



# Social Mobility and COVID-19

**Dr Rebecca Montacute**  
**The Sutton Trust**

**Governors for Schools**  
25<sup>th</sup> November 2021

# Social mobility in the UK



The poorest children are  
**11 MONTHS**  
behind when starting school

Closing Gaps Early

High performing comprehensive  
schools take in  
**HALF THE NUMBER**  
of poorer pupils than the average  
school

Selective Comprehensives

Disadvantaged students are  
**TWICE AS LIKELY**  
to leave formal education without  
GCSEs in English and maths than  
their better-off classmates

EEF's The Attainment Gap

# Social mobility in the UK



”

## 8 TOP SCHOOLS

send as many pupils to Oxbridge as three-quarters of all schools

—  
[Access to Advantage](#)



”

Britain's most influential people are  
**OVER 5 TIMES**  
more likely to have been to private school

—  
[Elitist Britain 2019](#)

# Social mobility in the UK



”

This means if you're born into a well off family, you're

**MORE THAN 2.5X TIMES**

more likely to end up wealthy yourself

—  
[Recent Changes to Intergenerational Mobility in Britain](#)

# The impact of the pandemic

## School shutdown - April 2020

### Immediate impact of the first lockdown

RESEARCH BRIEF | APRIL 2020



### COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Closures



Carl Cullinane and Rebecca Montacute

#### KEY FINDINGS

- 23% of pupils are reported to be taking part in live and recorded lessons online every day. However, pupils from middle class homes are much more likely (30%) compared to 16% of working class pupils. At private schools, 51% of primary and 57% of secondary students have availed of online lessons every day, twice as likely as in state schools.
- 60% of private schools and 37% of schools in the most affluent areas had an online platform to receive work, compared to 23% in the most deprived schools. 45% of students had communicated with their teachers in the last week. At independent schools, the figure is 62% for primaries and 81% for secondaries.
- Despite the challenges faced, parents are overall positive about schools. 61% of children learning at home had parents who were satisfied, similar to 60% of children in state schools. However, parents had spent less than £50 in the first week of the school shutdown, 14% had spent more than £100. 19% of children from middle class homes had £100 or more spent on them, compared to 8% in working class homes. For households earning over £100,000 per year, a third of children had more than £100 spent on their learning.
- Two thirds of children who previously received private tuition reported to no longer have such a service, while a third continued to have tuition through online services. The effect of these changes has been to narrow the 'tuition gap', but this is likely to only be temporary.
- These inequalities are reflected in the amount and quality of work being received by teachers. 24% say that fewer than 1 in 4 children in their class are returning work they have been set. 50% of teachers in private schools report they're receiving more than three quarters of work back, compared with 27% in the most advantaged state schools, and just 8% in the most disadvantaged state schools.

## A level results and university access – August 2020

### Impacts of the pandemic on A level students/assessments and university access

RESEARCH BRIEF | AUGUST 2020



### A Level Results & University Access 2020



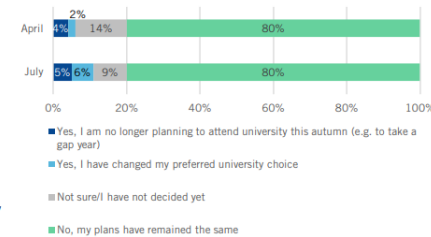
Covid-19, assessed grades and university admissions - Polling Overview

#### UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS 2020

In April this year, shortly after the closure of schools and the announcement of the cancellation of this year's A Levels and Scottish Highers, we surveyed young people applying to university through UCAS. This revealed significant worries about the grading process and how that would impact their chances of getting into their preferred university and course. It also showed significant uncertainty about the best course of action, with 20% of applicants reporting that they had changed their mind, or were now uncertain about their plans due to the pandemic.

A new survey of applicants, conducted in late July,<sup>1</sup> shows that uncertainty and worries still persist.

Figure 1. Have university applicants' plans changed as a result of the pandemic, April and July



Source: Youthsight survey of UCAS applicants for the Sutton Trust, 16th-22nd July and 9th-14th April

Figure 2. For those changing their mind or not sure, what are the main reasons (multiple selections allowed)

# The impact of the pandemic

## Learning in Lockdown - January 2021

### School provision in the second lockdown

RESEARCH BRIEF | JANUARY 2021



## Learning in Lockdown



Rebecca Montacute and Carl Cullinane

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Attendance at school

- In the first week of the January 2021 lockdown, more than a quarter (27%) of primary school age children were reported to be at least partially attending school in person, compared to just 8% of secondary age children.
- Of those children attending school in person, less than half (47%) of them had been attending school during the first lockdown last March. Almost half of parents cited work-related reasons for this, including their status as a key/critical worker (26%), a change in working status (14%), or a less flexible employer (8%).
- As a result, 37% of teachers in primary schools report they now have 1 in 5 or more of their usual pupils in attendance, compared to just 1% last March.

#### Devices

- At the beginning of the shutdown, just 5% of teachers in state schools reported that all their students have access to an appropriate device for remote learning, compared to 54% at private schools. Looking at pupils with adequate internet access, the figures are 5% and

to 23%, and for secondary students it has increased from 19% to 45%.

- However, 40% of children in middle class homes are reported to be doing over 5 hours a day, compared to 26% of those in working class households.

#### Support for home learning

- 41% of parents with children learning at home report that they have not very much time or no time at all to help their children with online learning, with parents of secondary age children having less time.
- Parents were split in their experience of learning from the home this time around. Many reported that they found it easier than the spring 2020 lockdown, with others reporting that they were finding it more difficult. 28% of those on low incomes were finding it more difficult, compared to 15% of those on the highest incomes.

- 31% of those with the lowest incomes had not been able to spend anything on their child's learning from home since September 2020, while 29% of those on the highest incomes had spent more than £100.

## A level results and university access – July 2021

### Ongoing impacts of the pandemic on A level students/assessments and university access

RESEARCH BRIEF | JULY 2021



## A Levels and University Access 2021



Erica Holt-White and Carl Cullinane

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Impact on learning

- More than a quarter (27%) of university applicants from a working class background struggled with insufficient study space at home this year, compared to 16% of those in middle class households. 7% reported lacking sufficient internet access.
- 15% of applicants studying in private schools received one to one tutoring this year, compared to 9% at state school.
- 69% feel they have fallen behind with their studies due to the disruption, with many also feeling that they have fallen behind even in comparison to their peers. 37% of state school applicants felt this, compared to 25% of private school students.

#### Assessment

- There was significant variety in the intensity of A Level assessment undertaken by students. The most common number of mini-exams/in class assessments per subject reported by teachers was three or four (38%). However 18% reported two or fewer, and 18%

state schools and those with lower Ofsted ratings.

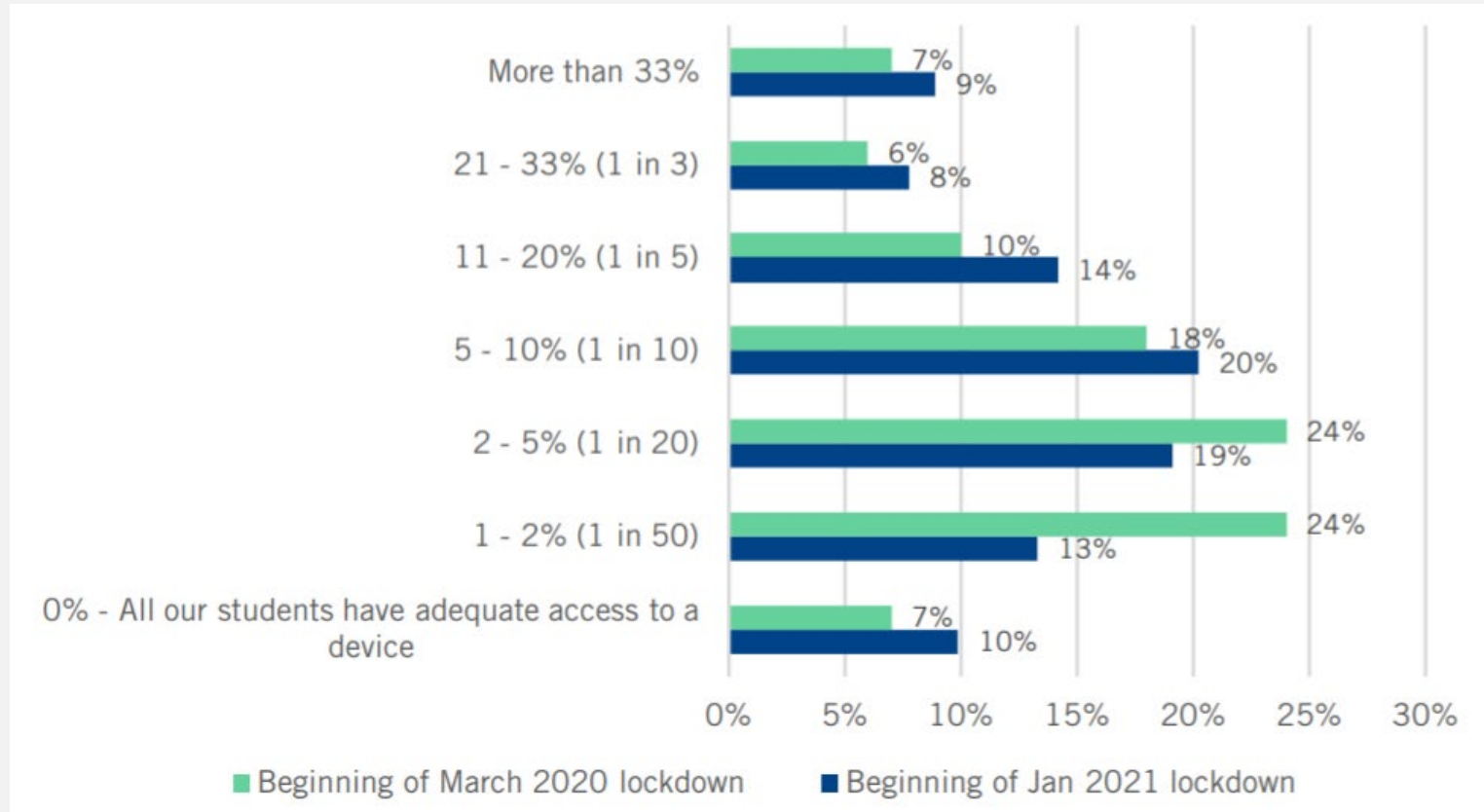
- 52% of teachers working in the most deprived schools of the country thought the support they received to determine grades was insufficient compared to 44% of those working in schools in the most affluent areas.
- 23% of teachers at private schools report that parents had approached or pressured them about their child's grade this year, compared to 17% at more affluent state schools, and 11% at the least affluent.
- Students' views are more positive this year than in 2020, with fewer anticipating that their grades will be harmed, and more agreeing that the system is as fair or more fair than a typical year. Anxieties around fairness also eased between April and June this year.
- However, almost half (49%) of state school applicants said they didn't feel confident that they would have the right information and support if they needed to appeal their grades. Applicants from independent schools were less likely to not feel confident (43%).

#### University applications and entry

- University applications this year are at record levels,

# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

## Access to devices

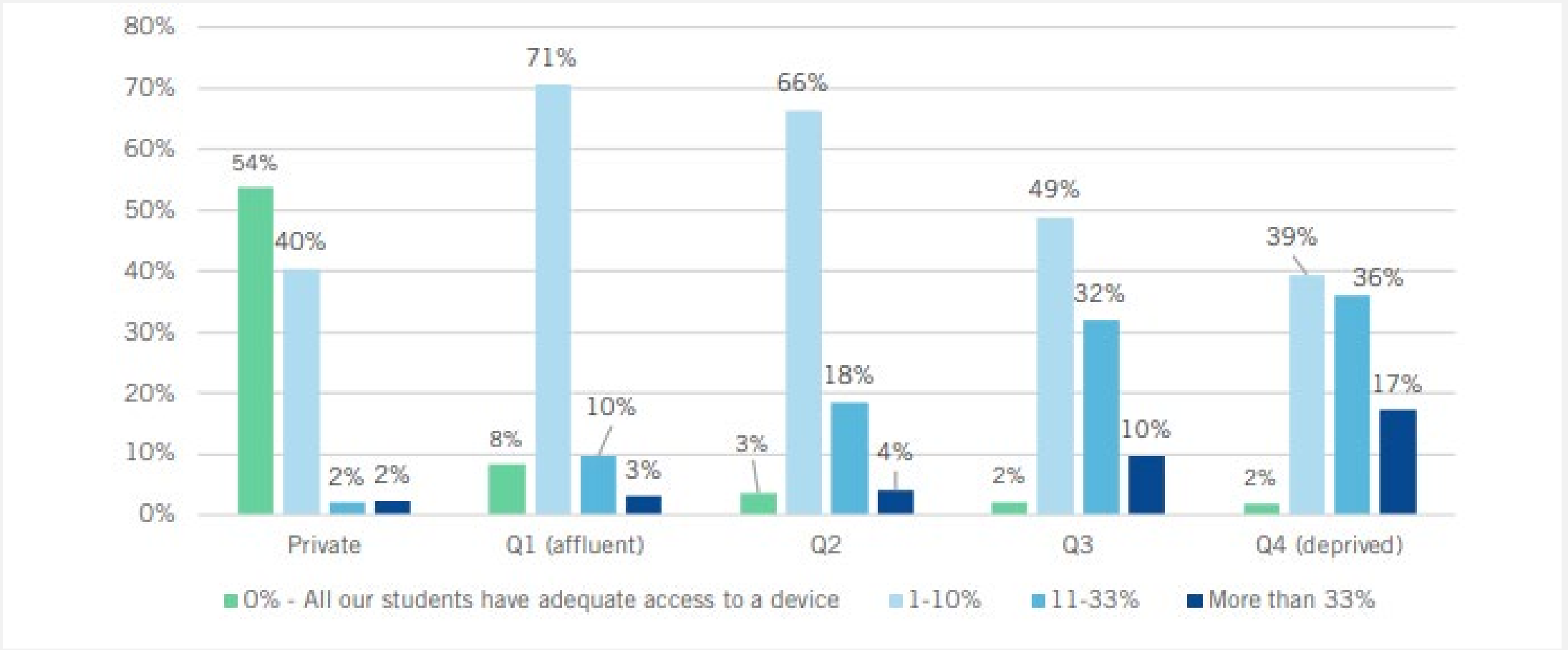


Teacher polling during January 2021 lockdown



# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

Access to devices

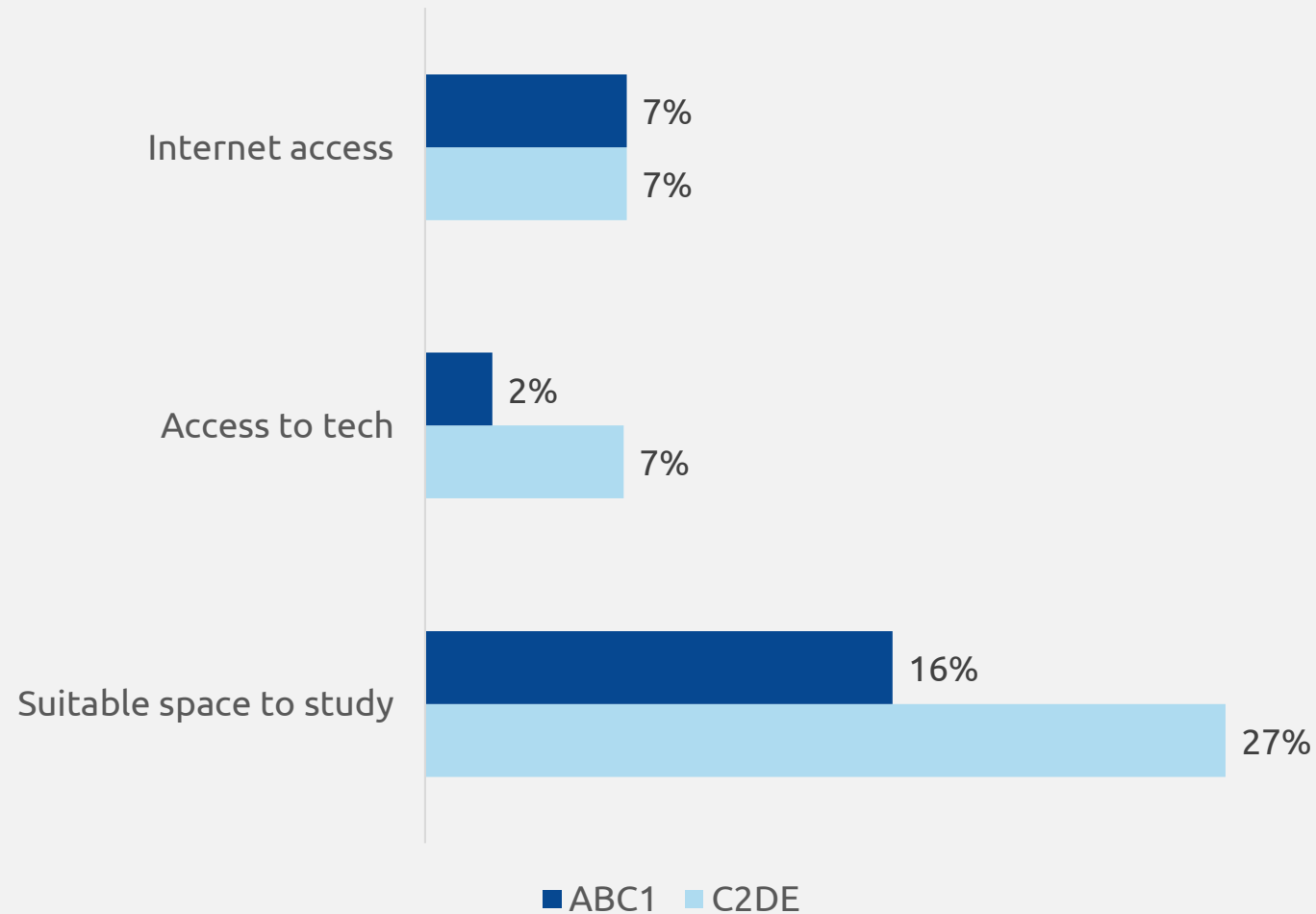


Teacher polling during January 2021 lockdown



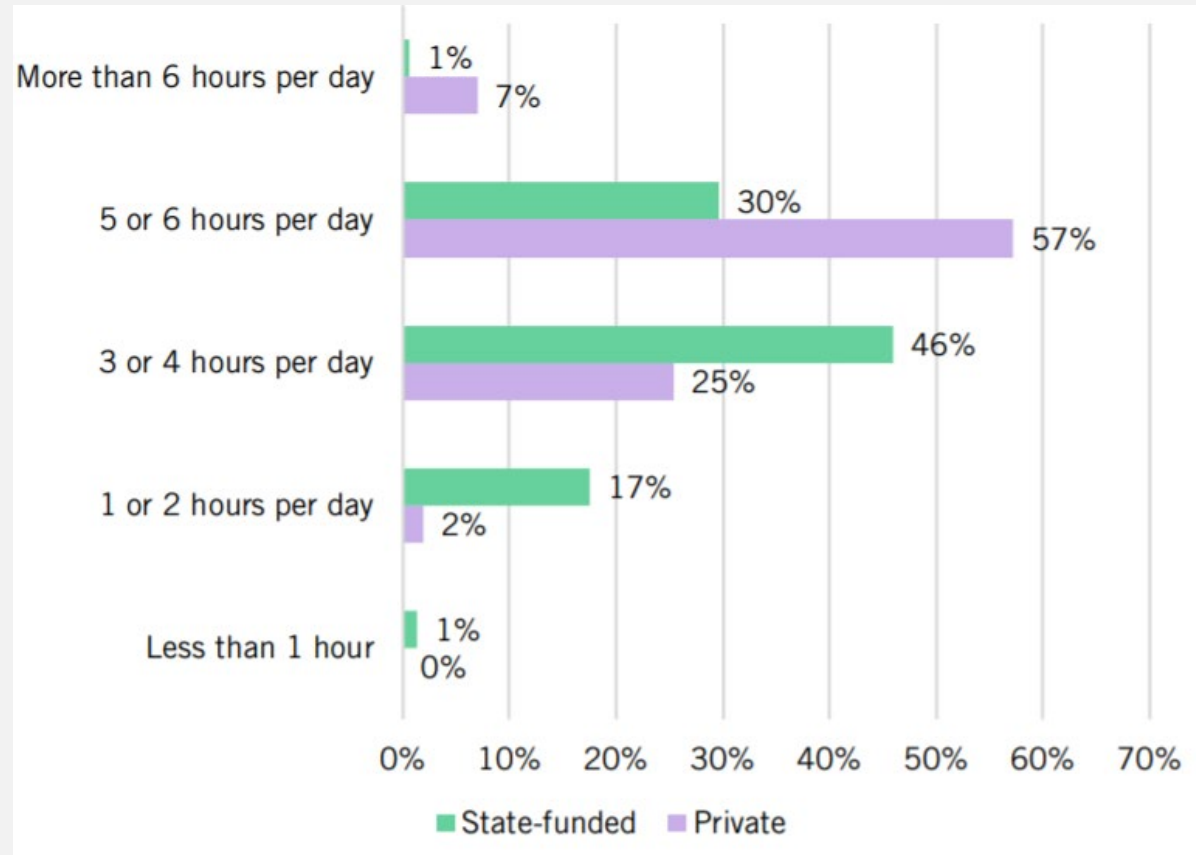
# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

Survey of young people – those with insufficient access -



# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

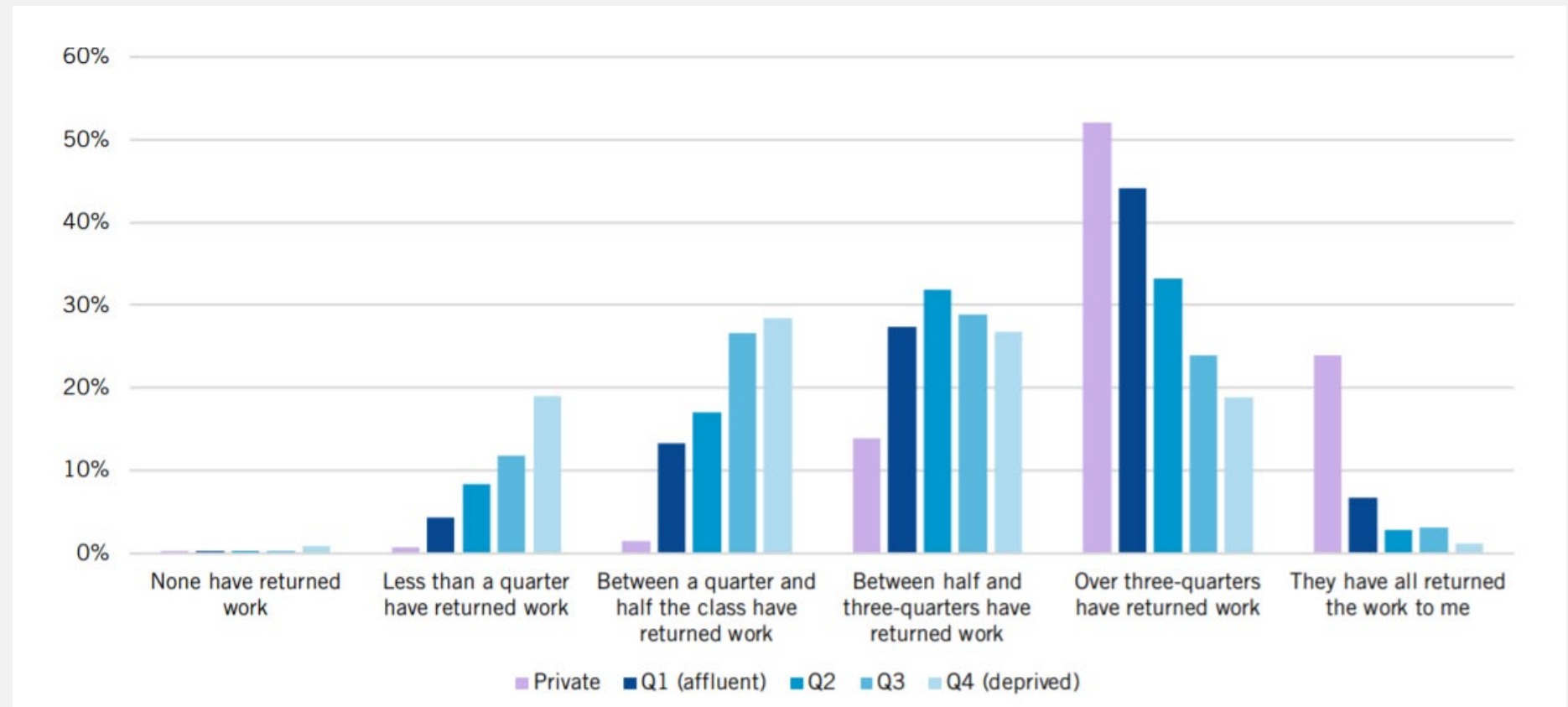
Hours spent learning per day by pupils



Teacher polling during January 2021 lockdown

# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

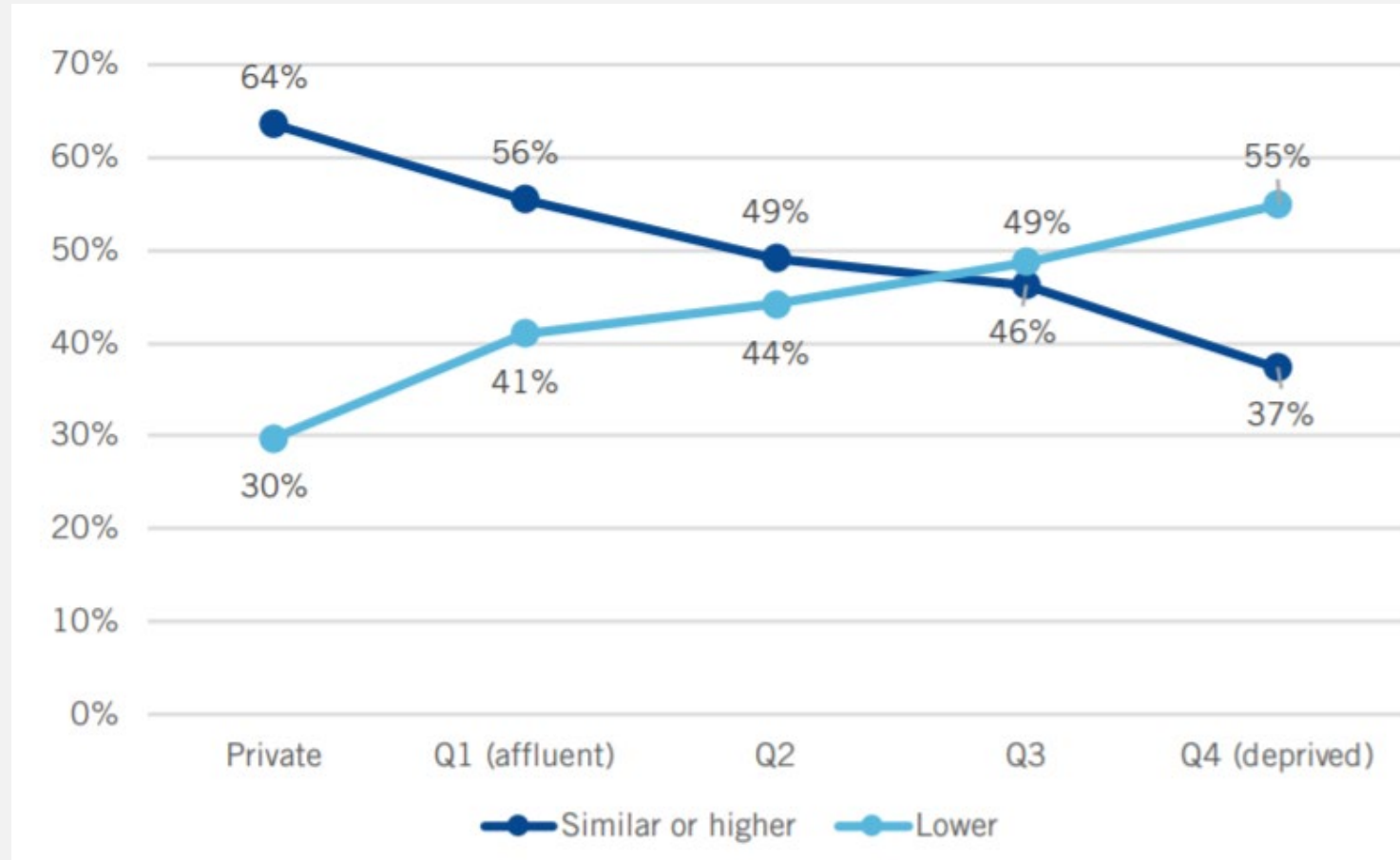
Work returned by pupils



Teacher polling during January 2021 lockdown

# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

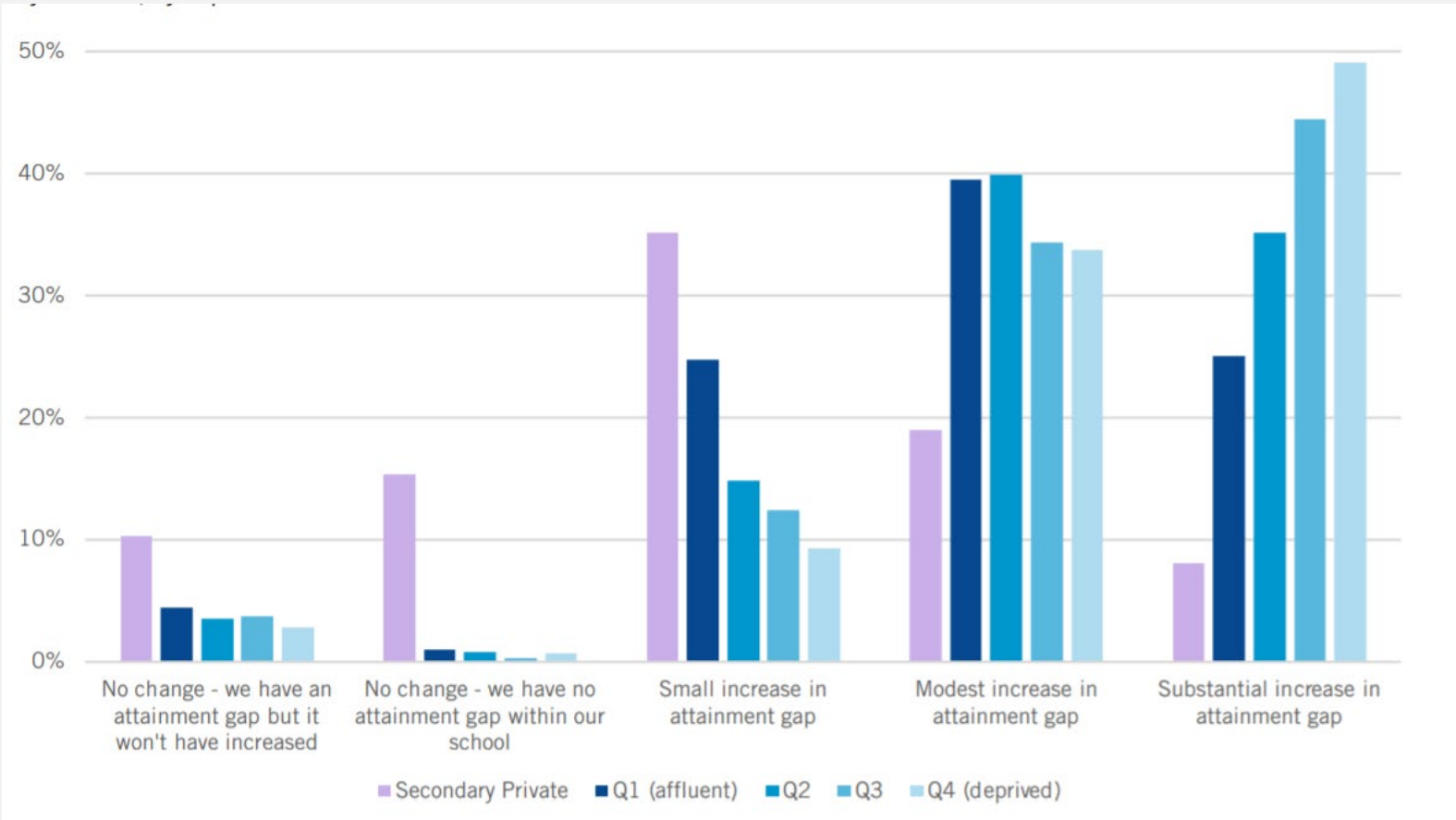
Quality of work returned



Teacher polling during January 2021 lockdown

# Disadvantaged students were heavily impacted by the pandemic

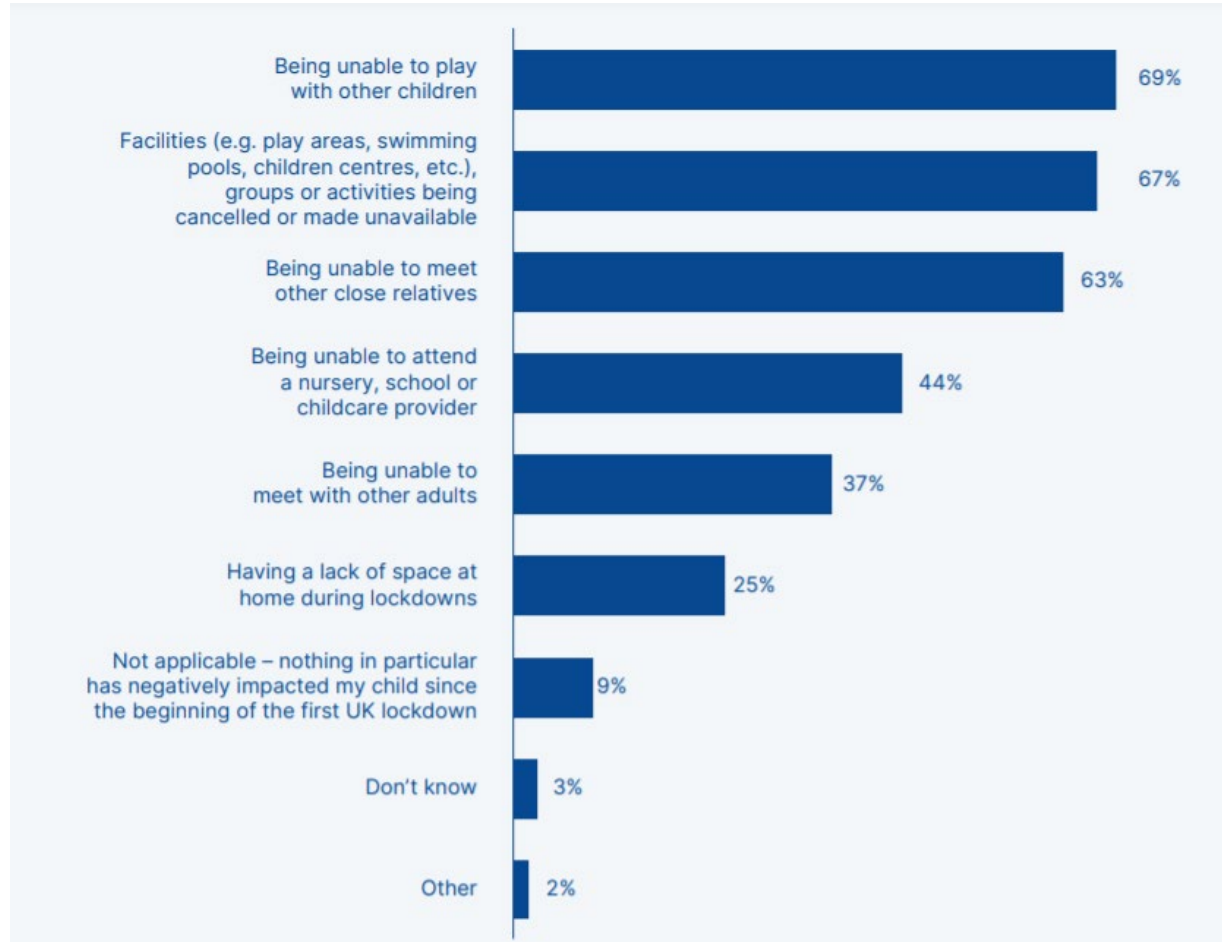
## Impact on the attainment gap



Teacher polling during January 2021 lockdown

# And there are issues for the early years too...

Proportion of parents who reported negative impacts for their children -

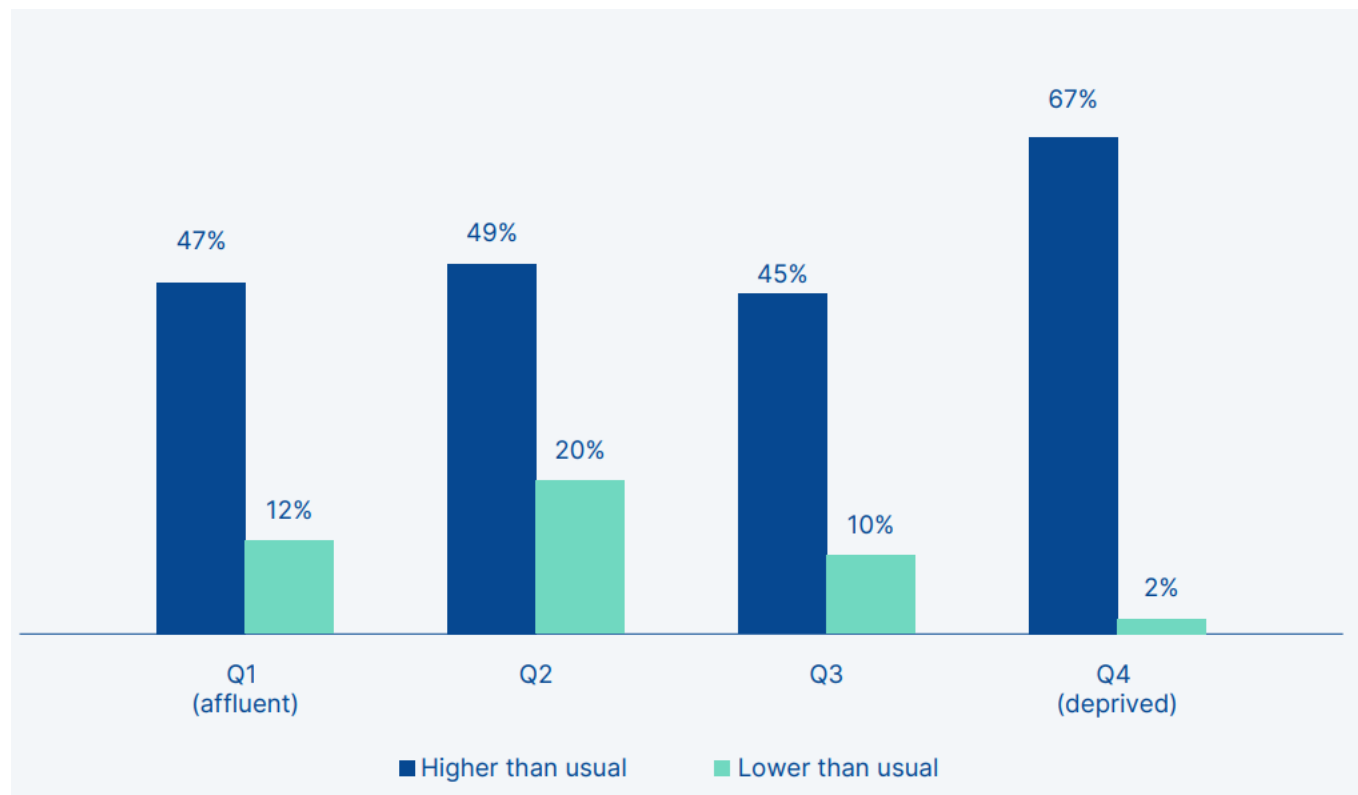


# 51%

The proportion of pre-schooler parents who thought **the government has not done enough to support the development of pre-school aged children** during the pandemic

# And there are issues for the early years too...

How the proportion of **students not school ready** in **primary senior leader's schools** compared to pre-pandemic -





# COSMO – The Covid Social Mobility and Opportunities Study

COSMO is a major new national longitudinal cohort study

It will look at the **short, medium and long term impacts** of the **COVID-19 pandemic** on **educational inequality and social mobility**.



# COSMO – The Covid Social Mobility and Opportunities Study



Centre for  
Education Policy &  
Equalising Opportunities



CENTRE FOR  
LONGITUDINAL  
STUDIES



KANTAR PUBLIC



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

## Ongoing absences

Over the winter, there are likely to be continued absences in schools due to COVID -

- Will your school be able to get the staff cover it needs?
- Does your school have enough laptops/internet dongles for any children learning from home while isolating?
- What is your school doing for any pupils who are repeatedly absent due to COVID isolation?

# Issues for governors to consider going forward -

## Education recovery

- How is your school monitoring learning loss? What is being done to identify specific pupils in need of support?
- How is your school using government catch up funds?
- Is your school making use of the National Tutoring Programme?
- How do your schools' catch-up efforts link in with their pupil premium strategy?



# Questions?

Feel free to email me with any Qs -  
[rebecca.montacute@suttontrust.com](mailto:rebecca.montacute@suttontrust.com)

# How can governors ensure that schools support all pupils to meet their potential?

Ellie Cheshire (ellie.cheshire@thekeysupport.com)



**GovernorHub**

from The Key



# Maslow's hierarchy of needs

## School 'recovery':

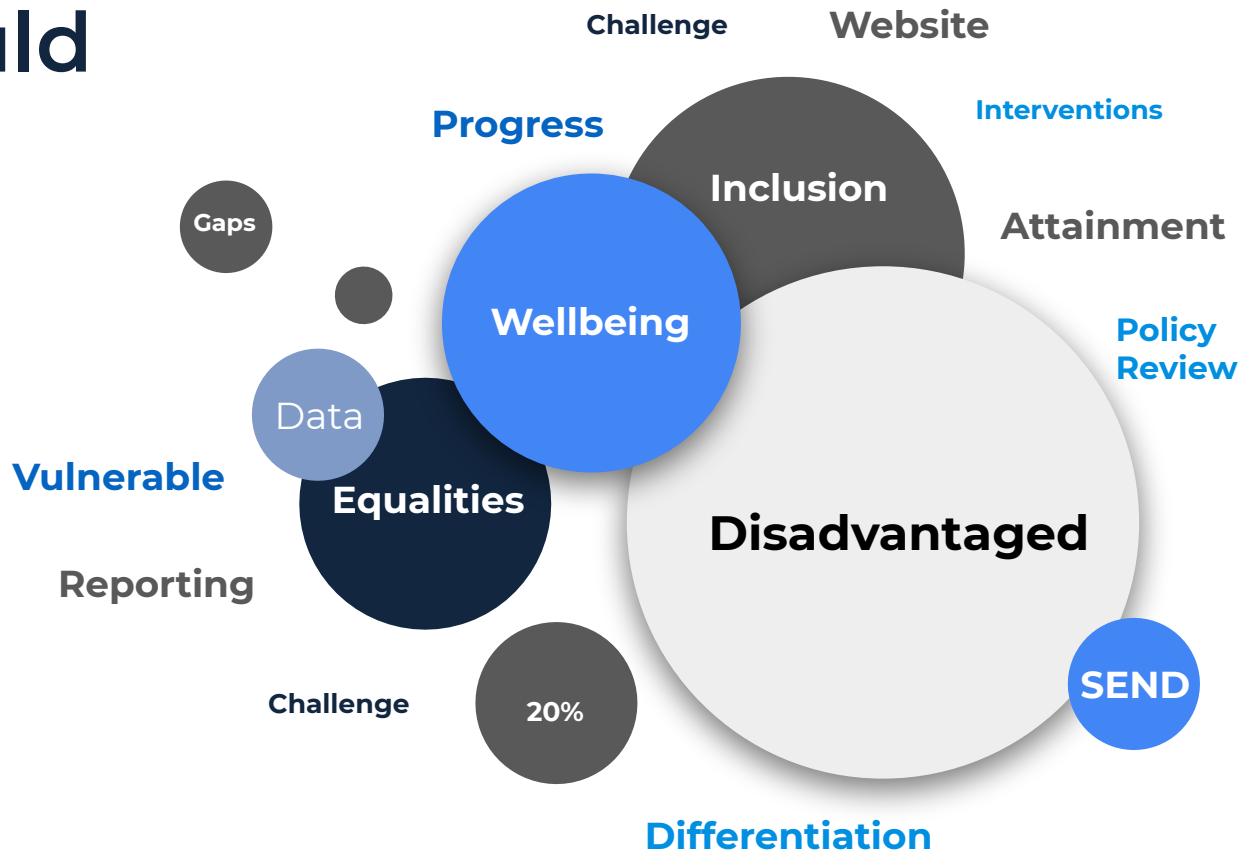
- Settling back into school routines
- Re-establishing expectations
- Rebuilding relationships

There's just no way to rush this, and all of this needs to be in place before we can even begin to think about school improvement.





# What should governors be doing?



# What should governors be doing?



# Have you got the tools for the job?

The governing board that was effective 2 years ago may not be fit for purpose in the year to come.

- When did you last identify and fill **skills gaps**
- Do you need to increase your monitoring activities so you **can effectively respond** to a rapidly-changing situation
- Does your current **committee structure** make sure you:
  - have the right eyes looking in the right places
  - spread the workload more evenly
- Who on your board is **championing** equalities, SEND, Pupil Premium etc?

# Three BIG questions ...

## Who are your stakeholders?

- Social/economic
- Geographical
- Barriers to learning
- What's happening in the community?

<https://governorhub.com/insights>



## What do pupils need?

Staffing structure  
Assessment  
Interventions  
Reasonable adjustments

## What is the culture in your school?

How are policies lived?  
How are staff trained?  
Does everyone feel the same?


# Clarity of vision

The **'north star' for decision-making** across the school

If it is based on attainment and progress will it serve as an appropriate beacon for the year to come?

Does it focus on:

- Making sure **everyone** feels safe and secure
- Rebuilding relationships
- Helping children feel confident in their learning again
- Helping them progress



**'Know your  
destination,  
focus on the  
journey'**

# Holding leaders to account

We don't necessarily have:

- Performance data
- Attendance data
- Budget benchmarks

This doesn't mean that school leaders need to manufacture new data - that would be counterproductive.


Work together with your SLT to identify the information that will inform these new areas of focus.



# Holding leaders to account

How successfully your values are embedding in the school. For example:

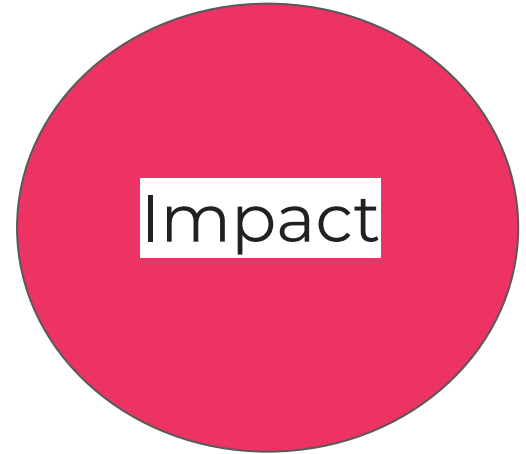
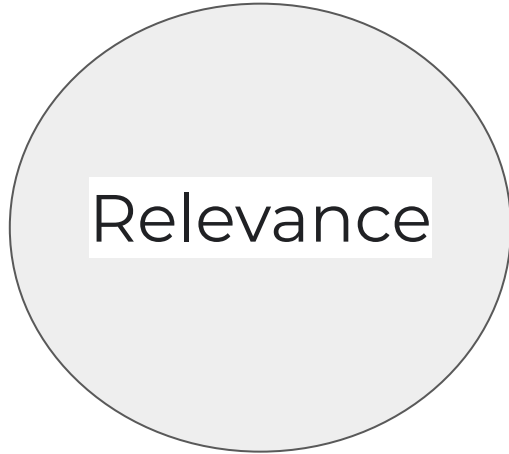
- **Instead of attendance, focus on engagement**
  - "Are our pupils excited about learning?"
- **Instead of progress, focus on closing learning gaps**
  - "Are all of our pupils getting the support they need to fulfil their potential?"
- **Instead of productivity, focus on wellbeing**
  - "Are we supporting our teachers, so they can be the best they can be for our pupils?"
- **Instead of parent engagement, focus on parent empowerment**
  - "What can we do to make our parents our allies?"



**'What they  
need ...  
they will  
get'**



# Making sure money is well spent



The obligatory  
thing to do  
next ...



How do you carry  
out your 3 core  
functions in each  
of these areas?