




School **Report**

2024

**Your voices,
our future**





“The key aspect is believing that [each] child can achieve and letting them know that you believe in them, that you care, and that they are important to the world.”

Primary SLT

Introduction

Education is an experience that inspires conversation, creativity and a community driven to make a difference.

This edition of the Pearson School Report seeks to **share insights** on education in England, **reflect on** three years of findings, and **encourage further discussion** about current challenges, solutions and opportunities for the sector.

Your voices

Since 2022, our reports have showcased educator and student views that have fuelled conversations from playgrounds to the Houses of Parliament. And we want to take this even further. So, this year, we've worked to build a bigger and richer snapshot of education by:

- asking more questions on more topics to more teachers and learners than ever before
- looking even further into 'what' students and educators think, as well as 'why'.

The result: a report that brings together **over 12,000 voices**, which we hope you and many more will add to in the coming months.

Our future

Within this report, many voices and emotions are expressed – from worry, to hope, to boundless curiosity.

While the challenges raised in our findings may seem stark at times, the proactivity and positivity of educators in seeking solutions and making a difference shine through. That's why, alongside trends and analysis, we wanted to celebrate the pivotal role educators and schools have in shaping future generations.

One of the students we spoke to wanted to thank their teachers for "letting us know we can become who we aspire to be". We'd like to thank everyone making this possible and we want to play our part in helping this continue.

By sharing perspectives on how education can best serve the aspirations of all our young people, we can drive positive change for the future.

Here's to raising our voices together...

Sharon Hague

Managing Director
School Assessment & Qualifications
Pearson



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Thank you

To everyone who's shared their voices and perspectives in this report: thank you.

About the research



Pearson commissioned a nationally representative external survey of primary and secondary educators* between 20/03/24 and 13/04/24 to capture their views. Between, 6,932 and 10,015 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** in April 2024 with 1,003 primary school children (aged 7–11 years) and 1,002 secondary school children (aged 11–16 years) across the UK.

Where we compare Pearson School Report data trends, this represents a percentage point (pp) change. We refer to +/-3 pp differences as being a change.

* Educators include classroom teachers, middle leaders, school leaders and headteachers working in schools in England.

Part One

Why teach and

why it matters

We asked more than 9,000 teachers and senior leaders to share what inspired them to start teaching...





Mary Palmer

Chief Executive Officer
The Teaching Awards Trust

Foreword

We can all remember a great teacher who helped us get to where we are today. Educators are the building blocks of our society. Through these findings, we know that 2 out of 3 teachers go into teaching to make a difference to pupils' lives and nearly half of all teachers to make a difference to wider society. But do they feel enabled to make that difference, and do they know the impact they make?

We need to work harder at showing teachers how valued they are, and the difference they make. Hopefully this research will reinforce to all teachers, some starting out in their careers, and others at the end, that their work does matter, and maybe even encourage more people to go into teaching.

To all teachers: thank you. You are changing lives; it makes a difference and it does matter.

*"Just being told by students
'you inspired me' is enough."*

Secondary Middle Leader

*"So many memories after 20+ years! Those
lightbulb moments are what keep you going!"*

Primary Headteacher

Findings in the spotlight



49%

of teachers joined the profession to **make a difference to society.**



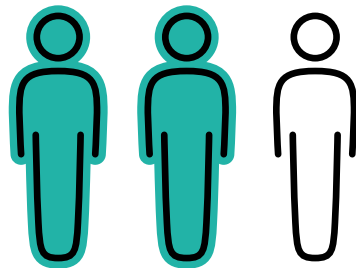
74% of learners

feel their school **supports them to achieve** what they want for their future.



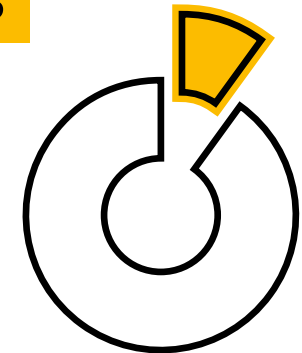
2 in 3 educators

went into teaching in order to **make a difference to pupils' lives.**



5% of educators

say the education system allows them to **support all pupils in the ways they would like to.**



Motivated to educate

While every educator's choice to teach is unique, the prospect of 'making a difference' is a hope shared by thousands.

"Never underestimate the power of a good teacher – they are never forgotten!"

Primary Classroom Teacher

A passion for making positive change has driven many into the teaching profession for as long as it's existed, and undoubtedly continues to inspire educators' career choices today.

The top five reasons that contributed to educators' decisions to become teachers

- 1 I wanted to make a difference to pupils' lives (**66%**)
- 2 I wanted to work with children and young people (**63%**)
- 3 I thought I'd be good at it (**60%**)
- 4 I felt teaching was an opportunity to make a difference to society (**49%**)
- 5 The pattern of holidays and hours were attractive (**37%**)

Other standout reasons include **"pursuing my strong interest in my subject"** (28%) and **"good career promotion opportunities"** (18%), but only **12%** of educators referenced pay as a driving factor in their decision to start teaching.

Beyond the numbers: why teachers teach

"Fostering a love of learning and enquiry is amazing."

Secondary Middle Leader

"I love being their first teacher, seeing their confidence grow, teaching them to read... It's a vocation for sure."

Primary SLT

"Knowing you're important to them and have made an impact on their lives is just the best feeling."

Secondary SLT



A powerful **role**

Over 2,000 students shared with us how teachers go above and beyond to support them in the now and in the futures they're forging.

"My teacher is the best and always makes me feel safe."

Primary Pupil

In successive Pearson School Reports and our wider conversations with students and teachers, it's clear how educators play a crucial role in shaping learners' minds and outlooks on school overall. Shared experiences and support mean so much to both sides.

Though just **1 in 20** teachers (**5%**) say **today's school system** "allows them to support all pupils in the ways they would like to"...

- For the **second year running, more than three quarters** of students we surveyed feel their **teachers are supportive**.
- **79%** of primary learners and **70%** of secondary learners say their school **supports them to achieve** what they want for their future.
- **77%** of all learners **feel accepted and that they belong** in school.
- **68%** of all learners **enjoy school** – a figure that rises to **78%** for primary pupils.



78% of learners

say their **teachers are supportive** and look out for them

“After struggling with mental health, a teacher is really looking after me. Every morning before lessons, we make a hot drink together and talk to ease me into the day.”

Secondary Student

“I was stuck with my work but I didn’t want to ask for help. My teacher saw me struggling and helped me.”

Primary Pupil

“I always feel different to my friends. And this upsets me [...] My teacher said that he was unique like me [...] and it’s okay to not be like everyone else.”

Secondary Student

One year on: enjoying school

Comparing responses to our 2023 Pearson School Report, we can see how students' views are changing.

Going up

- **58%** of students **enjoy secondary school** (was 55%) – with **21%** saying they do not enjoy school (was 24%).

Staying the same

- **68%** of all learners **enjoy school** (was 66%).
- **78%** of pupils **enjoy primary school** (same as 2023).
- **12%** of pupils do not **enjoy primary school** (was 13%).
- **17%** of all learners **do not enjoy school** (was 19%).

Your voices: why teaching matters

When we asked educators and students about how teaching experiences and teachers had a positive impact on their lives, we got responses in the thousands. Here's a selection of memorable moments that showcase the power and purpose of the profession in the classroom and beyond.

Primary educator and student stories

"When parents are genuinely thankful for the difference you have made to their child's life, that's special. Helping a child to 'come out of their shell' or 'seeing them grow in confidence' – that's more important for me than any grades."

Primary Classroom Teacher

"[My mathematics teacher] told me I can be anything I want to be, I should believe in myself."

Primary Pupil

"[I] helped a child see beyond their difficulties to understand that they would be successful and not defined by an area of presumed weakness. They have an amazing job and I still receive updates."

Primary Classroom Teacher

“My teacher saw that I was struggling with my writing and they went away to the shop [to] go buy me a hand gripper pen [...] and it made massive changes to how I write.”

Primary Pupil

“A child who lost a parent and had no confidence anymore was in my class [...] Their family said, ‘You have brought him back to his normal self. He trusts you and loves school again’.”

Primary Classroom Teacher

“I had a teacher who was really relaxed and cheerful [...] She made me feel calm in class and I wanted to learn.”

Primary Pupil

“The day a selective mute child whispered ‘good morning’ to me.”

Primary Classroom Teacher



[Read more](#) views
on education

#YourVoices

Secondary educator and student stories

"It's the little things: giving confidence, acting against bullying, having their backs, smiling and welcoming, giving those lightbulb moments of learning, embedding a love of reading and writing, support during difficulties, championing, feeding, instilling self-belief and self-esteem, building trust, having a laugh, creating good memories."

Secondary Middle Leader

"I remember when my teacher was proud of me for improving my attendance at school."

Secondary Student

"I have a really good science teacher who just knew I have autism from my behaviour, so he doesn't call me out in class. He comes and sits with me and talks through the work rather than making me speak in front of the class."

Secondary Student

"I work in a SEN school and the main positive impact I make is helping students feel like they fit in, they are an important part of [...] the community of the school. Also that they are noticed and valued as individuals."

Secondary Classroom Teacher

“Believing in me that I could get better grades when I did not and she was right, I’m doing better now than I was.”

Secondary Student

“On leaving school, a student wrote me a letter to thank me for being with her in a moment of a mental health crisis. These are the moments, being reminded of the impact we make, that make it worth it [...] It’s the moments we don’t necessarily know about that can make the biggest difference.”

Secondary SLT

“It’s not a single event. You don’t know you’re doing it. It feels like a continued act. But it’s in the cards at the end of the year or when they leave.”

Secondary Middle Leader

“My English teacher helped me [...] realise I was good enough and [to] be proud of my work and progress, and [to] keep going.”

Secondary Student



[Read more](#) views
on education

#YourVoices

“A child who had little confidence would cry when she got something wrong. I taught her that when she makes a mistake it just means she has learnt something. On the last day of the school year, she told me that I taught her that making mistakes make[s] her brain grow. That was a day where I knew I was making a difference being a teacher.”

Classroom Teacher

Part Two

Understanding **the challenges**

Alongside sharing the many positives in schools, educators and students shared the issues they face every day...





Steve Rollett

Deputy Chief Executive
Confederation of School Trusts (CST)

Foreword

The last few years have been tough for schools: the pandemic crystallised many long-term issues – from the social contract between pupils, parents, and schools, to our staff's expectations of what they want from a job.

A point of optimism for me, however, is the growing trend within the sector for tackling these issues directly as educators and as a wider sector. We are passionate. We want to make education inclusive. We want to tackle attendance and behaviour, and rethink SEND to put the child first. We can improve things for our students, colleagues, schools and trusts.

By sharing and understanding the challenges we face, we can come together to overcome them.

“Since Covid [...] there is more expectation that schools will solve, or be able to solve, issues around everything.”

Primary SLT

“For teachers, [there is] the ever-present issue of workload and balancing a nurturing approach with raising attainment.”

Secondary Middle Leader

Findings in the spotlight



57%

of educators say **teacher recruitment and retention** will be one of the biggest challenges their school faces this year.



Three years on

budget pressures are still perceived as the top challenge for schools today, as reported by **59%** of all teachers.



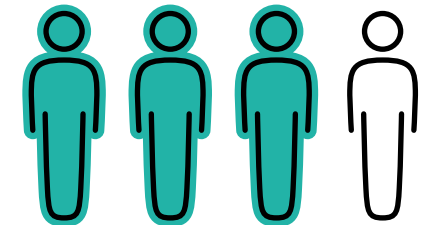
6 in 10
teachers

say today's education system **isn't accessible enough.**



Three quarters

of students say they have **difficulty engaging** in lessons – a figure consistent across phases and demographics.



The challenges 2024/2025

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.

“Supporting young people to meet expectations; motivating young people; getting young people into school regularly; involving parents; helping families...”

Secondary Middle Leader

Since our first Pearson School Report in 2022, educators have told us what they think will be the **biggest challenges** facing their school in the 12 months that follow.

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

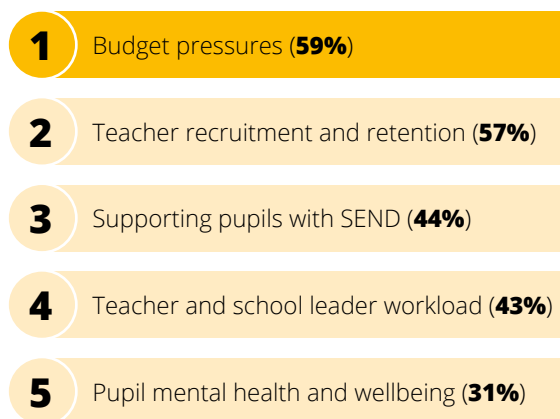
- 1** Budget pressures (**59%**)
- 2** Teacher recruitment and retention (**57%**)
- 3** Supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) (**44%**)
- 4** Teacher and school leader workload (**43%**)
- 5** Pupil mental health and wellbeing (**31%**)
- 6** Staff mental health and wellbeing (**30%**)

Top challenges: a yearly comparison

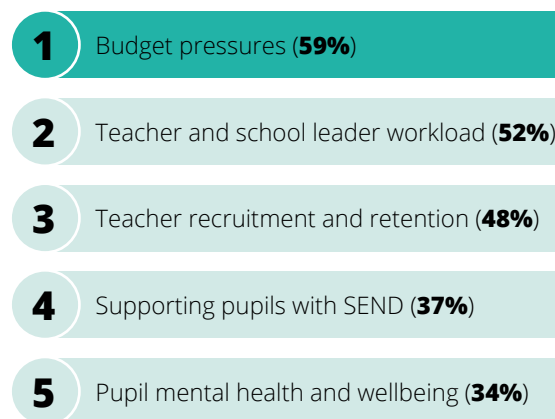
- In 2022, 2023 and 2024, **budget pressures** top the list for both primary and secondary schools.
- Challenges are changing over the years. **Teacher recruitment and retention** and **supporting pupils with SEND** have been selected as a challenge by more educators this year than 12 months ago.
- **40%** of all schools are now undergoing **staff restructuring**.
- Interestingly, multi-academy trusts are significantly more concerned about **recruitment and retention** than many individual state schools this year:
 - **65%** of large trusts report this as a top challenge compared to **49%** of local authority community schools.
 - This is a notable increase on 2023, when **56%** of large trusts and **38%** of local authority community schools described recruitment and retention as a top challenge.

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

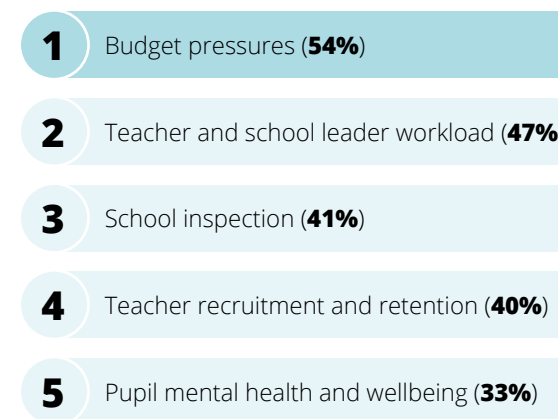
2024



2023



2022*



* Note: 2022 results gathered from school leaders only

Challenges on the rise

To better understand the various challenges facing schools and how these are changing, we asked teachers to highlight which issues had caused them increasing concern since 2023.

"[There are] increased numbers of pupils with mental health difficulties and lack of resources to support them."

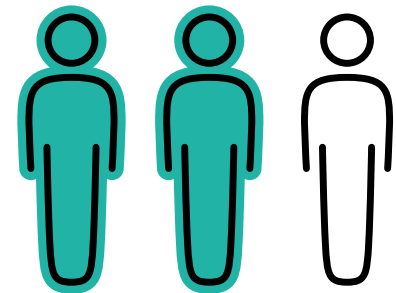
Secondary Classroom Teacher

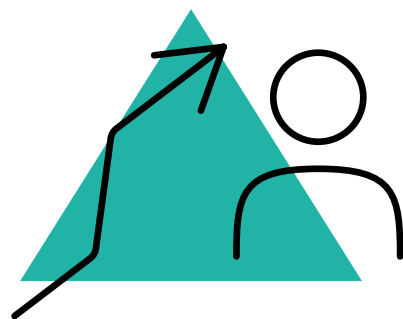
Q: In the last year, which of the following things have you become increasingly concerned about?

70% of teachers
say **pupil behaviour**



Two thirds
of educators
highlighted **pupil
mental health
and wellbeing**





61% of teachers say
prevalence of SEND

In addition, the top 10 areas of increasing concern in the last year noted by educators also include:

Pupil absence	59%
Pupil disengagement in learning	57%
Impact of cost of living on families	55%
Parent/carer support for education	47%
Digital wellbeing	37%
Prevalence of safeguarding issues	35%
Digital divide, i.e. equal access to devices	16%

"The lack of specialist provision and outreach expertise mean many pupils are not in best provision to thrive."

Primary Headteacher

"Recognising the challenge is the first step towards change [...] The challenge to us as professionals, and us as a wider society, is to meet that need with resources, support and meaningful change."

Dr Helen Care, Clinical Psychologist, A Confident Start

Student perspectives: **my school**

While there are differences between phases, students are largely positive about their school experience.

“My teacher helped me with my work when I was struggling and made me feel clever.”

Primary Pupil

When asked about school...

- **68%** of primary pupils rate **learner behaviour as good**. Less than half of secondary students (**45%**) say the same.
- **74%** of primary pupils report **learner happiness** as good compared with **49%** of secondary students.
- Primary pupils rate the **social, emotional and mental health** of learners more positively than secondary students: **67%** vs **45%**.
- **Almost two thirds** of learners feel their school is good at **making learning inclusive** for all students. This is particularly true among primary pupils (**71%**) compared to secondary students (**55%**).
- Just **5%** of primary pupils and **10%** of secondary students say their school is **poor at making learning inclusive** for all students.



Spotlight on **student engagement**

57% of
teachers

say **pupil
disengagement in
learning** has been
**an increasing
concern** in the last
12 months

After hearing that **almost 6 in 10** teachers are concerned about **pupil absence** and **pupil disengagement in learning**, we asked educators:

Q: In the last week, what proportion of your students would you say found it **difficult to engage in their learning**?

0% of students	2%
Up to 25% of students	55%
Between 26% & 50% of students	27%
Between 51% & 75% of students	11%
Between 76% and 99% of students	3%
100% of students	1%
None of the above	1%

“Our biggest challenges this year? Funding. Parental engagement. Teacher workload. Pupil engagement and absenteeism.”

Primary SLT

Over one week...

97% of teachers

witnessed **students having difficulty engaging in their learning.**

This represents at least **1.5 million students** in the given week and could be as high as **3.5 million.**

In **over half (55%)**

of all schools, up to **7 children in every classroom** had **difficulty engaging in lessons.**

“Pupil lack of motivation, inability to recall learning and disengagement in school since Covid...”

Secondary Middle Leader



Student perspectives

When we surveyed **primary and secondary students**, a large number reported issues engaging with learning.

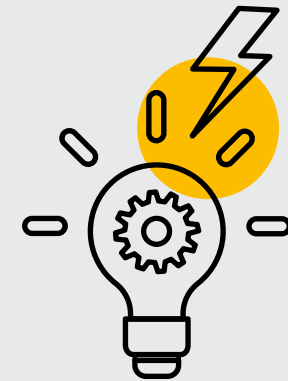
More than **6.5 million children in England**

and **7.7 million** children across the UK **struggle to engage in their lessons.**

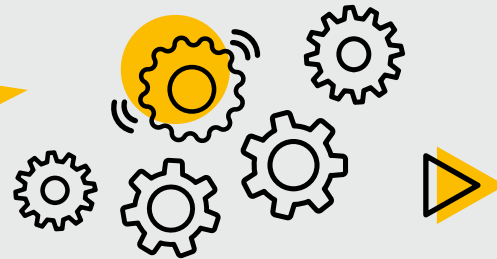


73% of students

say they **struggle to engage** in lessons.



Almost **1 in 5**



of all students say they **struggle "a lot"**.

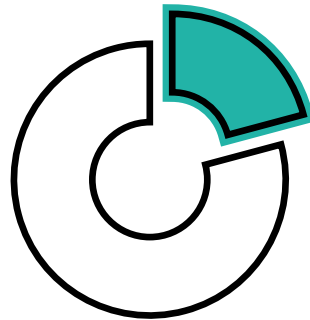


That's around **6 students** in an average-sized class.

In **secondary schools** specifically...

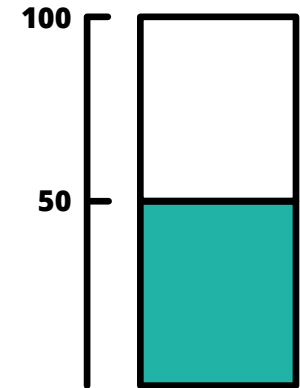
More than
a fifth

of students **struggle "a lot"**.



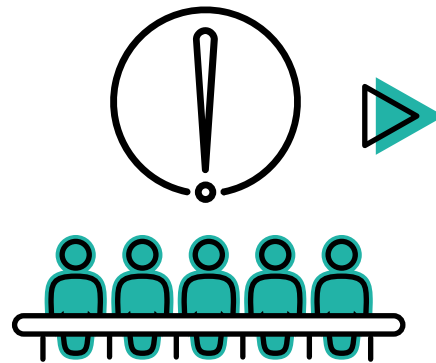
50% of secondary students

feel that what they are learning at school **'doesn't help [them] with issues [they're] facing now or in the future'**.



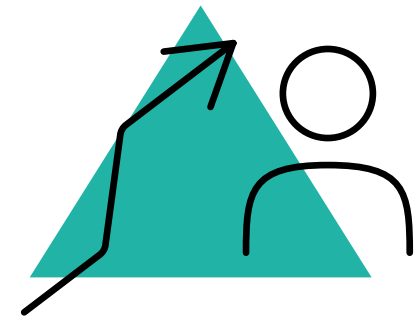
21% of students

don't enjoy school.



This rises to
a quarter

of 16-year-olds, compared to **11%** of 11-year-olds.



Student view: what impacts my learning now?

Delving deeper into the statistics, we explored what learners think affects their learning and how they engage.

When we asked learners what they felt impacted their learning, **issues with understanding** were reported as the biggest barrier. **A lack of confidence in their own abilities, ill health** and **disparities between their peers** were also selected by a significant proportion of students. Whilst **almost a fifth (17%)** said nothing impacted their learning, the same number were affected by hunger and mental health/wellbeing.

Q: What, if anything, **impacts your learning?**

Not understanding the work	45%
Not feeling clever enough	30%
Feeling unwell	23%
Struggling to take part/learn in lessons in the same way as my other classmates	21%
Being hungry	17%
Nothing	17%
My mental health/wellbeing	17%
My disabilities or additional education needs	11%
Limited access to technology (e.g. laptops/ computers to work on)	10%
Not seeing myself reflect in what we learn	10%
Not going to school enough	6%
Worrying about money	5%
Other	3%

Beyond the numbers: what's impacting my learning?

- *"Being shy"*
- *"Not being interested in the subject"*
- *"ADHD"*
- *"If it's boring"*
- *"No friends"*
- *"Other children's behaviour"*

Primary and Secondary Students



Barriers to future learning

What do educators predict the barriers to student learning will be in the next six months?



8 in 10 teachers

expect mental health to be a barrier to learning in the next 6 months

Looking ahead to the next six months, teachers anticipate the same factors being barriers to pupil learning as they did in 2023 – with **SEND** topping the list for primary teachers once again, and **mental health** doing so for secondary teachers.

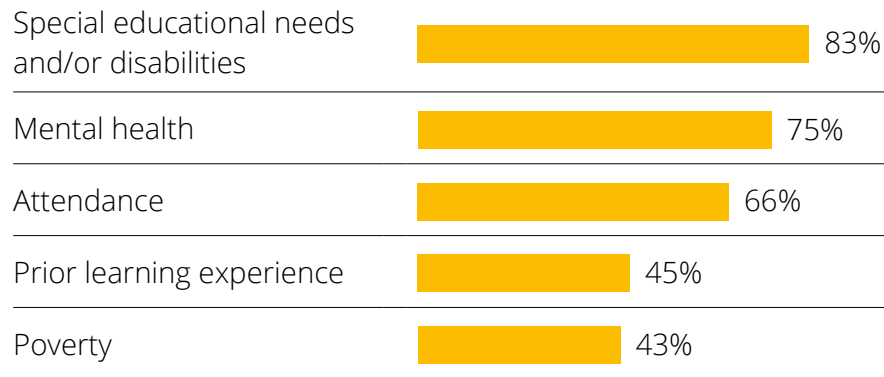
Teachers' expected barriers to pupil learning in the next six months

2024	Percentage point difference from 2023 to 2024	Percentage point difference from 2022 to 2024
Mental health (82%)	+3	Consistent
SEND (75%)	+13	+18
Attendance (74%)	+3	+3
Poverty (46%)	Consistent	Consistent
Prior learning experience (45%)	Consistent	-8

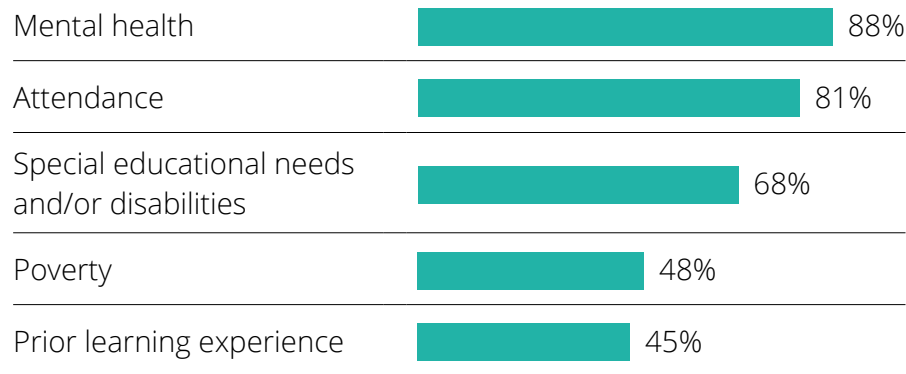
Primary vs secondary **differences**

Teachers' expected barriers to pupil learning in the next six months

Primary



Secondary



One year on: expected barriers

Going up

- **SEND** as an expected barrier in **secondary** (68%, was 52%) – a **16 pp difference**
- **SEND** as an expected barrier in **primary** (83%, was 74%) – a **9 pp difference**
- **Mental health** as an expected barrier in **all schools** (82%, was 79%) – a **3 pp difference**
- **Attendance** as an expected barrier in **all schools** (74%, was 71%) – a **3 pp difference**

Staying the **same**

- **Poverty** as an expected barrier in **all schools** (46%, was 44%) – a **2 pp difference**

A closer look: **SEND**

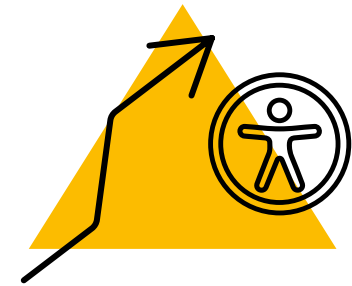
Across our Pearson School Reports to date, SEND has seen the single greatest increase among educators as a perceived barrier to pupil learning in the next six months.

“More SEN in schools and lower support staff? The maths does not add up!”

Primary Teacher

18 percentage point rise

in teachers reporting SEND as a **barrier to pupils' learning in the next six months***



* Compared to 2022

- At both primary and secondary levels, increasing numbers of teachers are seeing **SEND** as a barrier to pupil learning this year.
- The biggest leap in the reporting of SEND as a barrier to pupil learning is seen at **secondary** level – up **16 percentage points** in one year.
- **English teachers** believe SEND will be a bigger barrier to learning than other subject-specialist teachers do (**73%** compared to **64%** and **65%** of science and maths teachers respectively).
- **More than 8 in 10** educators think students with SEND or additional needs are being **ineffectively supported in their aspirations and achievements** by the current education system.
- Just **1%** of teachers say that the **SEND and AP Improvement Plan** has positively impacted their school since 2022.



“With ever-increasing numbers of learners with SEND in mainstream settings, nasen calls for a broader curriculum, one that includes vocational routes and skills development, alongside more traditional options.

Let’s have an approach that starts with students’ strengths, encourages their talents, and supports educators who want to make a difference to all learners.”

Annamarie Hassall, CEO, nasen

A closer look: **education for all**

In each Pearson School Report, we've asked educators to tell us which groups of students they feel are(n't) being supported by the current education system.

This year, we've taken it even further and asked both students and teachers for their views on representation, the curriculum, accessibility and inclusivity.

- **8%** of teachers say that education **reflects the diversity of pupils'** lives (was 10% in 2023).
- In 2023, **58%** of students said what they're learning reflects their life and background. Today, only **5%** of teachers feel the **National Curriculum reflects the world** around us.
- **62%** of primary teachers and **58%** of secondary teachers say today's education system is **not accessible enough**.
- **60%** of teachers say the education system **does not** set learners up with the **skills needed to thrive**.
- **Almost 9 in 10** learners agree with the statement: **"I want to be taught more skills that I'll need in life"**.

2022 to now

- In our 2022 Pearson School Report, **Black, Asian and minority ethnic students** were identified as the group least supported by the current education system (8%). Today, less than a third of teachers (29%) think they are ineffectively supported, which suggests a **perceived improvement** of support for this cohort.
- By contrast, figures indicate the **most prominent downward shift** since 2022 has been in the perceived support for **gifted and talented pupils**. In 2022, this group was reported to be the second most supported group (as selected by 40% of respondents). Today, almost the same number (35%) think they are ineffectively supported.

One year on: supporting aspirations

Comparing responses between our 2023 and 2024 reports, we can see how educators' views are changing on which students they feel are **ineffectively supported in their aspirations and achievements** by the current education system.

Going up

- **Disadvantaged pupils** (71%, was 57%)
- **Students with SEND or additional needs** (82%, was 69%)
- **Gifted and talented students** (35%, was 29%)

Staying the same

- **LGBT+ students** (27%, was 25%)
- **Students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups** (29%, was 28%)

Going down

- **Non-binary pupils** (21%, was 29%)



“What steps are we taking to address the challenges? Careful and prudent planning. Being mindful of how to best support children. Discussing choices as a team. Looking long-term for staff retention so that training is appropriate.”

Primary Headteacher

Part Three

Rising to the **challenges**

How are educators
and students
pioneering positive
change now?



**Farhan Adam**

Principal
Crown Hills Community College

Foreword

Schools deal with people, and people are different – different in their experiences of life, different in their starting points and personalities. The responsibility we have can be overwhelming, but we deal with people in all their glory and who they are matters, just as much as what we want them to become.

Teaching has always been a selfless profession, but more schools are prioritising workforce wellbeing – 64% of schools now run staff wellbeing initiatives. Happier and healthier staff mean healthier and happier children. It's why more than half of students say support from teachers has helped them in the last two years.

Challenges will always exist and, as educators, we are always being asked to do more with less. But collectively, we can change the narrative and take our communities with us to a more prosperous future for all.

“[We’re] trying to build a sense of belonging for students [with a] renewed focus on our house systems, values and rewarding positive behaviours.”

Secondary Middle Leader

“...diverse strategies, tech integration, real-world relevance, active learning, positive classroom culture, feedback, and continuous professional development”

Primary Headteacher

Findings in the spotlight



More than half of students

say **support from teachers** has helped them in the last year or two.



1 in 5 schools

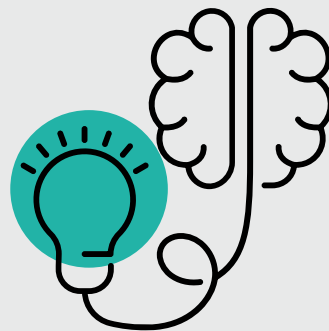
are exploring **new revenue streams**.



1 in 2 schools

are now **offering training** for:

- ✓ mental health and wellbeing
- ✓ SEND.



45% of teachers

feel **technology is making education more accessible**.



Schools: solution seekers

Educators across the country are at the forefront of creating new ways to continue supporting their learners, colleagues and communities.

“[Ensuring] school is calm & positive for children and staff”

Primary Headteacher

Many schools are striving to address and alleviate increasing concerns around students' unique needs, SEND provision and wider pastoral care – tackling what our findings show are key issues for the majority of educators, as well as enhancing student engagement.

The top five solutions being used in schools today

- 1 SEND training (**54%**)
- 2 Positive behaviour initiatives (**53%**)
- 3 Providing sensory spaces and/or wellbeing rooms (**51%**)
- 4 Supporting families experiencing poverty (**51%**)
- 5 Mental health/wellbeing training (**49%**)

Primary vs secondary **differences**

The differing responses across primary and secondary provide interesting insights into key areas of focus when it comes to inclusivity and support for children, young people and the wider school community.

Q: Are you/your school **doing any of the following?**

	Primary	Secondary	Percentage difference
Providing sensory spaces and/or wellbeing rooms	59%	43%	16%
SEND training	56%	52%	4%
Supporting families experiencing poverty	55%	46%	9%
Positive behaviour initiatives	52%	54%	2%
Mental health/wellbeing training	50%	48%	2%
Increasing opportunities to engage parents/carers	50%	35%	15%
Attendance rewards	41%	54%	13%
Guidance on digital wellbeing for parents/carers	36%	32%	4%
Adapting curriculum in line with today's issues	34%	32%	2%
Appointing more pastoral staff	15%	29%	14%
Appointing more attendance/welfare officers	9%	23%	14%

A closer look: **school solutions**

Over 3,000 educators shared the solutions already in action in their schools. We spotlight some of the top choices being used to address key challenges and barriers to learning...

Attendance and **behaviour**

For students to engage with learning, they first need to be fully present. Schools are finding innovative ways to encourage attendance and discourage disruptive behaviour.

“Enhanced attendance team, attendance monitoring software, rewards”

Secondary Headteacher

“Focused attendance conversations with parents”

Primary Middle Leader

“[We’re] addressing certain behaviours through assemblies and circle times [and] celebrating those doing the right thing.”

Primary Middle Leader

“Employment of behaviour mentors, new member of [Senior Leadership Team] with [a] behaviour remit”

Secondary Middle Leader

Strengthening **SEND** support

With many educators noting they face increasing challenges around the prevalence of and required support for SEND, schools are going above and beyond to enhance education for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

“[Our] Inclusion Manager spends a day a week on EHCP applications [and the] Head contacts the SEN Assessment Team weekly.”

Primary Headteacher

“Placing pupils in groups where they will thrive”

Secondary Middle Leader

“Working with [a] special school to train staff to meet more profound SEND needs”

Secondary Headteacher

“We have a quiet room, a SEND TA, [are a] Trauma Informed School, [and provide] interventions for children.”

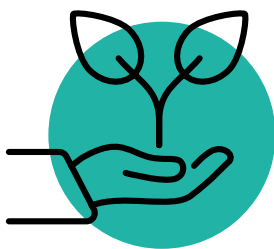
Primary Headteacher



Student and school **community wellbeing**

The importance of protecting and nurturing the wellbeing of students came through strongly as a theme in this year's report – as did prioritising this across the whole school community.

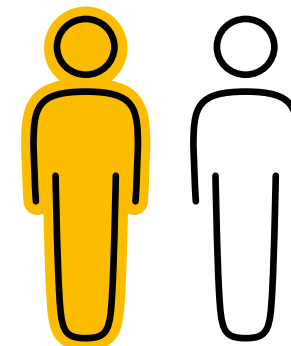
78% of students



believe their **teachers are supportive** and look out for them.

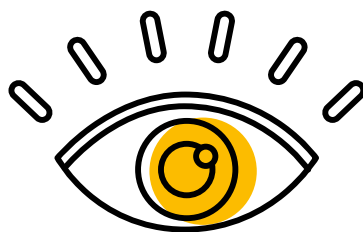
51% of students

say their school is **supporting families experiencing poverty**.



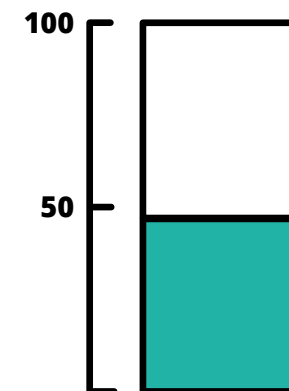
1 in 2 schools

are **providing sensory spaces** and/or **wellbeing rooms**.



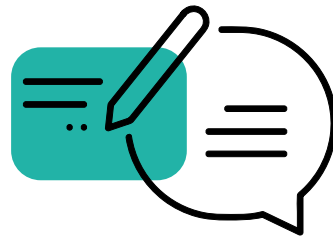
Nearly half of schools

are offering **mental health/wellbeing training**.



Plus...

- **43%** of schools are increasing opportunities to **engage parents/carers** at school.
- **34%** are offering guidance on **digital wellbeing** for parents/carers.
- **22%** of schools are appointing **more pastoral staff**.
- **37%** of learners want to see **free clubs** happen in their school, such as **after-school clubs and breakfast clubs**.



Discussion point

Year-on-year data shows a decline in teacher confidence in supporting students with pastoral issues – from **75 percentage points** to **61 percentage points** between 2023 and 2024 – a trend to watch and monitor in coming years.

Beyond the numbers: support in action

“We have appointed a member of staff on secondment to SLT with a specific remit of disadvantaged students for two years.”

Secondary SLT

“Regular coffee mornings for parents with a family support worker and SENCo”

Primary Middle Leader

“Support for the wider community with clothes swaps and an emergency relief fund”

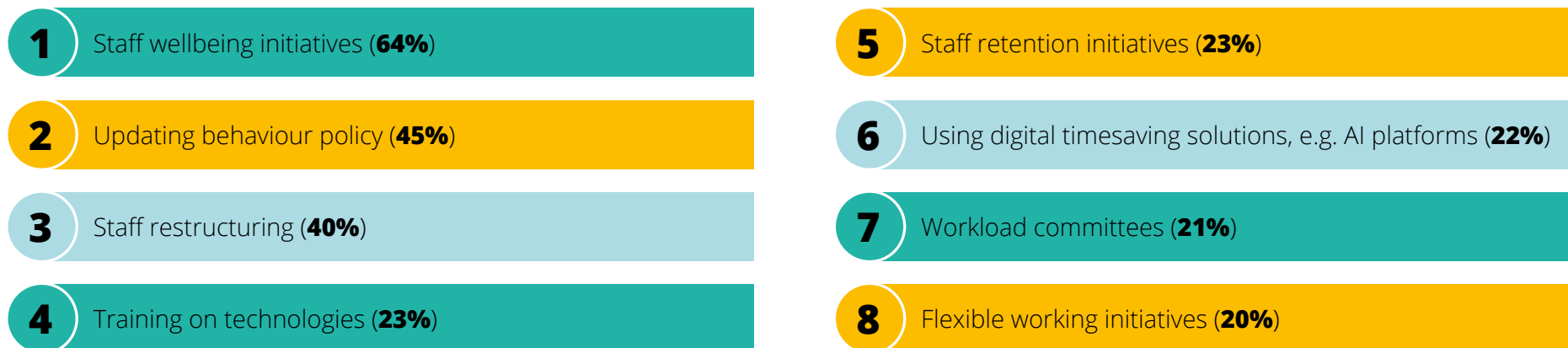
Secondary Middle Leader

Supporting **staff**

As well as focusing on how educators support students and communities, we explored the support educators themselves are receiving.

When it comes to aiding colleagues and staff specifically, educators in Senior Leadership Teams told us they're adopting a variety of strategies.

The top steps schools are taking to support teachers



It's also noteworthy that **1 in 10** staff in Senior Leadership Teams say their school is **not** taking any of these steps.

“Leadership support and external training to support teacher workload and wellbeing.”

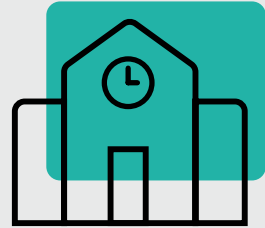
Primary SLT

“Following absence policies, [our] trust has bought into a medical package for all staff.”

Primary SLT

Balancing **budgets**

19% of all schools are



exploring
new revenue streams

fundraising
for core school supplies

One element driving the level and types of support within education is budget – reported as a top challenge by educators – and many schools are actively exploring solutions to this particular pressure.

“Applying to outside sources, e.g. charities for funding for projects”

Secondary Middle Leader

“Headteacher has joined [Local Authority] steering groups and is collaborating with other schools”

Primary SLT

“Looking at how to increase our reserves by hiring [out] the school and doing outreach”

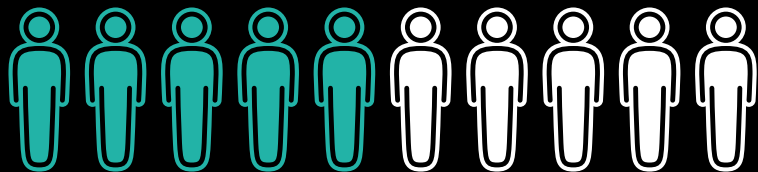
Secondary SLT

“Over-recruiting in key subject areas when good candidates apply”

Secondary SLT

The impact so far: **learning and engagement**

Teachers and students alike told us that some of the changes and actions in their schools have already enhanced learning experiences.



51% of students

say support from teachers has helped their learning in the past year or two

Top five things that have positively impacted schools in the past two years

Educators' views

- 1** Mental health and wellbeing initiatives
- 2** Digital learning resources
- 3** More diverse resources and texts
- 4** Improving digital infrastructure
- 5** AI tools

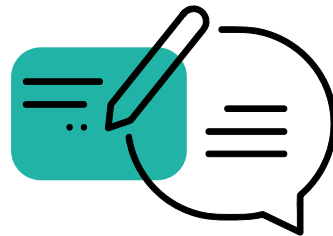
Students' views

- 1** Support from teachers
- 2** Extra curricular activities, e.g. sport/after-school clubs
- 3** Access to digital devices
- 4** More support staff in lessons
- 5** Access to outside green space

Primary vs secondary differences

While the proportion of primary and secondary students finding access to digital devices to be helpful is very similar:

- more primary pupils say **teacher support** has helped them in the past year or two compared with secondary students (**55%** vs **48%**)
- **a third** of primary pupils say **extracurricular activities** have helped them in the past year or two, compared to a **quarter** of secondary students
- **access to green space** was cited as a help for twice the proportion of primary pupils than secondary students (**32%** vs **16%**).



Discussion point

The findings open up the opportunity for further exploration. For instance: is it that fewer secondary schools perhaps have access to green spaces? Or that learners want/benefit from different types of support as they grow older?

“What supports student engagement? Being enthusiastic – allowing time for tangential learning whilst keeping them on track.”

Primary Middle Leader

“We have mental health training and first aiders, and some students are ‘mental health champions’ to promote mental wellbeing.”

Secondary Classroom Teacher

“Getting outside not only helps their learning and provides opportunities to take care of our planet, it also protects and restores children’s physical and mental wellbeing.”

Rosalind Mist, Director of Campaigns,
Education and Youth Engagement, WWF

The impact so far: **a relatable curriculum**

86% of students

say they want to learn about topics that are **more relevant** to them and their lives

82% of students

of students say they **would like to learn about a wider range of things**

Amid the challenges with student engagement reported this year, teachers are finding new ways to make today's curriculum more relevant and relatable:

- **a third** of all schools are **adapting the curriculum** in line with today's issues
- **improving pupil interest/engagement in learning** is the **top improvement** teachers believe would be seen as a result of making the curriculum **more relevant and representative of today's society**.

The **top five improvements** teachers think they would see if the curriculum were more relevant and representative of today's society

1 Pupil interest/engagement in learning (**79%**)

2 Pupil readiness for future careers (**71%**)

3 Pupil preparedness for a digital world (**61%**)

4 Pupils' social, emotional and mental health (**57%**)

5 Pupils' positive impact on the planet (**56%**)



Beyond the numbers: evolving the curriculum

“Trying to make the curriculum relevant to our students and adjusting content and lessons”

Primary Classroom Teacher

“Ensuring I know the why of the curriculum and the narrative. Supporting students to make positive connections to the subject at an intellectual and emotional level”

Secondary SLT

“A less knowledge-based curriculum for KS1/2 with a greater focus on skills and character”

Primary Headteacher

The impact so far: **digital engagement**

“Integration of technology in education is not only enhancing student engagement and pedagogical effectiveness but also fostering a more inclusive learning environment. We’re committed to showcasing the transformative impact of digital assistive technologies on learning experiences of all.”

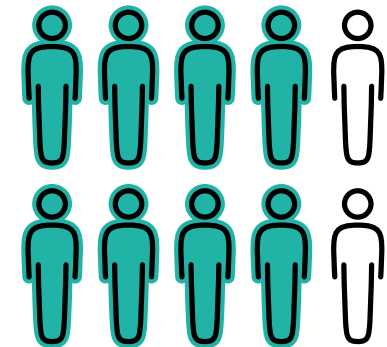
Anna Artemyeva,
Google for Education Head – UK & Ireland

Schools are harnessing technology in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning.

Enhancing engagement

8 in 10
learners

say technology **makes it easier for all students to participate** at school



- **54%** of primary teachers say **digital tools** are already helping them engage learners, while **32%** of secondary teachers say the same.
- **47%** of primary teachers and **43%** of secondary teachers say technology is making education **more accessible**.
- This year, **42%** of primary teachers say **digital approaches improve student engagement** (up 7 percentage points compared to a similar question asked last year).

Ways of working

53% of teachers

feel **confident using technology** in their role



Preparing for the future

86% of learners

say technology **plays a big part in their lives** now and will continue to as they get older, so they need to be good at using it



- **A fifth (22%)** of all schools are using **digital timesaving solutions**.
- **AI tools** are already **reducing the workload** of **1 in 5** teachers – this is highest among teachers in primary schools.
- Almost **a third** of teachers are **excited about what AI could mean** for their school.

- **More than 1 in 2** learners say their school is good at **helping them prepare for a digital world**.
- Yet just **7%** of teachers believe the current education system has **enough digital emphasis** to prepare learners for their futures.

Your voices: the solutions working for schools

We could only feature so many voices alongside the insights in this section. So, in the spirit of including as many as possible and broadening the conversation, here are more examples of what students and teachers think are helping their school and community...



[Read more](#) views
on education

#YourVoices

"I work in a SEN school and every step is celebrated."

Secondary Classroom Teacher

"Free breakfast club for everyone"

Primary Learner

"Music on arrival to settle/linked to learning/ to create interest. Use of art/quizzes [...] enables achievement."

Classroom Teacher

"Helping me and keeping in touch with my mum"

Secondary Learner

“When draft Education Health and Care Plans [are] written, we supply estimated cost so [the Local Authority] knows what money we will ask for.”

Headteacher

“Actually listening to us”

Primary Learner

“I have started a TikTok explaining model answers for A level Psychology.”

Secondary Middle Leader

“Treating all students equally and letting us know we can become who we aspire to be”

Secondary Learner



*“Yesterday all my teachers
said if I carry on the way I’m
going, I will go far in life.”*

Secondary Student

Part Four

Embracing **opportunities**

As a sector, where can we collectively embrace opportunities to enhance education for all learners in the future?





Claire Muhlawako Madzura

FED Learners' Council

Foreword

For many students, school is the one place, outside the home, where their needs can be addressed as a whole. A learner's development of social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills means that they receive a lot more than certificates or qualifications upon finishing school.

By reflecting on the current needs of our schools, teachers and learners, by listening and speaking to them directly, we give a voice to the stakeholders closest to the issues our schools face.

I hope that this report serves to narrow the gap between ideation and implementation as we strive to achieve an education system that is fair and equitable for all. When we foster an environment that supports each learner holistically and individually, we aren't just nurturing the children of today, we lay the foundations for the adults of tomorrow.

"The education system must meet the needs of today's children. [I] think this is a major factor for reduced attendance and engagement in schools."

Primary Headteacher

Reflecting on the now to forge the future

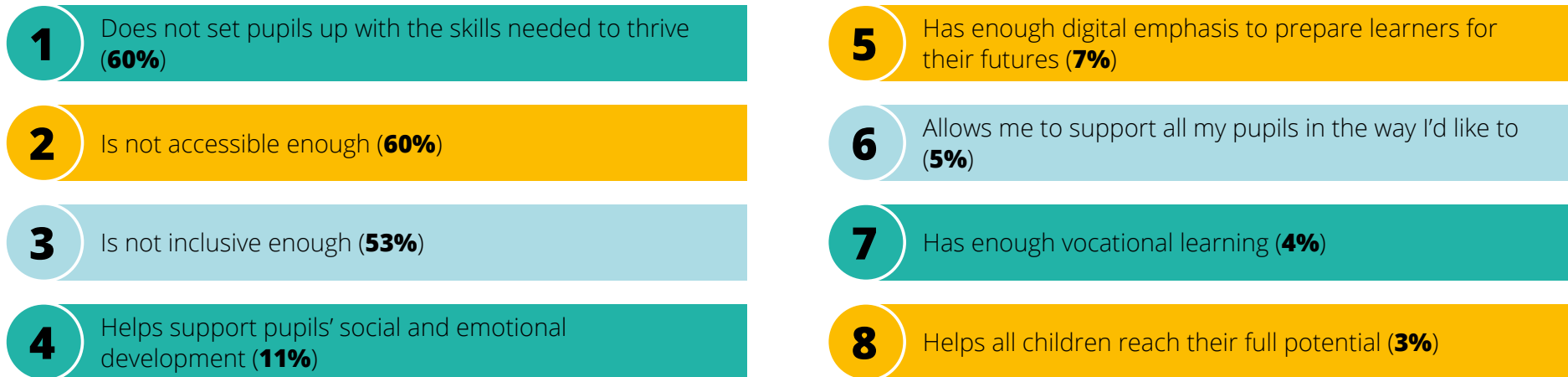
Inspired by the solutions-focused drive of schools and educators in the now, we asked students and teachers to consider the shape of education for decades to come.

Together, they looked to the future – sharing ideas on how the whole education community can further build on the solutions already in action.

While it's clear that educators feel there is work to be done to help today's system meet the needs of every learner...



"Today's education system..." – according to educators



... the collective responses on how to positively impact education were inspiring.

Opportunities for change?

We asked educators for their thoughts on which changes could have the biggest impact on education. Their answers highlighted factors both inside and outside of the classroom.

“[We need] better services outside of schools for young people, so that schools can start focusing on education rather than helping students just survive.”

Classroom Teacher

The top five changes to impact education – as chosen by teachers in England

- 1 Increased support staff pay
- 2 Investment in health and social care services, i.e. NHS/CAMHS/social services
- 3 Ofsted reform
- 4 Mental health support
- 5 National workforce plan (recruit and retain teachers)

Outside of the top five changes to impact education, as identified by most teachers:

- primary teachers were **almost twice** as likely to suggest **reforming SEND provision** than teachers at secondary (**43%** vs **22%**)
- **over a fifth** of teachers chose **reforming the curriculum (21%)** and **digital infrastructure (22%)** as part of their top three choices.

Analysis of these figures illuminates interesting differences in perceived impacts between school stages and educator roles.

Top five changes to impact education – breakdown by role

Primary	Secondary	Classroom teacher	Headteacher
1. Increased support staff pay (73%)	1. Investment in health and social care services (64%)	1. Increased support staff pay (69%)	1. Ofsted reform (74%)
2. Ofsted reform (68%)	2. National workforce plan (recruit and retain teachers) (59%)	2. Investment in health and social care services (60%)	2. Increased support staff pay (72%)
3. Investment in health and social care services (60%)	3. Increased support staff pay (58%)	3. Ofsted reform (59%)	3. Investment in health and social care services (65%)
4. Mental health support (58%)	4. Mental health support (57%)	4. Mental health support (58%)	4. Mental health support (58%)
5. Early years intervention and family support (44%)	5. Ofsted reform (52%)	5. National workforce plan (recruit and retain teachers) (44%)	5. Reform SEND provision (57%)

“By building resilience, strengthening knowledge, understanding and confidence around mental health, we can turn the tide and create an educational system that works for everyone.”

Catherine Roche, Chief Executive, Place2Be

“[I’d like a] realistic approach [to] how much data we need to create and analyse, as we could probably use AI more for those time-consuming jobs that don’t require teaching skills.”

Secondary Middle Leader



Students' views

When we asked students for their thoughts on changes to impact education, they showed an interest in similar big-picture changes.

The top five changes to impact education – as chosen by students

- 1 Options for both digital and paper-based assessments
- 2 Better mental health support
- 3 Free breakfasts for all
- 4 School WiFi and better devices for pupils
- 5 Better support for learners with SEND

- **1 in 5** secondary students would make **better support for teachers** one of their top calls for change.
- **70%** of all learners want more **teaching assistants/people to support** in lessons. Similarly, **65%** of all teachers want increased pay for **support staff**.

Spotlight on the future of assessment

Primary and secondary students' **top choice** on what could impact education was **digital flexibility for assessments**.

- Classroom teachers are particularly keen on the aspect of choice between paper-based and digital assessments, with **47%** of them for this change compared to **39%** of headteachers.
- **27%** of all learners want to take assessments **when they're ready** to, not at a certain point in the year – rising to **a third** of secondary students.
- **18%** of primary pupils and **25%** of secondary students want the **option to sit assessments at home or at school**. In 2023, a similar number of teachers told us they would like to see virtual assessments with remote invigilation.

75% of
students

and

45% of
teachers



would like the choice of paper-based (written) and digital (onscreen) assessments

Enhancing student engagement

How can we engage students in learning and open up more opportunities for them in future?

Reflecting students' interests in WiFi, devices and digital assessments, teachers highlighted the value of digital options for improving learner engagement in the future, along with other system-wide adjustments to the curriculum.

Educators' views: what would help students engage more in their learning?

7% of teachers say today's system has enough digital emphasis to prepare learners for their future

More than 1 in 2 teachers say today's education system is not inclusive enough

39% say

a device for every student

38% say

increased use of digital tools

85% say

additional staff to support pupils

46% say

more diverse resources and texts

Educators' views: what would help students engage more in their learning? (Continued)

6 in 10 teachers say today's education system does not set up pupils with the skills they need to thrive

4% of teachers say today's education system has enough vocational options

6 in 10 teachers say today's system is not accessible enough

64% say

updating curriculum content to make it relevant to students' lives

54% say

a greater **focus on life skills**

57% say

more **vocational/hands-on options**

47% say

access to **extracurricular activities**

60% say

they predict technology will **improve accessibility for SEND** in the next three years

30% say

enhanced accessibility features for resources

A closer look: a curriculum of choice

Inspired by responses about what evolving the curriculum in future could do for student engagement, we explored what this might look like.

Almost 8,000 teachers and over 2,000 students told us which non-core topics they'd like to see in a new curriculum.

Educators' views

- **7 in 10** of all teachers would add **mental health/wellbeing** into a new, future-focused curriculum.
- **Three quarters** of all teachers would put **core life skills, e.g. financial management**, into the curriculum.
- **66%** of all teachers would add **communication skills, including oracy** to the curriculum.

The top 10 non-core topics teachers would put into a new curriculum to last for the next 20 years

	Primary	Secondary	Percentage difference
Mental health/wellbeing	74%	65%	9%
Core life skills, e.g. financial management	72%	76%	4%
Communication skills, including oracy	69%	62%	7%
Physical health/wellbeing	66%	62%	4%
Digital skills	52%	53%	1%
Climate change and sustainability	52%	51%	1%
Critical thinking	45%	52%	7%
Global and local citizenship	40%	42%	2%
Employability skills	38%	53%	15%
Emerging technologies, e.g. generative AI	30%	36%	6%

Students' perspectives

Like teachers, students chose **life skills** to top the list of what they'd like to see taught in schools.

Q: If you could design your own curriculum what would you like to see? Students' **top five**:

1 Skills to help me in my everyday life, e.g. finances, cooking, etc. **(63%)**

2 Skills to help me get a job in the future **(57%)**

3 Communication skills **(39%)**

4 How to look after my mental health/wellbeing **(38%)**

5 How to improve my physical health/wellbeing **(35%)**

Plus...

Around a third of learners would like to:

- learn about **digital skills** in their school **(32%)**
- see **climate change and sustainability** in their curriculum **(31%)**
- gain skills to **take part in, or contribute to, communities**, e.g. how to vote **(30%)**
- learn how to consider things from **different viewpoints** in their curriculum **(28%)**.

***“What would I like to see in my curriculum?
How to manage money and for later life,
how to take out a mortgage.”***

Secondary Student

“How to live a healthy life”

Primary Pupil

Key considerations for a **curriculum of the future**

From our Pearson School Reports to date, it's clear that educators and students alike believe that specific topics and considerations have important roles to play in the education of young people going forward.

Diversity, equality and inclusion

- **64%** of learners agree they learn better if they **see people like themselves** or from their backgrounds in what they learn in school (same as 2023).
- In 2023, **6 in 10** teachers said what was taught in schools was **more diverse and inclusive** than five years earlier.
- That same year, **9 in 10** of all schools took **steps to support diversity and inclusion** in their setting.
- Today, **50%** of all educators believe making the **curriculum** more real and relevant would **improve equity and inclusion**.

"We've modified our curriculum to make it more diverse and thus [...] more engaging."

Middle Leader

Climate and sustainability

- **3 in 5** teachers agree **schools have a powerful role to play in shaping sustainably minded citizens** (same as 2023).
- **90%** of students feel it's important we try to **look after the planet, nature and animals** (was 91% in 2023).
- **9%** of schools have a **climate action plan** (was 8% in 2023).

“Our schools are beacons for our communities on the challenging road to net zero [...] through what they teach, how they teach and the behaviours they inspire.”

Alex Green, Head of Let's Go Zero

Skills for life

- **87%** of pupils want to be taught **more skills**.
- **More than half** of teachers (**52%**) **would make digital skills its own non-core topic** if they were in charge of designing the curriculum.
- **2 in 5** learners want **more hands-on learning options** in their school.
- Similarly, **3 in 10** learners would like access to **extracurricular activities** in their school.

“Allow students to go to college at 14 to study practical subjects [e.g. to become a] plumber, electrician.”

Secondary Middle Leader

A closer look: **doing more with digital**

Intrigued by students' and educators' responses about technology in the now, we asked about the power and potential of technology in future.

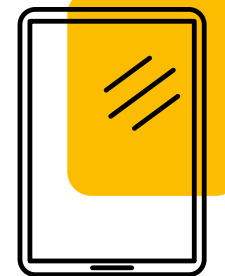
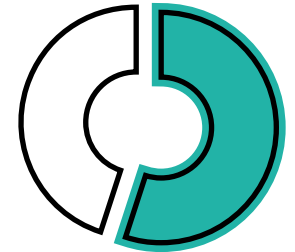
"I have pushed to provide 1-1 devices [...] as I believe this will help reduce the digital divide and engage this generation in a way they can relate to. The impact it has had within just a few weeks [...] is overwhelming."

Primary Middle Leader

Opportunities to explore

More than half

of teachers **(55%)** feel **we need a better digital curriculum**



34% of students

want to do **more learning on digital devices** in class, e.g. computers and tablets

31% of students

would like the ability to sometimes **learn and join lessons remotely** from home



Tackling the **digital divide**

In our 2023 Pearson School Report, we shone the spotlight on key barriers to fully embracing technology in education – including the digital divide.

This year, many educators told us that they've been enhancing digital access in their schools. But there's still more for us to do as a sector to make this a reality for all.

48% of teachers say **more needs to be done to tackle the digital divide in homes and schools**

- **38%** of teachers feel they **need training** on how to use technology.
- Around **1 in 2** schools say they don't have **adequate infrastructure to adopt new technology** in their school.
- **More than 1 in 4** teachers predict **digital infrastructure** and **access to WiFi** will become an **increasing concern** in the next year.

One year on: developing digitally

Recent Teacher Tapp data on edtech barriers also suggests...

Staying the **same**

- **43%** of schools **don't have in-school tech support** – no change from when we asked in our 2023 Pearson School Report.
- **84%** of teachers say they **never have training on digital learning tools and edtech advancements**. 17% of teachers surveyed for our 2023 Pearson School Report told us they had access to this.

Going **down**

- **69%** of learners feel their school has everything they need to complete their work digitally (was 80% in 2023).
- **Less than half** of teachers (**46%**) **don't have reliable WiFi across the whole of their school** – was 55% in our 2023 Pearson School Report.

Spotlight on **AI**

74% of secondary students say



it's **important to learn more about AI** and the role it'll play in the future

Given educators' and students' desires to build on digital skills, we asked **secondary students** for their views on AI:

- **38% already use generative AI** in daily life
- **63%** feel they **do not learn enough about AI** in schools at the moment
- **nearly half (48%)** feel **other countries learn more about AI** than we do
- **68%** would like to see **GenAI** taught in schools
- the elements students would most like to learn about are:
 - **how to use it well**
 - **what it can be used for**
 - the **pros and cons** of AI.

What technology **could do in future**

Underpinning educators' and students' desires to embrace digital innovation is the potential it has to enhance education experiences and support the whole school community.

At a school and community level...

Top three areas that teachers think will improve due to technology in the next three years

- 1** Accessibility for learners with SEND (**61%**)
- 2** Student progress tracking (**54%**)
- 3** Teacher workload/admin (**42%**)

Plus...

Looking beyond the top three, areas that educators predict will also improve due to technology are:

- parent/carer engagement
- high-stakes assessments, e.g. onscreen exams
- remote and flexible working
- personalised teaching.

Enhancing **student engagement**

Primary and secondary teachers also expect some broad improvements for students due to technology.

Q: In three years from now, which of the following do you predict will have been **improved due to technology**?

	Primary	Secondary
Pupil preparedness for a digital world	65%	54%
Pupil readiness for future careers	41%	33%
Pupil interest in learning	32%	17%
Pupil outcomes	10%	10%
Student remote/flexible working	28%	42%

“By listening to those directly involved in the education system, we can develop strategies that resonate with students’ needs and experiences whilst ensuring the system is tailored to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of our changing world.”

Carl Ward, Chair of the Foundation for Education Development (FED)

Your voices: our future

Three quarters of learners say their school supports them to **achieve what they want for their future**.

66% of teachers said they chose to go into teaching because they wanted to **make a difference** to pupils' lives.

Building on the spirit of this, teachers and students look ahead, and share their wishes and aspirations for education in their own words.



[Read more](#) views
on education

#YourVoices

"More support and understanding of disability and neurodiversity"

Secondary Student

"Better staff training [in mental health]"

Primary Classroom Teacher

"Praise cards, extra lunch, fun trips"

Primary Pupil

"Greater support for parents, [with] schools as hubs for parents to access resources"

Secondary Classroom Teacher

“Attendance officers, mental health support, guidelines, support for teaching staff”

Secondary Classroom Teacher

“Making and creating”

Primary Pupil

“More recognition of teaching as a valuable job”

Secondary Middle Leader

“IT infrastructure and transforming [teaching and learning] into a more digital domain”

Secondary Middle Leader



Continuing the conversation

Instead of adding a conclusion to draw this report to a close, we invite you to join us in its next chapter: continuing conversations about the findings and collaborating on driving positive change.

Engaging with educators, students and the wider sector is crucial to who we are at Pearson and what we do. That's why we make it a priority not only to bring voices together, but also to listen and keep engaging as we strive to support every learning journey.

Thank you to everyone who has shared their perspectives with us so far.

Exploring the questions: **our pledge**

Alongside the voices of concern and hope expressed here, there are also voices of curiosity, plus questions that we can collectively find answers to.

Building on the insights and commitments of the Pearson School Reports to date, we'll work alongside the education community to continue seeking answers to four key questions:

- How can we **facilitate further collaboration and showcase innovation** around some of the **key challenges** being experienced within the education community?
- How can we accelerate progress to ensure **all learners and educators feel included** in education?
- How can we help each school and trust **to shape sustainable and brighter futures** where **everyone** can flourish?
- How can we **keep embracing digital innovation** and **collectively tackle barriers** such as the digital divide?

Add **your voice**

Driving positive change doesn't happen in isolation, so we're calling on all those involved in education to join the conversation.

Have **your say**

Get in touch via social media:



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For us, learning isn't just what we do. It's who we are.

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