliotis, Student

Supporting students

Despite this period of global change and uncertainty, the majority of **teachers feel confident in their abilities to support students** with pastoral issues.

Q: How confident do you feel in your ability to support your pupils with the pastoral issues facing them today?

| | All | Classroom teacher | Middle leader | SLT (excl. head) | Headteacher |
|---------------------------------|-----|-------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| Very confident | 13% | 8% | 14% | 22% | 26% |
| Somewhat confident | 64% | 65% | 65% | 64% | 62% |
| Neither confident nor otherwise | 13% | 15% | 13% | 9% | 5% |
| Not that confident | 8% | 10% | 7% | 5% | 3% |
| Not at all confident | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Not relevant/cannot answer | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 2% |

Schools today:

exploring the
effects of world
events

A summary of teachers' views
on education today, and during
the past year, across schools
nationwide

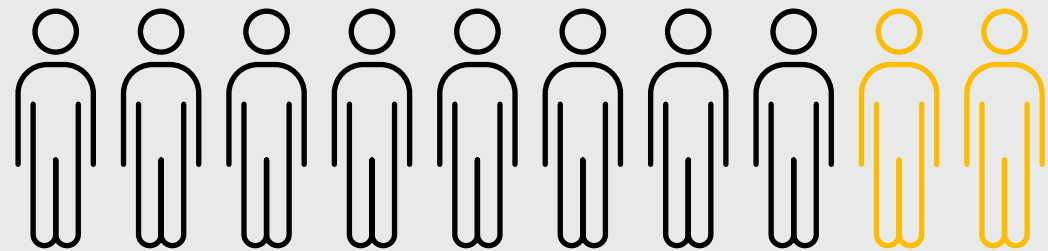


The continued impact of Covid-19

"Covid made us all feel helpless and eroded a sense of purpose – like all loss, it left us all, staff and pupils, thinking what's the point? Post-Covid we can redefine the point for our community and make real gains in the classroom by connecting to their futures."

Vice Principal

Teacher responses to our research painted a picture of the ongoing effects of Covid-19, and the continued impact of lockdowns, **indicating both pressures and signs of progress.**

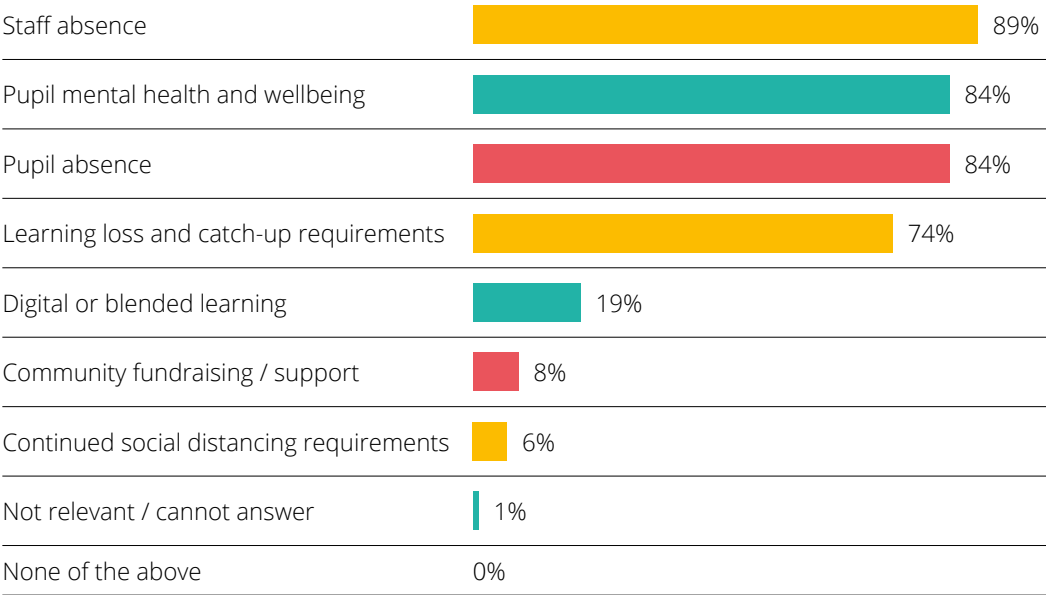


More than 8 in 10

teachers say the effects of Covid-19 are still being experienced in their school in terms of pupil absence, staff absence or pupil mental health.

More than two years since the first lockdown, the issue is one that continues to affect school life, with **more than 50% of teachers witnessing an increase in pupil anxiety** around Covid-19 developments over the past year. This was second only to pupil anxiety around global conflict.

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



Some teachers have noticed a **strengthening of community links** due to Covid-19, with 48% of headteachers saying their relationships with parents have been enhanced since the pandemic began.

- However, only 19% of teachers say their school is doing more to **connect pupils and the local community** following the pandemic.
- While 47% of classroom teachers feel that **relationships with community members including pupils, parents, governors and local authorities, have not been enhanced**.

Awareness & anxiety around global issues

“At the start of the Russian-Ukraine war we shared videos and support lines in tutor time, plus held talks at lunch and support drop-in sessions.”

Secondary Science Teacher

Teachers have seen a **rise in pupil awareness around global issues**, as well as an increase in pupil anxiety.

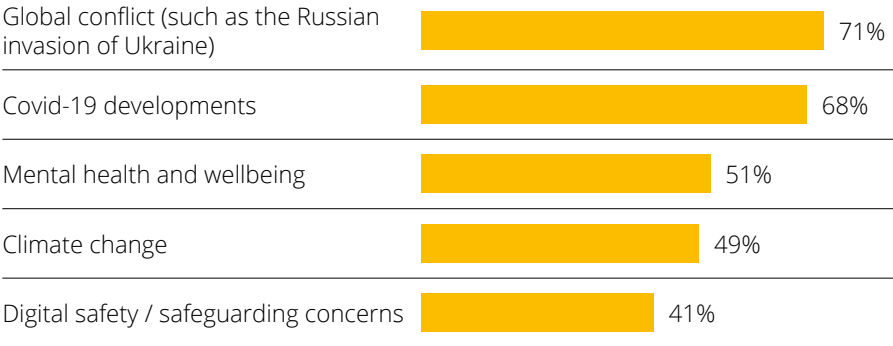
The proportion of students struggling is a stark reminder, if any were needed, that our schools do not operate in a vacuum – but are microcosms of the wider world, and very much affected by broader events.

Global conflict

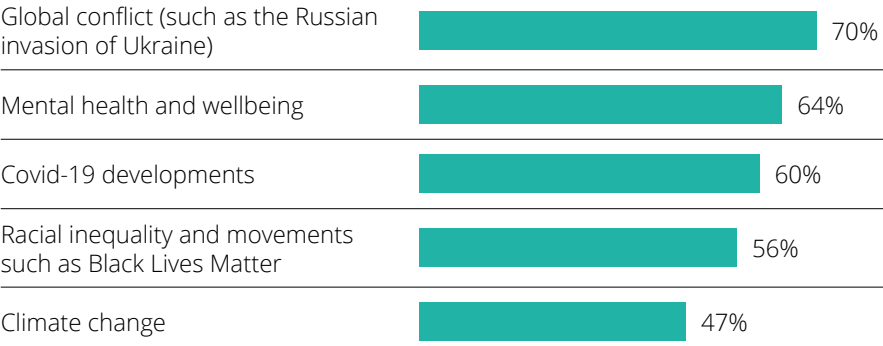
- **7 in 10** of teachers report witnessing an increase in pupil **awareness around global conflict** over the last year.
- **61% of teachers** have seen an increase in pupil **anxiety around global conflict**.

Q: Thinking about the last year in your school, have you witnessed an increase in pupil awareness around any of the following issues?

Primary



Secondary



“The world our children are growing up in is increasingly unrecognisable to the one inhabited by most adults as they grew up, and undoubtedly, teachers will be asked to unpick some of these issues, so that they can continue to support each new generation of happy, well-rounded young people.”

Kerry-Jane Packman, Parentkind

Areas in which teachers have seen an increase in pupil awareness and anxiety over the last year in school

| | Increased awareness | Increased anxiety |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| Digital safety / safeguarding concerns | 36% | 15% |
| Global conflict | 70% | 61% |
| Climate change | 48% | 25% |
| Racial inequality & movements i.e. BLM | 48% | 19% |
| Political decisions i.e. Brexit | 24% | 12% |
| Covid-19 developments | 64% | 51% |
| Rising cost of living | 20% | 16% |
| Social injustices | 17% | 11% |
| Mental health and wellbeing | 57% | 41% |
| Physical health and wellbeing | 14% | 7% |

The power of **social media**

Just 13% of teachers say that uncertainty over the future is the greatest pressure facing pupils today. Instead, over half of all teachers feel **the greatest pressure on pupils is social media**, which is no doubt a major factor influencing how pupils engage with the news and world affairs.

“Social media platforms have their strengths and weaknesses. Usefully, they increase knowledge and make conversations about mental health more possible and acceptable. However, they also push up anxiety around these issues by disseminating unhelpful information or misinformation.”

Dr Helen Care, Clinical Psychologist

Racial inequality and location

It's important to note that, in some instances, **location plays a role in how current affairs are perceived and processed by pupils**, most strikingly with regards to racial inequality, and movements such as Black Lives Matter.

Though 48% of all **teachers witnessed an increased awareness amongst pupils around racial inequality** over the last year, only 19% reported seeing an increase in pupil anxiety around this issue. London bucked the trend, however, with a 31% rise in pupil anxiety around racial inequality.

"Young people are not apathetic, they are engaged, interested and want to make change. We know that a lot of anxiety about global events is driven by, or exacerbated by, a sense of lack of influence and control. Helping young people channel their interest and engagement is key."

We can help manage pupil anxiety with honesty: focus on facts but limit them, and tailor to the young person's developmental stage. Look for small ways to be part of the solution – we always feel better if we feel we're trying. While we do want pupils to be well-informed, global citizens, it's also important to acknowledge that if there isn't anything they can practically do, continually talking about it may not be helpful. Allow them to duck out of conversations if they're overwhelmed."

Dr Helen Care, Clinical Psychologist

Safeguarding concerns & pupil pressures

“Heads of Year and pastoral staff are excellent, but there is a limit to what they can do. One of our major concerns currently is pupils struggling with their mental health. Unfortunately, we are not mental health professionals.”

Secondary Science Teacher

During the past year, teachers (particularly those in secondary schools) have witnessed a range of safeguarding issues among pupils – from substance abuse to bullying and mental health needs. This experience not only underlines the importance of training to efficiently handle such issues with sensitivity, but also the crucial role schools play in **identifying and supporting the needs of children and young people today** – among the most vulnerable members of our society.

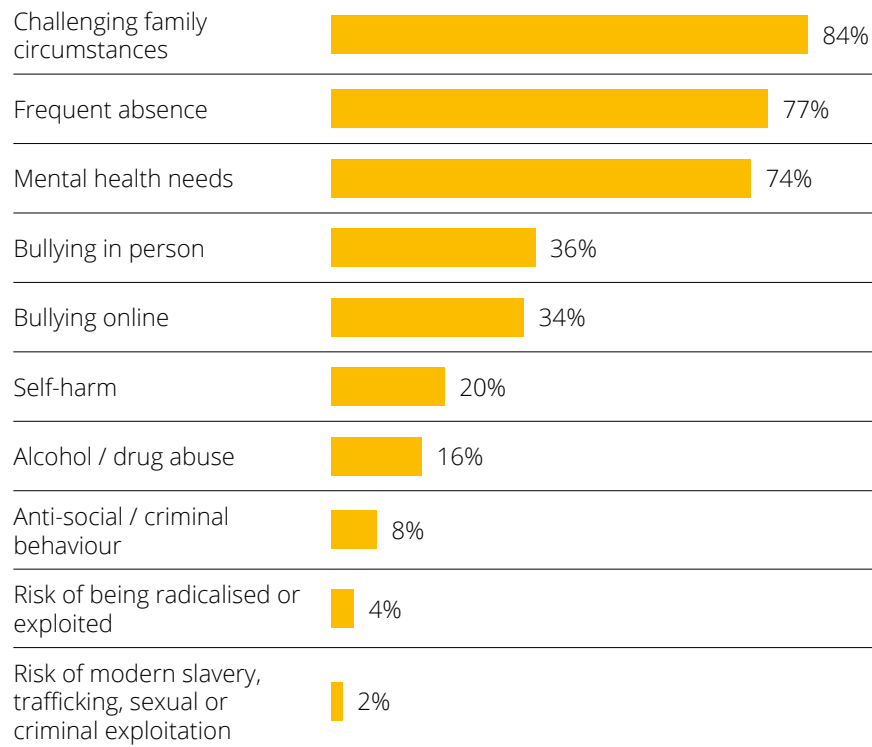
- **Challenging family circumstances** is the safeguarding issue most teachers have witnessed among pupils since October 2021.
- 95% of secondary teachers, and 81% of primary teachers, have witnessed **stress and anxiety** among one or more of their pupils in the past six months.

“Young people’s mental health and wellbeing is important. Our education over the past two/three years has had so much disruption; it’s left us very vulnerable.”

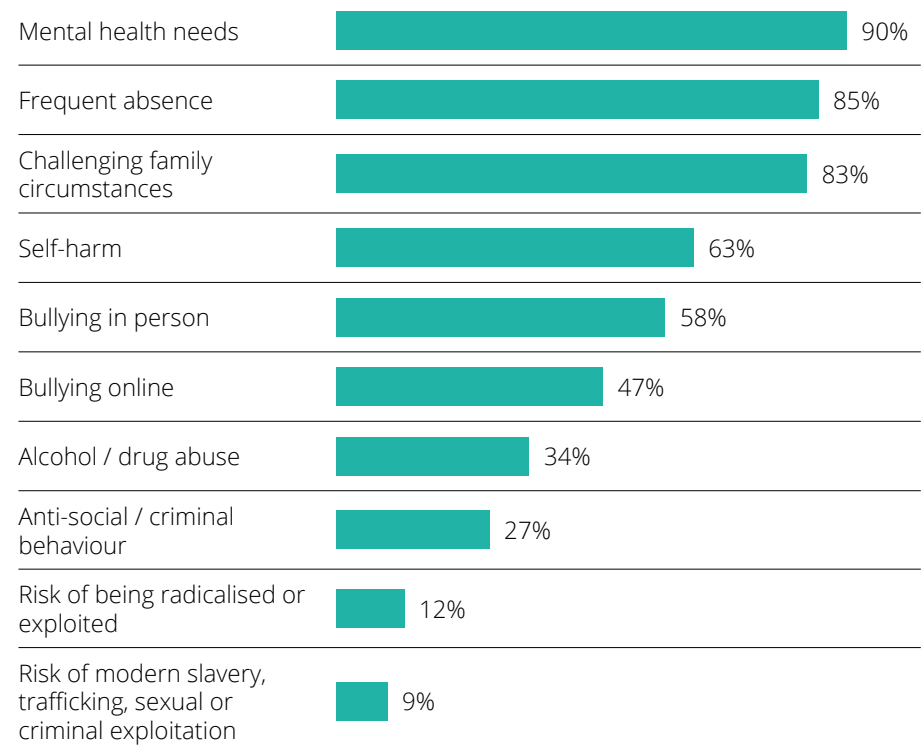
Diego Bartolomeu, Student

Q: Have you witnessed any of the following safeguarding issues among your pupils in the past six months?

Primary



Secondary



Impacts in the classroom & barriers to learning

"I work in a school of mainly disadvantaged children with many vulnerabilities. We spend so long getting their maths and English to the levels required that we cannot enrich their lives to the extent we should in other subjects."

Acting Deputy Head

"My school's biggest opportunity over the next 12-18 months? Getting disaffected students back into school post-Covid disruptions."

SLT and Secondary Teacher

We asked teachers to tell us what they thought **the greatest barriers to pupil learning had been in the past six months** and **what they anticipate they'll be in the next six months**. Their answers revealed a spectrum of experiences representing different areas of affluence and disadvantage.

Comparison of responses between previous six months and those ahead

| | Barrier in previous six months | Perceived barrier in the next six months |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Poverty | 43% | 48% |
| Hunger | 25% | 33% |
| Physical health | 29% | 28% |
| Mental health | 81% | 81% |
| SEND | 58% | 57% |
| Accessibility | 14% | 15% |
| Attendance | 81% | 71% |
| Prior learning experience | 55% | 53% |
| Lack of diversity and representation | 9% | 11% |
| Social injustice | 17% | 21% |
| None of the above | 1% | 2% |

“This shows a very high expectation among the teaching workforce that poverty and hunger will be key barriers to learning over the next six months. It is a matter of urgency that appropriate policies are put in place to safeguard children and the long-term health of the economy.”

Sinéad Mc Brearty, Education Support

Barriers to learning over the **past six months**



8 in 10 teachers say

attendance

has been a
barrier to pupil
learning.

mental health

has been a
barrier to pupil
learning.

Whilst attendance and mental health were common barriers identified across all schools, **poverty, hunger and social injustice have been more than twice as likely to obstruct learning** in disadvantaged schools than in their more affluent counterparts.

Q: Which of the following factors do you think have been a barrier to pupil learning in your school over the past six months?

| | | Q1 (affluent) | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 (deprived) |
|---|-----|--|------------|------------|---------------|
| Poverty | 43% | 26% | 41% | 53% | 70% |
| Hunger | 25% | 16% | 22% | 33% | 44% |
| Physical health | 29% | 25% | 31% | 33% | 36% |
| Mental health | 81% | 83% | 82% | 81% | 84% |
| Special education needs and / or disabilities | 58% | 55% | 59% | 59% | 62% |
| Accessibility | 14% | 14% | 14% | 15% | 19% |
| Attendance | 81% | 79% | 84% | 88% | 88% |
| Prior learning experience | 55% | 50% | 58% | 55% | 62% |
| Lack of diversity and representation | 9% | 8% | 8% | 9% | 13% |
| Social justices | 17% | 13% | 15% | 19% | 28% |
| None of the above | 1% | 2% | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| Not relevant / cannot answer | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| All responses | | Breakdown of responses by affluence quartile | | | |

Anticipated barriers to learning over the **next six months**

Teachers also shared what they thought the **greatest barriers to pupil learning would be in the next six months** in their schools.

Again, mental health and attendance came top, while clear variation was evident in terms of the estimated impact of poverty and hunger expected across different levels of disadvantage.

Overall outlook

- **81%** of all teachers think that **mental health** will be a barrier to learning.
- **71%** of all teachers think that **attendance** will be a barrier to learning.
- **57%** of all teachers think that **SEND** will be a barrier to learning.
- **48%** of all teachers think that **poverty** will be a barrier to learning.
- **33%** of all teachers think that **hunger** will be a barrier to learning.

Outlook for schools in more deprived areas

In schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM Q4):

- **70%** of teachers think **poverty** will be a barrier to learning – for the more affluent schools, just **34%** of teachers think this will be a barrier.
- **50%** of teachers think **hunger** will be a barrier to learning – for the more affluent schools, just **22%** of teachers think this will be a barrier.
- **83%** of all teachers think that **mental health** will be a barrier to learning.

Q: Which of the following factors do you think will be a barrier to pupil learning in your school during the next six months?

| | | Q1 (affluent) | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 (deprived) |
|---|-----|---------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Poverty | 48% | 34% | 49% | 61% | 70% |
| Hunger | 33% | 22% | 33% | 40% | 51% |
| Physical health | 28% | 22% | 28% | 32% | 34% |
| Mental health | 81% | 82% | 81% | 83% | 83% |
| Special education needs and / or disabilities | 57% | 55% | 59% | 59% | 61% |
| Accessibility | 15% | 13% | 15% | 17% | 19% |
| Attendance | 71% | 68% | 73% | 78% | 79% |
| Prior learning experience | 53% | 49% | 57% | 54% | 57% |
| Lack of diversity and representation | 11% | 10% | 8% | 12% | 13% |
| Social justices | 21% | 16% | 19% | 25% | 30% |
| None of the above | 2% | 2% | 2% | 0% | 1% |
| Not relevant / cannot answer | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |

All responses

Breakdown of responses by affluence quartile

How schools are responding to the issues

Teachers have gone above and beyond to support pupils and their communities through difficult times – and the challenges continue. Many schools are working hard to respond by offering interventions such as counselling for students and staff training. These positive steps are likely to be a contributing factor to the statistic that almost 6 in 10 teachers report having seen an **increase in pupil awareness of mental health and wellbeing** over the past six months.

“We’ve increased pastoral support, including external [agencies], increased phone calls home and contact with families by form tutors, particularly those families who have very strong family ties to Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia.”

Geography Teacher

“My school’s interventions? More counsellors, safeguarding assemblies, external agencies in for drugs, sexting, internet safety, etc., PSHE sessions, fundraising events, form discussions.”

Head of Faculty

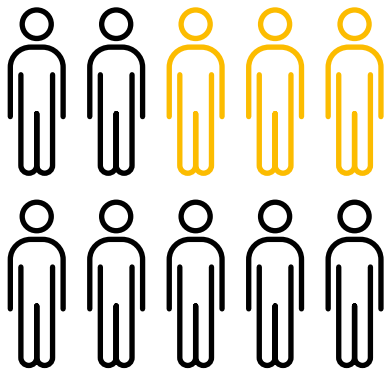
“All classes have app-based open communication channels between class teachers and parents/carers.”

Year 4 Teacher



Support in action...

- A third of secondary teachers say their school has introduced **peer mentoring** to support pupils.
- Almost 1 in 2 primary teachers have increased the time they spend **working with parents** to support pupils with the issues they face.
- 63% of primary teachers say their school is giving advice to pupils on **using social media safely**.

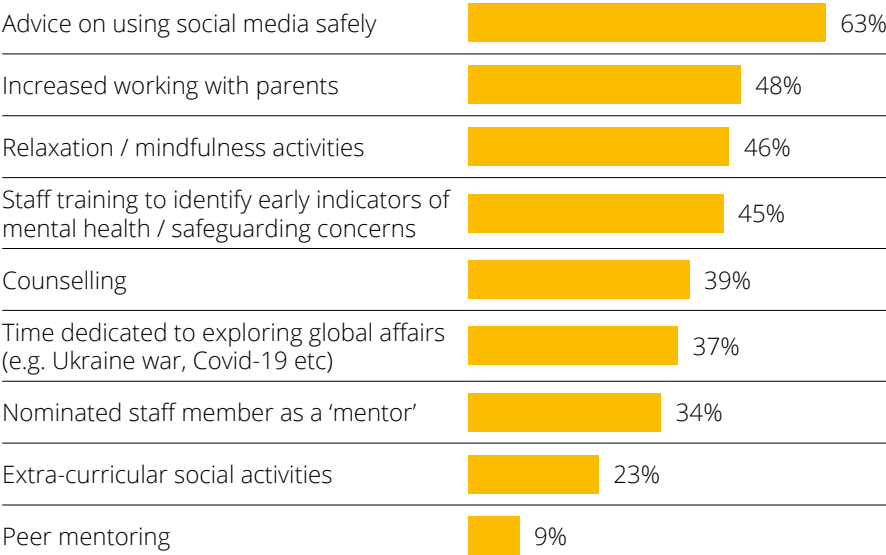


7 in 10

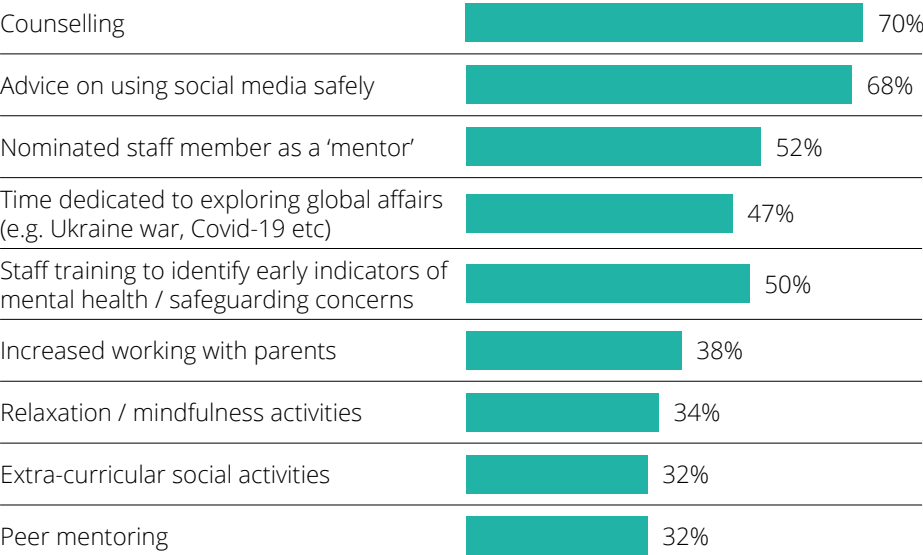
secondary teachers reported the use of **counselling interventions** in their school to support pupils with the issues facing them.

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

Primary



Secondary

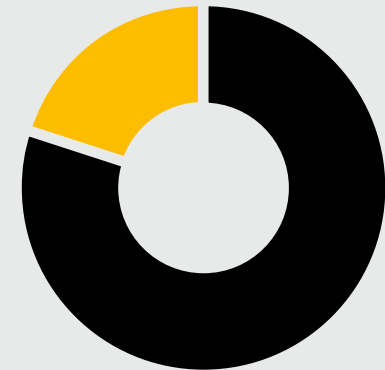


... and with **confidence**

Though many educators described being under an increased strain and workload in their professional roles, a significant proportion reported feelings of confidence with regards to **giving pupils the holistic support they need.**

Over three-quarters

of all teachers **feel confident in their ability to support their pupils with the pastoral issues** facing them today.



- However, almost 1 in 10 (9%) of all teachers **do not feel confident** in their ability to support their pupils.

“Feelings of safety are central to success in school, academically and socially. Feelings of safety are established, maintained and restored through our relationships. It is essential that we develop the relationship practices of all staff to support them to initiate, grow and repair relationships with students and between students. This is especially true in times of challenge.”

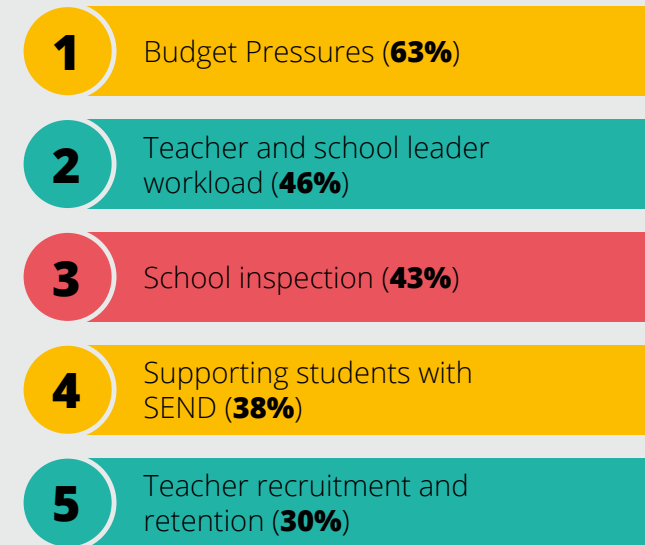
Shaun Brown, The Difference

The **school leader** perspective

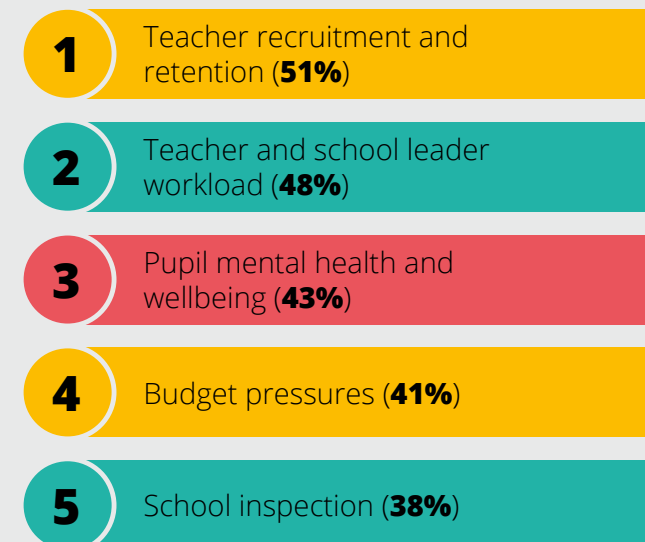
When school leaders were asked what they expected to be the top three challenges for their school to manage over the next year to 18 months, **budget pressures** came first on the list.

- More than 1 in 3 school leaders think their school will **reduce support staff or restrict the use of resources** to reduce spending over the next academic year.
- 30% think their school will **reduce investment** in their premises over the next academic year.
- Almost half are considering **letting out school buildings** over the next academic year to increase their school's income.

Primary



Secondary



Q: Which of the following do you think your school will implement to support reduced spending over the next academic year?

| | |
|---|------------|
| Reduction in support staff | 39% |
| Restricted use of resources | 38% |
| Reduced investment in premises | 30% |
| Less investment in staff CPD | 25% |
| None of the above, we don't need to reduce spending | 22% |
| Reduction in teaching staff | 21% |
| Bigger class sizes | 20% |
| Sharing staff with other schools | 12% |
| Reduction in curriculum offer | 8% |
| Not relevant / cannot answer | 5% |

Q: Which of the following is your school considering to increase income over the next academic year?

| | |
|---|------------|
| Letting out buildings and facilities to generate income | 44% |
| Community fundraising | 31% |
| Parent donations | 24% |
| Sharing contracts for services | 20% |
| Nothing at present | 18% |
| Sharing curriculum resources with other schools | 15% |
| Contracting out staff to other schools | 13% |
| Business partnerships | 11% |
| None of the above | 8% |
| Not relevant / cannot answer | 6% |
| Setting up on-site nursery provisions | 5% |

“Through our work with hundreds of schools each year, we hear that budget pressure remains an enormous source of stress on many leaders. In response, most expect to have to cut support staff and resources. At a time when we ought to be investing in learning recovery for a generation, this is deeply troubling.”

Sinéad Mc Brearty, Education Support

How can the sector respond to these challenges in a way that supports all pupils, and sustains our teaching workforce in England?

Schools tomorrow:

looking ahead
to support
future learning

We asked teachers to look ahead and consider how they think the sector could best support schools and all pupils in the future



Evolving the national curriculum

Many educators voiced issues with the current curriculum, and proposed suggestions to help facilitate progress, ensuring it serves pupils for life in 2022 and beyond.

“Curriculum needs to focus more on developing skills for workplace, as well as broadening knowledge and cultural awareness and tolerance.”

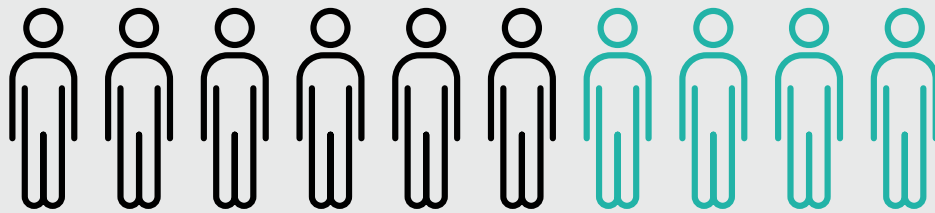
MFL Teacher

Representation was a key talking point, with **only 1 in 20 teachers saying that education in schools today reflects the diversity of pupils’ lives**. This finding comes two years on from our *Diversity and Inclusion in Schools Report*, in which 80% of teachers said more could be done to celebrate diverse cultures, people and experiences in UK education.

Q: For which of the following groups do you think the current education system effectively supports aspiration and achievement?

| | |
|--|------------|
| Advantaged pupils | 59% |
| Gifted and talented pupils | 40% |
| Boys / Men | 33% |
| Girls / Women | 25% |
| None of the above | 15% |
| Disadvantaged pupils | 11% |
| Special education needs and / or disabilities (SEND) | 9% |
| Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups | 8% |
| Not relevant / cannot answer | 8% |
| Non-binary LGBTQ+ | 6% |

These findings could lead to serious long-term impacts for pupils if left unaddressed, as established in Pearson's report on the future of qualifications and assessment. This revealed, after consulting 6,000+ young people, teachers, and education experts, that *"young people fail to connect with learning because the curriculum does not sufficiently reflect or represent their lives."*



61% of teachers

say the current education system is **not successfully developing tolerant, sustainably minded global citizens** of the future.

"The findings show that teachers have an expansive view of the purposes of education. This is encouraging, but they also have considerable concerns about whether education is currently meeting pupils' needs."

Teachers need to be able to exercise their agency in developing young people's ability to write their own life stories and to confront contemporary challenges, but this shouldn't just be about curriculum, accountability and qualification change. It is just as much, if not more, about giving teachers the space, support and expertise needed to make their vision a reality."

Loic Menzies, Visiting Fellow, Sheffield Institute of Education

So, what do teachers think should be in the curriculum? Educators selected the characteristics that they would like to see the future national curriculum develop among learners:

Q: What are the FIVE most important characteristics that you would like a future national curriculum to develop among your pupils so that they can thrive in 2022 and beyond?

1

Resilience (**63%**)

2

Kindness (**61%**)

=

Self-esteem (**61%**)

4

Tolerance of diverse opinions (**58%**)

5

Social and cultural awareness (**57%**)

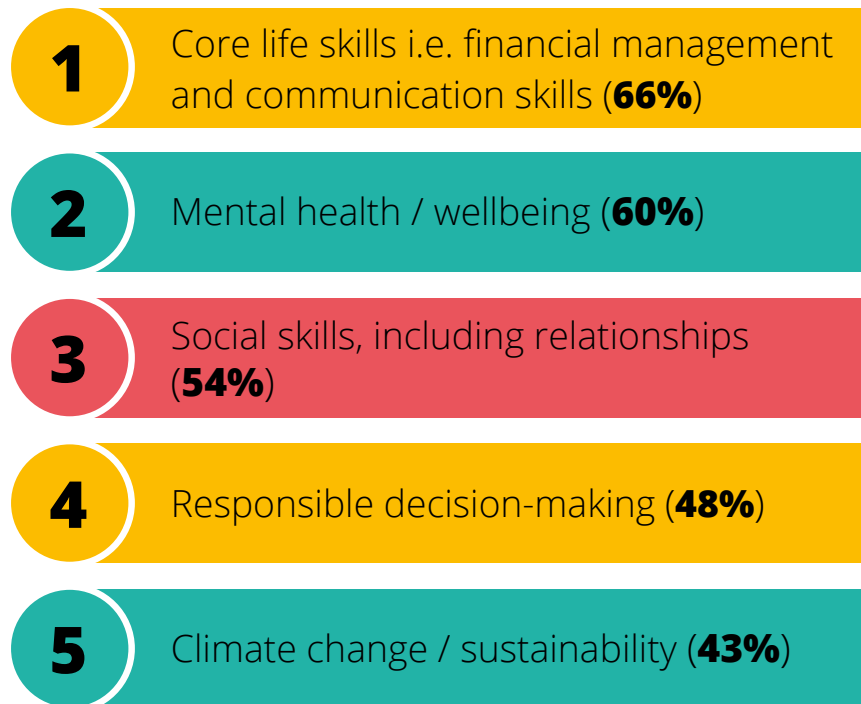
Life skills

A recurring theme across respondents was the view that **the curriculum should incorporate life skills** with as much time and emphasis as core subjects, with two-thirds of teachers believing that this would better support pupils.

Again, this echoes findings from Pearson's research into the future of qualifications and assessment, which reported teachers' views that:

"Knowledge and skills are equally important and shouldn't be artificially separated. Knowing and doing are essential prerequisites for individuals to progress in their lives."

Q: Would you like to see any of the following themes incorporated into the national curriculum with as much time and emphasis as core subjects?



"Independence is one skill I think could be worked on more to truly allow us to flourish when we don't have such hands-on support."

Sophia Papasouliotis, Student

"I believe that sustainability, climate change and communication should be taught too, with nearly as much emphasis as maths and English."

Additionally, we would benefit from lessons on core life skills, especially financial management. Most children don't have any concept of money, and sometimes end up in a bad place because of it."

Diego Bartolomeu, Student

Top 10 themes teachers would like to see included in the national curriculum with as much time and emphasis as core subjects

1

Core life skills i.e. financial management and communication skills **(66%)**

2

Mental health / wellbeing **(60%)**

3

Social skills, including relationships **(54%)**

4

Responsible decision-making **(48%)**

5

Climate change / sustainability **(43%)**

6

Physical health / wellbeing **(40%)**

7

Digital skills **(38%)**

=

Social justice **(38%)**

9

Self-awareness **(37%)**

10

Local community issues **(27%)**

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is another skillset that educators are keen to develop in their pupils, with 55% of classroom teachers and 46% of headteachers agreeing *“we need a better digital curriculum to prepare learners for an online world”*.

- Around 8 in 10 teachers think that both **digital wellbeing or digital literacy** should be incorporated into the curriculum over the next 5–10 years.
- Almost half of teachers think **reading and writing for digital media** should be incorporated over the next 5–10 years.
- A third (32%) think **digital communities / networks should be an element incorporated into the curriculum** in the next 5–10 years, perhaps reflecting the growing role of online peer and professional groups.

“Digital skills are essential to maximise the life chances of our students. The development of digital skills should be incorporated as appropriate into all subject areas and extra curricular activity to support all learners including those with SEN and EAL.

Teachers need access to advice, support and rich practice to inform and develop their own pedagogy. Guidance and frameworks should be flexible, and staff and students should feel empowered to make informed decisions about when (and, equally crucially, when not) to incorporate the use of technology in their work.”

Emma Darcy, Chiltern Learning Trust

The headteacher **perspective**

Headteachers revealed their own aims to **advance the curriculum and wider education** in the next two years:

What headteachers plan to do in their schools in the next two years

| | |
|--|------------|
| Embed mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum | 73% |
| Take steps to being a more sustainable and eco-friendly school | 65% |
| Diversify curriculum topics to cover race/gender/disability | 56% |
| Teach climate change and sustainability | 47% |
| Enact positive change in the your community | 46% |
| Build space in the curriculum to explore current affairs | 38% |
| Embed life skills into your curriculum | 37% |
| Support student activism on global issues | 21% |

These changes may go some way to addressing the increases in pupil awareness and anxieties, as identified elsewhere in the report.

Interestingly, despite the desire for a focus on life skills in the curriculum, and the reported impact of external events on students, **37% of headteachers are planning to embed life skills in their school curriculum** over the next two years. 38% plan to build space to explore current affairs, and 21% intend to support student activism on global issues.

"I'm glad to see that two-thirds of headteachers are hoping to take steps towards a more sustainable school, but I think it's so important to highlight the need for a holistic, systems approach to embedding sustainability into schools. Everything is connected; sustainability is inextricably linked with wellbeing, responsible decision-making, life, social and relationship skills, and so each of these issues should be used as themes to weave throughout the curriculum and the school year, rather than addressed in silos."

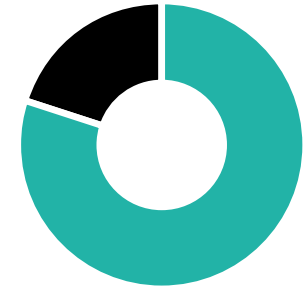
Holly Everett, Reboot the Future

An equal focus on social & emotional education

The majority of **teachers in England want a greater emphasis on social and emotional education** in schools, with 63% feeling that wellness and mental health awareness should first be introduced to children as early as the pre-school or infant school stage. Their responses align with the broader worldwide perspective. As reported in Pearson's 2022 *Global Learner Survey: Wellness*, 92% of learners, families and educators said schools should play a bigger role in training people to solve today's mental health issues.

Moreover, when we asked about the plans laid out in the government's 2022 White Paper, *Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child*, funding of a senior mental health lead for all schools was the most supported initiative – selected by more than two-thirds (68%) of teachers in England.

80% of all teachers

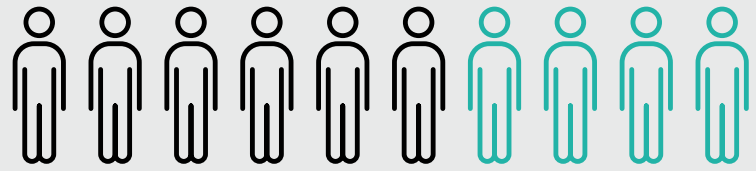


believe that pupils' **social and emotional development is as important as their academic development.**

- That's **85% of primary teachers and 75% of secondary teachers.**

"Students' social and emotional needs must be met before pushing academics."

Year 9 Tutor

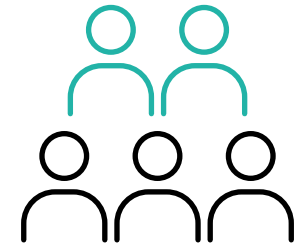


6 in 10 teachers

spent less than 30 minutes developing pupils' social and emotional skills, while more than 1 in 4 (27%) **spent no time at all** developing these.

- 66% of primary teachers and 34% of secondary teachers **would like to spend more time each day developing these skills among pupils.**

60% of primary teachers



plan to **embed mental health and wellbeing** across the curriculum over the next 2 years.

- Just **32% of secondary teachers** plan to do the same.

"Wellbeing, resilience and practical problem-solving skills need to be at the core of everything. If the last two years have shown anything, it is that we cannot predict the future."

Year 5/6 Class Teacher

"At infant level children need to have a solid base of understanding their emotions and feelings, [and] empathy for others."

Executive Headteacher

“If schools are going to develop the ‘whole child’ we need to have a fundamental rethink of what we are teaching them. With unlimited time and resource, all learning can have benefits. However, that isn’t the reality. We have a very limited time with our children, so we need to carefully consider what the priorities are. For us, as with the majority of teachers surveyed, our children’s health – physical and emotional – had to be as much of a priority as learning to read and write.

If children are not emotionally ready to learn, they will not retain information. Conversations about emotional health and strategies – active learning breaks, meditation, regulation stations – are an everyday aspect of children’s learning at Kensington.”

Ben Levinson OBE, Kensington Primary School



SEND

On the subject of SEND, and meeting emotional needs, our research also explored responses to the government's SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper 2022, which looks at **"levelling up" opportunities** for all children and young people.

Teachers are widely in favour of many of the proposals outlined in the Green Paper, including:

- More educational psychologists **(66%)**
- Making Education Health and Care Plans digital **(64%)**
- Better identification of needs and support in mainstream schools **(60%)**
- 'Local inclusion plans' bringing together a range of education, health and care services **(56%)**.

Half of SENCos were also in favour of providing parents with lists of appropriate placements for their child.

"We need to reframe what schools call 'inclusion' – moving away from a traditional model which focuses on the SEND needs of the minority, which implicitly messages that 'normal = no needs' – to a universal model of inclusion.

This should be underpinned by the recognition that ALL children have learning, wellbeing and safeguarding needs and that every member of staff has a role to play in recognising and responding to them."

Shaun Brown, The Difference

Reviewing the teacher role & school accountability

There is much that teachers want to do to **build a better future for their pupils**, but do they think it is their professional responsibility to achieve this, and do school accountability and performance measures enable it?

Top words used by educators to best describe their role:

Facilitator

Leader

Caring

Inspiring

Support

Guide

Rewarding

"We have to focus on the wider child first – help them understand their place within the world; that everyone matters."

Headteacher

"Young people, professionals and teachers all see it as vitally important to equip young people to cope with the realities of the real world as they actually encounter it."

Dr Helen Care, Clinical Psychologist

More than three-quarters of teachers view their purpose as **developing the whole of the child** and not just their academic performance.

Q: Which of the following do you think is a teacher's professional responsibility to develop in pupils?

| | All | Primary | Secondary |
|---|-----|---------|-----------|
| Academic achievement | 97% | 97% | 96% |
| Mental health | 61% | 69% | 53% |
| Physical health | 52% | 63% | 41% |
| Core life skills (e.g. financial management, communication skills etc.) | 69% | 67% | 71% |
| Global awareness | 69% | 71% | 67% |
| Self-awareness | 72% | 77% | 67% |
| Behaviour | 78% | 80% | 76% |
| Relationship skills | 68% | 74% | 62% |
| Responsible decision making | 69% | 70% | 68% |
| Responsible citizenship | 70% | 71% | 69% |
| None of the above | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Not relevant / cannot answer | 1% | 1% | 1% |

This sense of vocation and the **collective aspiration to develop the ‘whole child’** in school, is echoed by teachers’ thoughts on the current education system:

- 56% of primary teachers and 42% of secondary teachers think the **current academic structure is too rigid**.
- 78% of primary teachers, and 59% of secondary teachers, say **too much focus is placed on academic testing** as a measure of pupils’ success.
- 64% of primary teachers and 50% of secondary teachers say teachers need **more freedom to enrich pupils’ skills** beyond academics.



Here are some of the insights shared by teachers...

"Self-marking tests online would be very helpful, or builder tests that can be used if curriculum has been changed/moved around."

Head of Science

"Greater time to discuss assessment with the children would be useful, e.g. 1:1 workshops on next steps."

Primary Headteacher

“Most pupils are good at something and there should be more opportunities to demonstrate and award non-academic traits.”

Secondary Teacher

“My school are reviewing assessment and accountability to inform more cohesive practices.”

Head of Faculty (Secondary)

The **growing interest in onscreen assessment options** – to be investigated by Ofqual over the next three years – may go some way to updating the current system in a way that can be tailored to suit the maximum number of pupils and ease the current marking workload of teachers.

“The technology for onscreen exams is already well advanced and well used in our professional and vocational assessments.

To fully achieve the potential of onscreen assessment in GCSEs and A levels, we’re working with the education community to ensure we harness onscreen assessment where it can have most impact.

Most importantly, we want teachers to feel confident and ready for delivery, and learners to have a great experience that is accessible, inclusive and enriches their learning and progress.”

Hayley White, Assessment Director, Pearson School Qualifications

An **empowered** & **appreciated** workforce

“Whilst things can seem negative in the press, I have always found parents and the local community to be very supportive and positive.”

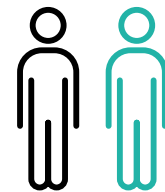
Assistant Headteacher

“Teachers [are] more vocal and aware in speaking out about work-life balance.”

Year 2 Teacher

Looking ahead, respondents to our survey considered the education workforce – including how it might be supported in future.

Teachers shared their feelings about the profession, and the concept of community was a point of focus.



1 in 2
teachers

say their school has a **strong sense of community**.



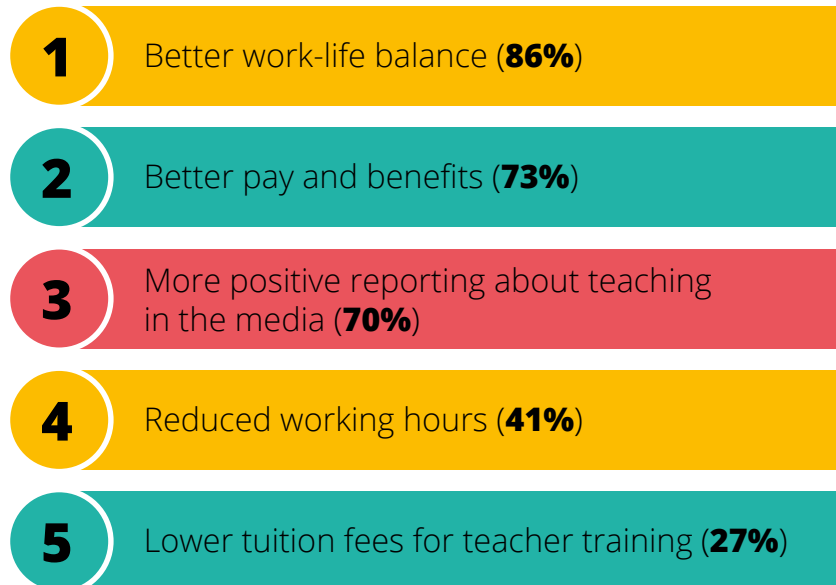
47% of
all teachers

believe their school has created a **supportive environment for pupils and staff**.

In considering how to attract more talented teachers to the profession, addressing the work-life balance of the role was touted by educators across all demographics as the best way to achieve this.

Second to this came better pay and benefits, which almost three-quarters of teachers believed would be encouraging.

Top five things teachers think would best encourage more people to get into teaching



“Social, emotional and mental health is intimately connected to the school environment. The experience of a child in the classroom of an under-resourced, overstretched, exhausted teacher is vastly different to the experience in the class of that same teacher when they are adequately resourced to meet needs of children and young people.”

Sinéad Mc Brearty, Education Support

“Part of all the changes we’ve made has included creating a curriculum that is manageable. We’ve removed content so that there is time and we have given teachers flexibility and autonomy to respond to the needs of their children.”

Ben Levinson OBE, Kensington Primary School

Nevertheless, the role itself continues to be one that **many teachers are motivated to continue**. Here's what they said when we asked them about their role and the opportunities ahead:



***"Rewarding,
varied, enjoyable"***

SLT and Year 2 Teacher



***"Our biggest opportunity is a
chance to make the community
stronger through partnership
working at all levels."***

Year 5 Teacher



***"Vital, inspiring,
fun-filled"***

Year 6 Teacher



***"There is more potential
to work with parents and
carers than ever."***

Primary Headteacher



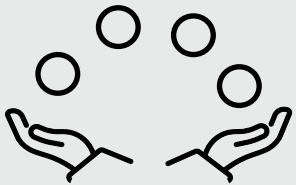
***"Caring, motivational,
strong"***

Science Teacher



***“What three words best describe my role as educator?
Teach, love, learn.”***

Year 5 Teacher



***“Busy, juggling,
exhilarating”***

SLT



“We want to keep the best lessons from lockdown.”

Headteacher



“All the people I meet personally are positive about the role of teachers.”

Reception Teacher



“Parents are grateful for what we do.”

Secondary Teacher

Conclusion

The insights in this report are a starting point for conversations around education in England today and the shaping of its future.

From the responses that teachers have shared with us, it's clear that continued collaboration and innovation are key if the sector is to enhance the experience and impact of learning for all young people.

The majority of teachers want the system to evolve to ensure that it meets the needs of the whole pupil, equipping children with the skills and confidence they need to adapt to a range of challenges, and thrive in adult life.

Most teachers wish to see schools as fully supported learning environments that can nurture good mental health practices, reflect the diversity and value of all individuals, and establish pupils on pathways that best meet their needs. By doing so, the system can influence society's future for good, helping create a nation that is empathetic, tolerant and sustainably minded, for the overarching benefit of all.

The work teachers do has the power to impact how learners manage life within and outside the classroom. The role requires talent and dedication – especially during ongoing challenges of budget cuts, workloads and global instability – as well as a level of responsibility that many already embrace with care and satisfaction.

Though uncertain, the times ahead hold the potential for constructive changes and opportunities. Together, we can progress on a collective journey into a digitally skilled and closely woven world where equity, inclusion and social mobility support a truly well-rounded education system.

Guided by the insights, ambition and community mindset shown by teachers, we look forward to collaborating, listening and learning from each other to drive forward positive change.

Sharon Hague
Managing Director,
Pearson School Qualifications

Reflections on the report

Insights across
the sector



“Overall, it is heartening to see that teachers’ views broadly align with those held by parents. It should be no surprise, considering the great work done by the nation’s teachers, but the fact that teachers are alive to the changing needs and appetite of children and their families is incredibly welcome.

The findings related to positive mental health, assessment, and lost learning due to Covid-19 will all be incredibly important to parents. Pearson’s results show that, as is happening for parents and young people, teachers are considering exactly how education can respond to the changing world we live in.

Looking ahead, it feels right that these big questions about how education best serves young people in a changing world are being asked.”

Kerry-Jane Packman, Parentkind

“Understanding what’s really happening on the ground in schools is often difficult. But getting into teachers’ minds – understanding their experience – is vital for making educational improvement. Through our surveys we are able to keep a pulse on what teachers think, want, need and feel.

Working with organisations like Pearson to ask pertinent questions, and share that information widely, is a key part of ensuring that teacher voice is shared with decision-makers. Every question and answer help to make the picture of education a little clearer.”

Laura McInerney, Teacher Tapp

“These results chime with my experiences and expectations. I hear mainly from the point of view of students, but their concerns and opinions align with these.

What I am struck by is that most young people are very engaged with world events and have a strong sense of the important matters in the world.”

Dr Helen Care, Clinical Psychologist

“So many of the issues raised in the survey come back to education policy: budgets, resources for additional needs, recruitment, retention, pay, the narrowing of the curriculum, and many more. There is much here for policymakers to reflect and act on. Meanwhile, schools must continue to excel at that which underpins the great work they do in communities across the country – relationships.”

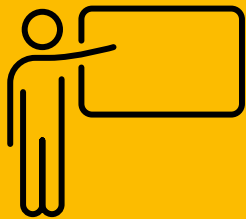
Sinéad Mc Brearty, Education Support

“These findings reflect the individual conversations I’ve been having with educators and teachers over the last year – conversations that have bounced between hope, frustration, excitement and fatigue.”

Holly Everett, Reboot the Future

About the research

Pearson commissioned a nationally representative survey of teachers between 12th and 25th April 2022 to capture their views on education.



**Almost 7,000
educators
were polled.**

Between 3,644 and 6,770 teachers, and between 1,693 and 1,760 senior leaders, responded to the questions.

Responses were collected by the polling organisation Teacher Tapp. Teachers included classroom teachers, middle leaders, and school leaders – including headteachers – working in schools in England. The analysis is for all teachers in England, including private schools. All answers have been weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics.

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