



Department
for Education

SEND Futures: parental perceptions of school support for pupils with SEND at age 13-14

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Social Research

This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 5 July 2024. As a result, the content may not reflect current Government policy.

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Executive summary

The SEND Futures Discovery Phase study is a large-scale longitudinal study funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in collaboration with the National Children's Bureau (NCB). The primary aim of the study is to shape the methodology of a full-scale longitudinal study focusing on young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families. It also offers an opportunity to gather views from parents and young people and the opportunity to illustrate the types of insights a mainstage study could provide.

This report does this by focusing on one important theme – namely, parental perceptions of school support. It seeks to address a gap in our knowledge about how parents of young people with SEND view the support given by their child's school, and how this differs between different groups of parents – determined specifically, according to their child's needs, the type of school they attend, and aspects related to SEN identification and the level of support in place (exemplified by whether or not the young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)). It also explores the relative importance of several specific aspects of support provision in driving parents' overall views on the support provided by the school. This can help identify which aspects of support provision appear to matter most for parents. These and other questions of relevance to policy and practice are discussed in the Discussion and conclusions chapter.

Using a mix of online, telephone and face-to-face data collection methods, the SEND Futures Discovery Phase study provides rich and robust data from more than 2,000 families across England. This report draws on data collected from 2,330 parents during the second wave of fieldwork which took place in the summer term of the 2022-23 academic year when young people in the study were in Year 9 (aged 13-14). The findings have been weighted to be nationally representative for this population.

Main findings

Parental perceptions of school support

- Just under two thirds of parents (64%) thought the school supported their child well across all the areas where they needed extra support. Nevertheless, a notable minority of parents reported negative views - 26% thought their child's school had not done very well and a further 10% thought that the school had not done well at all in supporting their child.
- Parents' views on other aspects of support ranged from a low of 51% reporting positive views in relation to support with developing their child's interests and

hobbies, to a high of 67% reporting that the school understood their child's SEN well.

- Views among parents whose child attended a special school were much more positive than among parents whose child attended a mainstream school – across all the measures looked at in the report. For example, the proportion of parents who felt their child was well supported overall, was 90% of those whose child attended a special school and 59% among those whose child attended mainstream education.
- Among parents of young people in mainstream schools, a higher proportion of those whose child had an EHCP had positive views of the support received than of those whose child did not have an EHCP. This pattern was evident across all the measures of support looked at, with the exception of development of hobbies and interest where there was no difference.
- Parental perceptions also differed based on their child's primary type of SEN. Parents of children with profound, multiple, or severe learning difficulties held the most positive views. Almost all of these young people attended a special school.
- Among parents whose child attended mainstream education, a lower proportion of those whose child had social, emotional and mental health needs or a specific learning difficulty were positive about the support provided in relation to their child's SEN than among parents whose child had other types of needs.
- The age at which their child's SEN was identified was also correlated with parents' perceptions of the support provided by the school. Generally, earlier identification correlated with more positive parental views on support.

Drivers of overall parental perceptions of school support

- Of the six aspects related to school support measured and analysed in this report, parents' perception of how well the school understood their child's SEN was the most important in driving their opinion on the school's support at an overall level. This was particularly the case among parents whose child attended mainstream education.
- Within the context of mainstream education, feeling closely involved in the school's decisions about their child ranked as the second most important factor affecting parents' views on the support provided by the school, across all the areas where their child needed extra support. Conversely, among parents whose child attended a special school this aspect was among the least influential.

Implications for policy and practice

- The markedly less positive views among parents with a child in mainstream education, particularly those whose child attended mainstream education and did not have an EHCP, indicate that there is some way to go to achieve the aim of building parents' confidence in the ability of mainstream settings to effectively meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- In mainstream schools, prioritising resources to improve awareness of SEND among teachers and other staff, reflecting this in policies and practices, and ensuring parents are meaningfully involved in decision making related to their child, may be useful focal points for efforts to improve support for pupils with SEND and, through this, parental confidence in and satisfaction with the system.
- Within mainstream education there may also be benefits of looking specifically at the support provided for pupils with specific learning difficulties or social, emotional, and mental health needs to identify whether additional resources or interventions are required. Parents of young people with these types of primary needs were the least positive about school support.
- In contrast, within special schools, with their focus on meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, parents were generally much more positive about the support provided in special schools. Nearly all parents expressed that the school understood their child's SEN well, and a much higher proportion than in mainstream schools felt closely involved in the school's decisions about their child.

Future research

The report raises several questions which could be followed-up in future research, e.g.:

- What is the relationship between parents' perceptions of the support provided (as a marker of the quality of the support provided) and their child's outcomes – in terms of educational outcomes and other outcomes, including health and wellbeing, and independence in adulthood?
- What is the relationship between parental views on support for pupils with SEN provided and measures of quality of support, e.g. as measured by the school and/or as reported by teachers and school staff (including SENCOs) and external specialists?
- How do parents' views on the support provided vary as their child grows older, and across the primary and secondary school stages? How does this correspond to practices and policies related to SEN, as well as wider school policies?

- What drives the relationship between early SEN identification and parental views on support? And how is this related to the types of needs a child or young person has?
- What other, wider, elements affect parents' views on support for SEND provided by their child's school? For example, other school initiatives, policies, etc.?
- What role do parents' and pupils' socio-economic background play in how parents' view the support provided, and the quality of this support – and what are the other factors at play here? For example, paying for private assessments, private help with learning and/or other needs and/or simply being better placed to 'navigate the system'.
- How do young people themselves view the support they receive? How does this correspond with the views of their parents, and with the wider school policies and practices? And, importantly, how does this relate to their wider experiences and outcomes – both educationally and otherwise, e.g. their health and wellbeing?

The SEND Futures Discovery Phase Study already provides robust data for exploring a number of these questions, including young people's views. A full-scale mainstage study will further add to the ability to answer research questions and build the evidence to inform policy and practice.

Introduction

This report explores parents' perceptions of the support provided to their child at school and draws on data collected in the SEND Futures Discovery Phase – a longitudinal pilot study which collected data on the experiences of young people in England with special educational needs (SEN). This is a diverse and growing population with a wide range of support needs. Department for Education (DfE) data shows that the number of pupils in England with SEN increased to a total of more than 1.5 million pupils in 2023 (DFE, 2023a). In recognition of the need to ensure support was in place to meet pupils' needs, the SEND Code of Practice¹ sets out key responsibilities and commitments for supporting children and young people with SEND. Gaining a better understanding of the views and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families, including their views on the support provided, is crucial for policy makers and others seeking to improve the support in place.

This chapter provides an overview of the SEND policy landscape, with a particular focus on parental views on the support schools provide for pupils with SEND, and sets out the aims of the report and the data collection.

Background and policy context

The provision of high quality support that meets children's and young people's special educational needs, in inclusive education settings, is a continuing policy challenge in the education sector. The Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009) concluded that major reform of the SEND system was needed, with one of the key areas for reform being 'a stronger voice for parents' with good, honest communication an important component of building confidence. The Inquiry advised:

"In the most successful schools the effective engagement of parents has had a profound impact on children's progress and the confidence between the school and parent. Parents need to be listened to more and brought into a partnership with statutory bodies in a more meaningful way." (Lamb, 2009)

The need for better communication with parents is also highlighted in other research (e.g. Penfold et al., 2009). Over a decade on from the Lamb Inquiry, research has also found that many of the concerns identified remain, including parents not feeling meaningfully involved in decision making with their child's school, and lacking confidence in the support their child receives. These concerns for parents with children with SEND are ongoing challenges facing the SEND sector and policy makers (Ofsted, 2021).

¹ See the *Children and Families Act 2014*, s66. Available at: [Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Guidance exists on the support schools should be providing to their pupils with SEND. Specifically, schools have specific statutory duties detailed in the SEND Code of Practice. The Code states schools must use their 'best endeavours' (as per the Children's and Families Act 2014 – section 66²), to ensure special educational provision is made in relation to identifying, and supporting, all children with SEND - whether or not they have an EHCP (DfE, 2015)³. Key components of special educational provision are that parents and children and young people are actively involved in decision making throughout the school's activities in supporting pupils with SEND. The Code explicitly states that parents 'know their child best' and that 'it is essential for schools to listen and understand when parents express any concerns about their child's development' (DfE, 2015. p95). It also states schools have a duty to 'agree in consultation' with parents and pupils the support to be implemented, along with plans for monitoring, review, and next steps of support provision. Schools should be meeting with parents at least three times per year and a key responsibility of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is liaising with parents of pupils with SEN (DfE, 2015, p101, 104).

The increasing demands on the SEND system, and the insufficient resources available to meet increasing levels of need is well recognised, with policy efforts underway to address these challenges. In March 2023, the Government published the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. The plan aims to deliver 'a more dignified experience for children and young people (CYP) with SEND, and to improve families' confidence in the system' (DfE, 2023b). The plan builds on proposals outlined in the March 2022 SEND and AP Green Paper, which consulted on government plans to offer children and young people with SEND the opportunity to thrive, with access to the right support, in the right place, and at the right time (DfE, 2022). Analysis of the consultation responses identified the need to increase families' confidence in the support system for those with SEND as a key priority (Sinclair and Zaidi, 2023). This will mean addressing the key challenges identified in the Government's SEND review: 1) making access to support less adversarial and a more positive experience for families; 2) improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those in AP and; 3) improving the financial sustainability of the system.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan sets out the government's commitment to deliver a new national system, with national standards as the cornerstone to this. National standards aim to improve mainstream education through setting standards for early and accurate identification of need, and timely access to support to meet those needs. The standards will outline the types of special educational provision that should be available, who is responsible for delivering that support, and clarify expectations on mainstream settings and local services. These standards aim to help families, practitioners and providers understand what support every child or young person should be receiving from

² *Children and Families Act 2014*, s66. Available at: [Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

³ The best endeavours duty is from the Children's and Families Act 2014 (section 66).

early years through to further education, no matter where they live or what their needs are. There has been an increase in the percentages of both pupils with SEN and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)¹ and pupils with SEN but no EHCP (i.e. in receipt of SEN support⁴) since 2016. By improving the support on offer within mainstream education, the aim is to enable more children and young people to access the support they need without the need for an EHCP or a specialist or alternative provision place. This planned improvement in mainstream support, and reduced pressure on the EHCP assessment process is intended to result in a reduction in adversity in the system and increased parental/carer confidence in the support provided to their child.

At the mainstream school level, teachers and school leaders have reported the challenges they face in supporting pupils with SEND. The June 2023 School and College Panel⁵ reported a sizeable proportion of mainstream school teachers and leaders feeling that that they were not equipped to effectively support pupils with SEND; reported by 1 in 4 teachers (25%), and 1 in 3 school leaders (34%). Teachers stated the increased numbers of pupils with differing needs as the main barrier to supporting pupils with SEND (80%), and school leaders cited both the lack of funding (90%), and the funding arrangements (e.g. only spending on those with an EHCP (60%)), as barriers to providing support to pupils with SEN (School and College Panel, June 2023).

The 2023 Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel, 55% of parents of young people with SEND in mainstream schools, reported having ever experienced concern about the quality of education or support provided by their child's school in relation to their SEND (Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel 22/23, June wave, October 2023). Furthermore, the National Parent Survey 2023⁶ – a survey of parents across the UK with a child aged 4 to 18 attending school – found that parents with a child with SEN faced additional pressures, and reported lower levels of satisfaction with the support offered to their child than parents whose child did not have SEN. Notably, parents with a child with SEN were typically less satisfied with the support offered to help their child's mental health and wellbeing compared with other parents. In addition, the survey found that children with SEN had a much higher prevalence of almost all mental health conditions⁷.

The relationship between schools and parents is a key aspect of support to pupils with SEND. Research has highlighted that parents of pupils with SEND may require additional support from schools for them to feel comfortable to be open and honest about their

⁴ Special educational provision in schools is called SEN Support. This is provided to children and young people following the school identifying and taking action to meet pupils needs.

⁵ The panel includes school or college leaders and teachers, from mainstream local authority maintained and academy schools, in primary and secondary settings, who have agreed to take part in brief, regular surveys about education related topics.

⁶ The National Parent Survey includes data from parents attending state (maintained) schools (93%), and independent/private schools (7%). The report methodology does not detail what percentage of schools are specialist settings.

⁷ The mental health experiences/conditions covered: anxiety, self-harm behaviours, eating disorders, depression, being subject to bullying, and cyber-bullying/online abuses.

child's needs with schools (Carroll et al., 2017). In addition, they may have additional concerns compared with other parents, such as: being more worried about their child's safety in school, whether they are making friends, or what other parents think of their child, rather than primarily focusing on academic performance. The issue of communication between parents of a child with SEN, and their child's school, is complex, with both the number of interactions and nature of communications being important to parental experiences and perceptions. For example, qualitative research by Ofsted found that in schools that used a range of both formal and informal communication channels to encourage parents to share information, parents felt well supported by staff, and were more likely to be confident about the school's broader approach to inclusion (Ofsted, 2021). Other research has found that parents of children with SEN were slightly more likely to feel involved in their children's education than parents whose child did not have SEN (ParentKind, 2023). In addition, other research has explicitly suggested that improvements to meeting the needs of pupils receiving SEN support should include better communication and engagement with parents (Penfold et al., 2009).

Thus, it is widely acknowledged that parents' views on the support provided for their child's SEND matter. As the people who 'know their child best', their views are an indicator of the availability and quality of the support provided to young people with SEND and how well, or not, their needs are being met. If parents do not feel their child is being appropriately supported to thrive at school, and have their needs met, they may feel they have no choice but to seek an EHCP and, in some cases, specialist provision, as the only means of legally guaranteeing the right and appropriate support. This could lead to escalations to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).

As set out here, existing research has provided useful insights into how the views of parents of pupils with SEN differ to those whose child do not have SEN. Research has also been undertaken to understand more about the dynamics of parent-school communications and broader levels of parental satisfaction. There is, however, a gap in our understanding of how different groups of parents feel about the support provided to support their child's SEN and according to different aspects of the support provision. The questions we start to address in this report are: do parents whose child have particular types of needs hold noticeably different views than other parents? And what matters most to parents when evaluating school support at an overall level?

Report aims

This report aims to understand how, in the summer term of 2023, shortly after the launch of the SEND and AP reforms, parents of pupils in Year 9 viewed the support for SEN provided by their child's school – at an overall level and across several specific areas related to the support provided for their child. It also aims to understand how these views differed across different groups of parents - in particular, according to their child's needs

and the type of educational setting their child attended. It also aims to identify, among the aspects measured, which appear to matter most to parents in shaping their overall perceptions of the support they receive from the school.

Drawing on data collected from a nationally representative sample of parents of young people with SEN at this age – specifically, on data collected in the second wave of the SEND Futures Discovery Phase study – this report provides robust estimates of parent perceptions of school support for their child’s SEN. Specifically, it investigates how well parents felt the school supported their child overall, across the areas where their child needed extra help or support. It also explores how well parents felt the school understood their child’s needs, and how satisfied they were across a range of more specific areas. These include how well the school supported their child to manage their mental health, to develop confidence and self-esteem, to develop hobbies and interests, and to what extent parents felt involved in the school’s decision-making relating to their child.

The data and the study

This report draws on data from the SEND Futures Discovery Phase study - a large-scale survey funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and carried out by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in collaboration with the National Children’s Bureau (NCB). The study has collected two rounds of survey data with the same young people and their families – the first wave of data collection took place in the summer of 2022, when the young people were at the end of Year 8 at school (aged 12-13) and the second wave of data collection took place a year later, when the young people were in Year 9 (aged 13-14).

The primary aim of the Discovery Phase is to inform the methodology of a full-scale longitudinal study with young people with SEND and their families. If the mainstage study progresses, it would become a significant part of the social science data landscape – delivering high quality evidence to inform policymaking around the support of young people with SEND. In addition, the Discovery Phase study provides a unique and valuable data source in its own right, providing insight into the lives of a wide range of issues affecting a cohort of young people with SEND aged 12-14 in 2022 and 2023.

This report draws on data collected predominantly in the second wave of the study when the young people were in the summer term of Year 9 and aged 13-14. Unless otherwise stated, all findings in this report refer to data collected at this second wave. Data collection included interviews with 2,456 households, including 2,330 interviews with parents and 1,967 young people. Fieldwork for the second wave of the study was conducted using a combination of face-to-face, telephone and online interviews. The analysis in this report draws on the data collected from parents.

Further details about the study are provided in Appendix B. Methodological appendix. Researchers and other interested readers are also encouraged to refer to the [Wave 1 Methodological report](#) and the [Wave 2 Methodological Report](#) for further information, and to explore the dataset for further insights (we plan to make the data available through the Office for National Statistics Integrated Data Service).

Analytical notes

The findings in the report have been weighted to be nationally representative of parents or main carers of all young people with SEN (defined as in receipt of SEN support or had an EHCP) who were 1) in Year 9 and attended English state education in the 2022/23 academic year and who were 2) also registered as having SEN in the previous academic year (when the original sample for the study was drawn).

Wherever comparisons are made between subgroups (for example, young people attending a mainstream school versus those attending a special school), the differences between groups are only commented on where these are statistically significant at the 95% level. That is to say that there is less than a 5% probability of the difference arising by chance if there was no difference in the population. Not all statistically significant findings are commented on. Full tables, including significance tests, are available in a separate file.

Where comparisons are made between subgroups, the analysis did not control for other characteristics that may affect or explain this relationship. For example, a relationship between the type of school a pupil attended and their wellbeing may be affected by the type of needs they had, and the type of needs they had may also separately be associated with the type of school they attended as well as their wellbeing. These complexities are not controlled for here but could be looked at in future research.

The analysis employed in the Key drivers of parents' overall views of school support chapter is more complex. This approach builds on traditional regression models to account for high levels of correlation between different aspects of parental views on school support looked at in the report. Notes on the interpretation of these results are provided in the relevant sections.

When interpreting tables and figures throughout the report, note that percentages are typically presented to zero decimal points. This has been done to improve readability and because percentages smaller than 1 are rarely meaningful. As a result, figures may not add up to 100%. Furthermore, some tables are not intended to add up to 100% - where this is the case it is noted in the table heading.

The methodological appendix includes a more detailed description of the variables used in the analysis.

Terminology

While the study name, 'SEND Futures', was chosen to make sure all young people with SEN and/or disabilities felt included in the study, the database from which the sample was drawn (the National Pupil Database) only records whether pupils have SEN (whether they receive SEN support or have an EHCP) – not specifically whether they have a disability. Therefore, while the sample includes many young people with disabilities it is only representative of the population of young people with SEN, rather than Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). To reflect this the report refers to young people with SEN when referring to specific study findings.

For simplicity, throughout this report we refer to survey questions asked of 'parents'. In practice, in a small number of cases the questions were answered by a young person's main carer or guardian.

A glossary is provided in Appendix A.

Report overview

The chapter Parental perceptions of school support provides a summary of how positively or negatively parents viewed the support provided by their child's school in relation to their SEN. It looks at how these views differed according to a range of characteristics, including the type of school the young person attended, their main type of SEN, whether or not they had an EHCP, and the age their primary SEN was identified. That chapter also explores to what extent parents' views on support were consistent over time, by comparing parent's views when their child was at the end of Year 8 (summer 2022), and when their child was at the end of Year 9 (summer 2023).

The Key drivers of overall parental views on support for SEN provided by the school chapter explores the relative importance of several individual aspects related to support in driving parent's overall perceptions of the school's support for their child. It does so across mainstream and special schools.

The report concludes with a discussion of the main findings and suggestions for future research.

Parental perceptions of school support

This chapter explores how parents of young people with SEN perceived the support provided by their child's school, both overall and across several specific areas. These included how well they thought the school supported their child to manage their mental health, to develop social skills, to develop confidence and self-esteem, to develop their hobbies and interests, how well the school understood their child's SEN, and to what extent they felt closely involved in the school's decisions about their child. It also explores whether and to what extent parental perceptions differed according to a range of school and pupil characteristics, including the type of school attended, the type of special educational needs the young person had, whether they had an EHCP, and the age at which their SEN was first identified.

Key findings

- Just under two thirds of parents (64%) thought the school supported their child well across all the areas where they need extra help or support.
- Nevertheless, a substantial minority of more than one in three parents had negative perceptions of the support provided. When asked about how well the school supported their child in all the areas they need extra help or support, 26% answered not very well and 10% not well at all.
- Across all measures looked at, parents whose child attended a mainstream school had noticeably less positive perceptions than those whose child attended a special school – 59% whose child attended a mainstream school thought their child was well supported across all areas where they need support, compared with 90% of those whose child attended a special school.
- Among parents whose child attended mainstream education there were clear differences according to whether or not the young person had an EHCP – parents whose child had an EHCP had much more positive perceptions of the support received than those whose child did not have one.
- Parental perceptions also varied by their child's primary type of SEN. Parents whose child had profound, multiple or severe learning difficulties were the most positive – these young people were more likely to attend special schools. Conversely, parents whose child had social, emotional, and mental health needs or a specific learning difficulty – both more likely to attend mainstream education – had the least positive perceptions of the support provided by the school.
- Parental perceptions also varied according to the age at which their child's SEN had first been identified. Earlier identification was generally associated a higher proportion of parents holding positive views on school support.

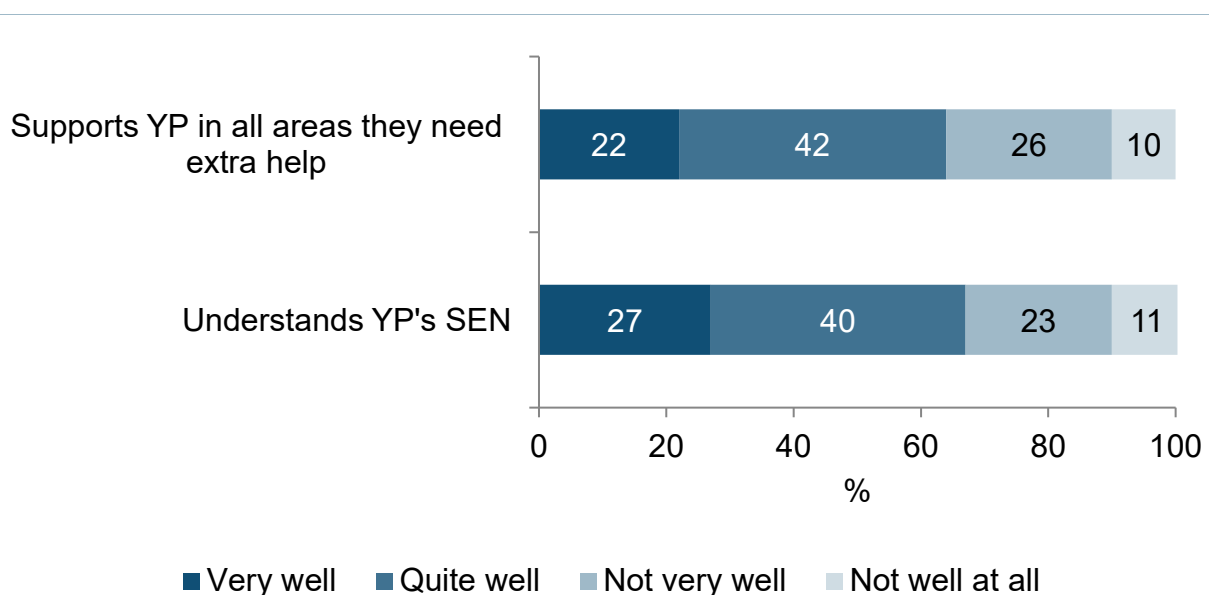
- Parents' overall views of the support provided by their child's school were generally stable over the time period measured – that is, between when their child was at the end of Year 8 and a year later, at the end of Year 9. In the vast majority of cases, parents held either consistently positive or consistently negative views across these two time points.

Overall parental perceptions of support

Parents were asked how well the school supported them in 'all the areas where your child needs extra help or support' and how well they felt their child's school 'understands their special educational needs or disability'.

Figure 1 shows that on both measures a majority of around two thirds of parents felt the school understood the young person's SEN (67%) and supported the young person in all areas they need help (64%). However, on each measure, around 1 in 10 parents also reported that the school did not do well at all.

Figure 1. Parent perceptions of school support overall and understanding of YP's SEN



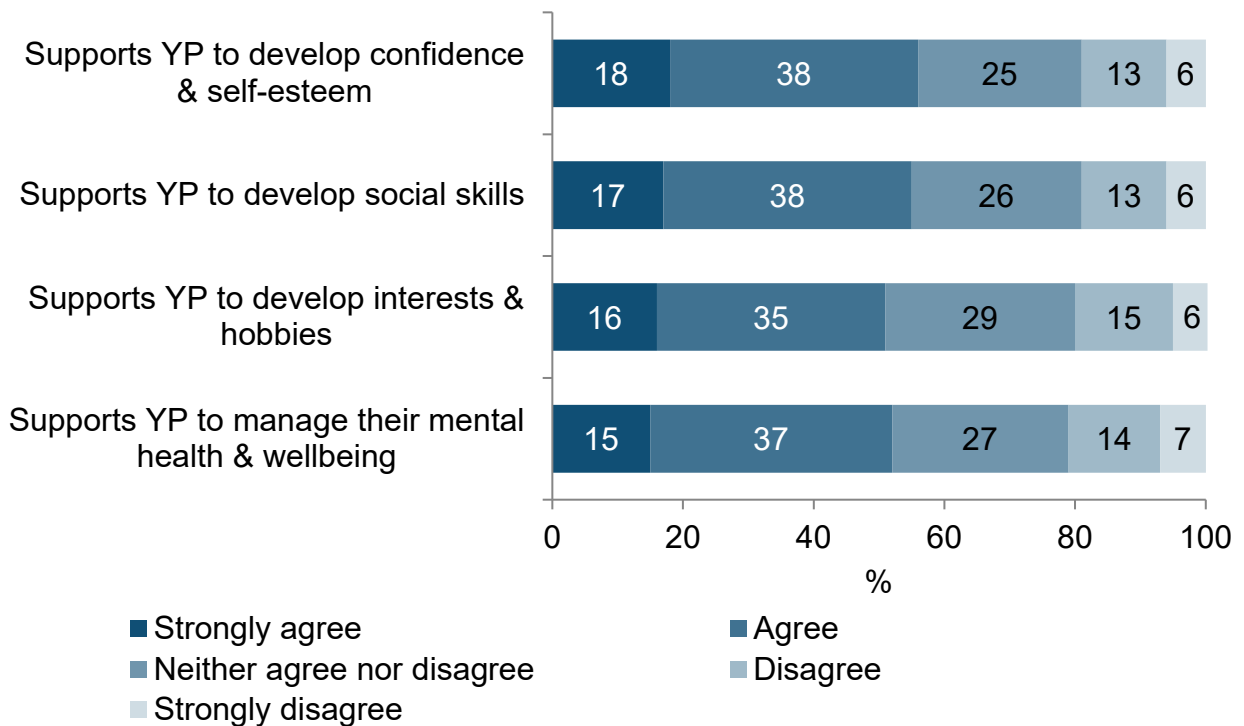
Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Supports YP, N=2250; Understands YP's SEN, N=2249.

Parents were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the support provided by the schools in relation to their child's SEN. The first set of statements addressed elements of support such as help to manage mental health and wellbeing or develop their confidence. This was followed by a statement asking to what extent parents felt closely involved in decisions about their child made by the school.

Figure 2 shows that across all questions on specific support, just over half of parents either strongly agreed or agreed that the school supported their child, while around a fifth disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remaining proportion of parents neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements.

Figure 2. Parent perceptions of specific areas of school support

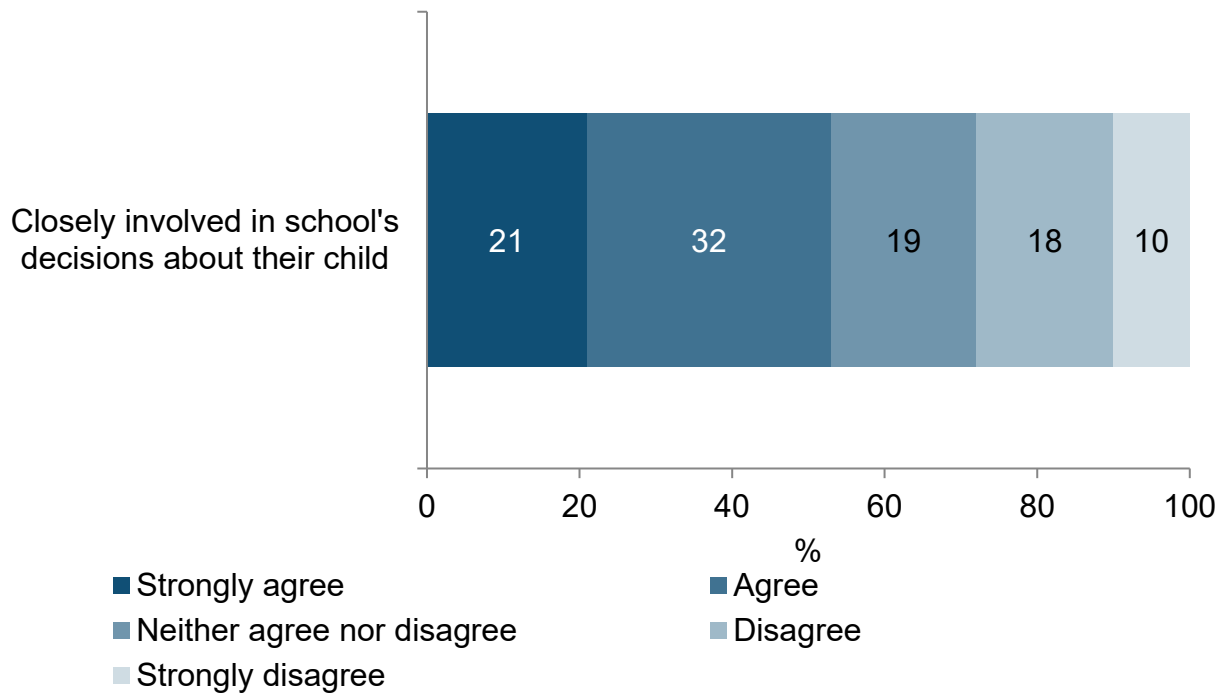
Proportion of parents who agree or disagree that their child's school...



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Confidence & self-esteem, N=2250; Social skills, N=2249; Interests & hobbies, N=2247; Mental health & wellbeing, N=2242.

Parental perceptions of the extent to which they felt closely involved in decisions made by the school are set out in Figure 3. It shows that half of parents (53%) felt involved in the school's decisions about their child, while just under three in ten (28%) did not.

Figure 3. Proportion of parents who feel or do not feel closely involved in school decisions about their child

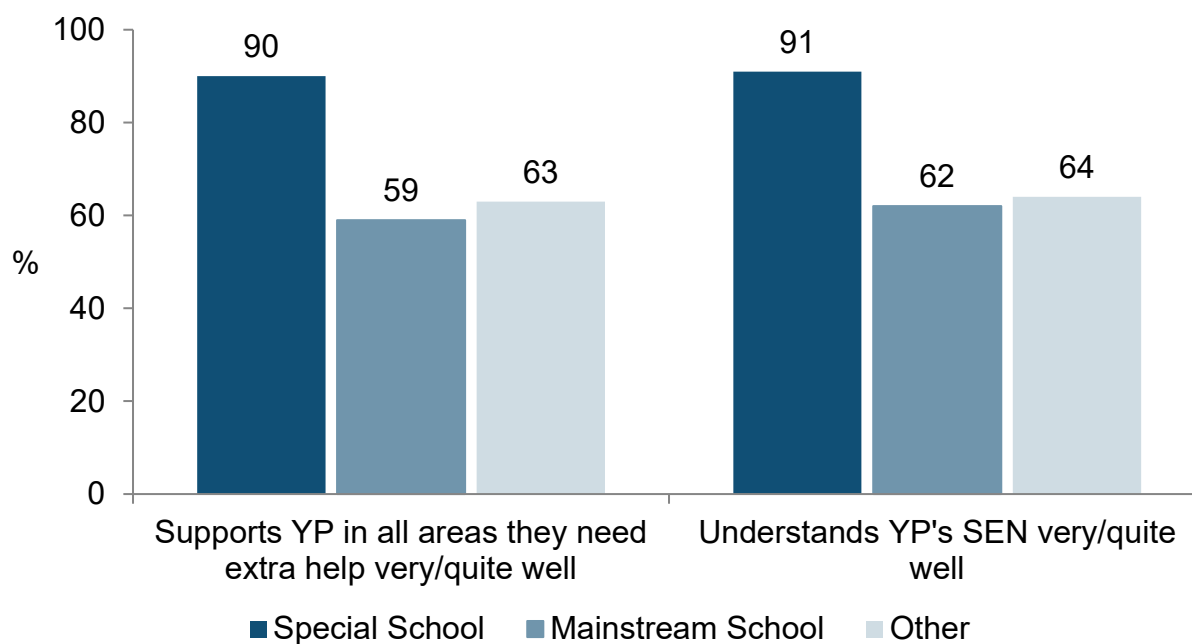


Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Involved in decisions, N=2259.

Perceptions of support by school type

The type of school a young person with SEN attends is likely an important factor in what support they receive and, as a consequence, how parents perceive the support their child receives⁸. This section looks at parental perceptions of school support and feeling involved in school's decisions by the type of school or educational setting the young person attended – a mainstream school, a special school, or an 'other' educational setting (including AP)⁹. Figure 4 shows some clear differences in parental perceptions by school type. Among parents whose child attended a special school, 9 in 10 thought the school did very or quite well in understanding their child's SEN and in supporting them across all the areas where they needed extra help. This compared with around 6 in 10 parents whose child attended a mainstream school or other type of school such as alternative provision or part of a SEN unit within a mainstream school.

Figure 4. Proportion of parents who reported the school does very or quite well in supporting and understanding the YP, by school type



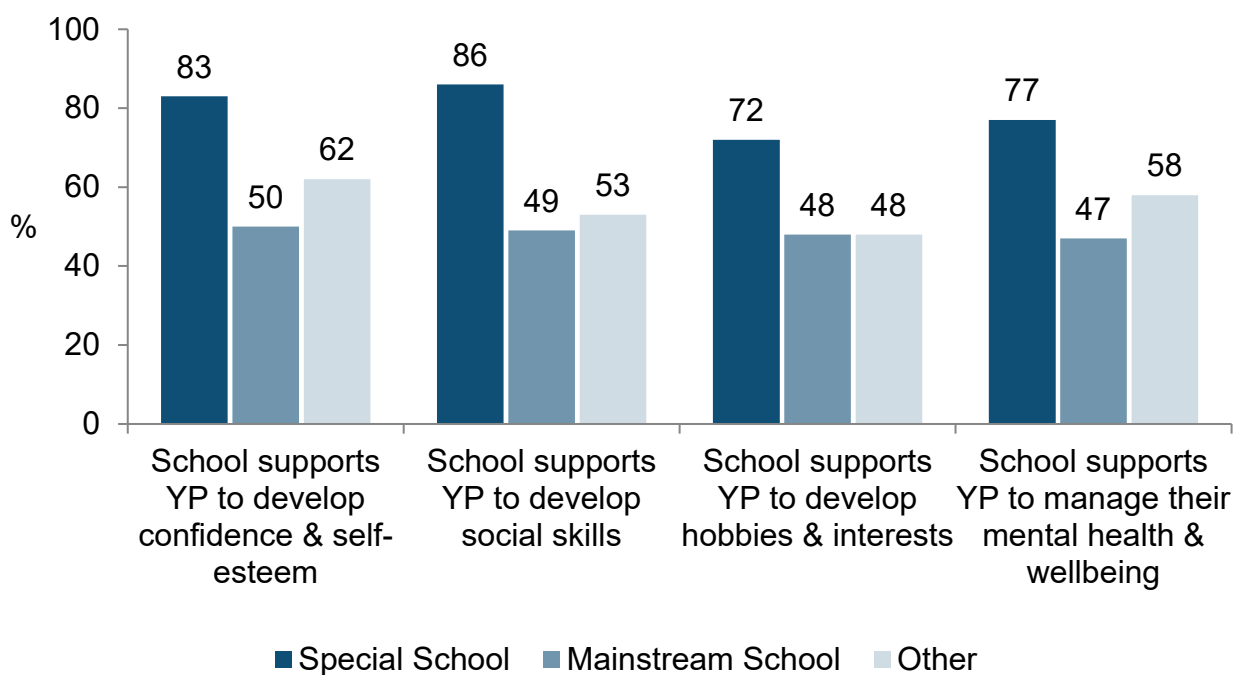
Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated (Special school, N=387-389; Mainstream school, N=1,763-1,767; Other, N=94).

⁸ See series of annual 'Parent Voice' reports by ParentKind: <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/research-and-policy/parent-research/parent-voice-reports>

⁹ Of the latter, around half attended AP. AP settings provide education for young people who do not attend a mainstream school or special school full time. This can include Pupil Referral Units (PRU), an AP academy or an AP free school. Placements can also be arranged in mainstream or independent schools that provide AP. It may also take place in an educational setting that is not registered with DfE.

A similar picture was seen on specific types of school support. As seen in Figure 5, parents had noticeably more positive perceptions of special schools, while perceptions of 'other' types of school was fairly similar to those seen for mainstream schools. The largest differences between special schools and mainstream schools were seen in relation to support for young people to develop social skills, and confidence and self-esteem. Parents whose child attended a special school were much more likely to agree or strongly agree that the school supported their child in this than parents whose child attended a mainstream school. Differences were smaller, though still notable, in areas related to supporting pupils' mental health support and developing their hobbies and interests.

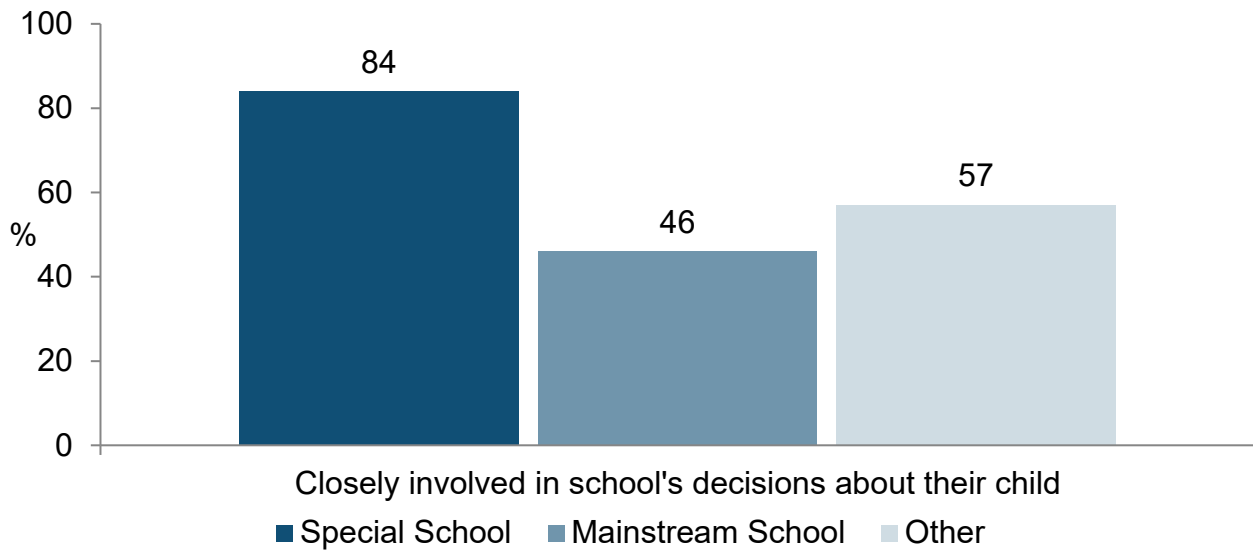
Figure 5. Proportion of parents who agreed/strongly agreed with statements about school support, by school type



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated (Special school, N=387-389; Mainstream school, N=1,758-1,766; Other, N=92-94).

As seen in Figure 6, there was also a noticeable difference in how well parents felt the school closely involved them in decisions about their child. Parents whose child attended a special school were much more likely to ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that they felt closely involved in the school’s decisions about their child (84% compared with 46% in mainstream schools).

Figure 6. Proportion of parents who feel closely involved in school decisions about their child, by school type



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated (Special school, N=389; Mainstream school, N=1,772; Other, N=96).

Perceptions of support by type of primary SEN

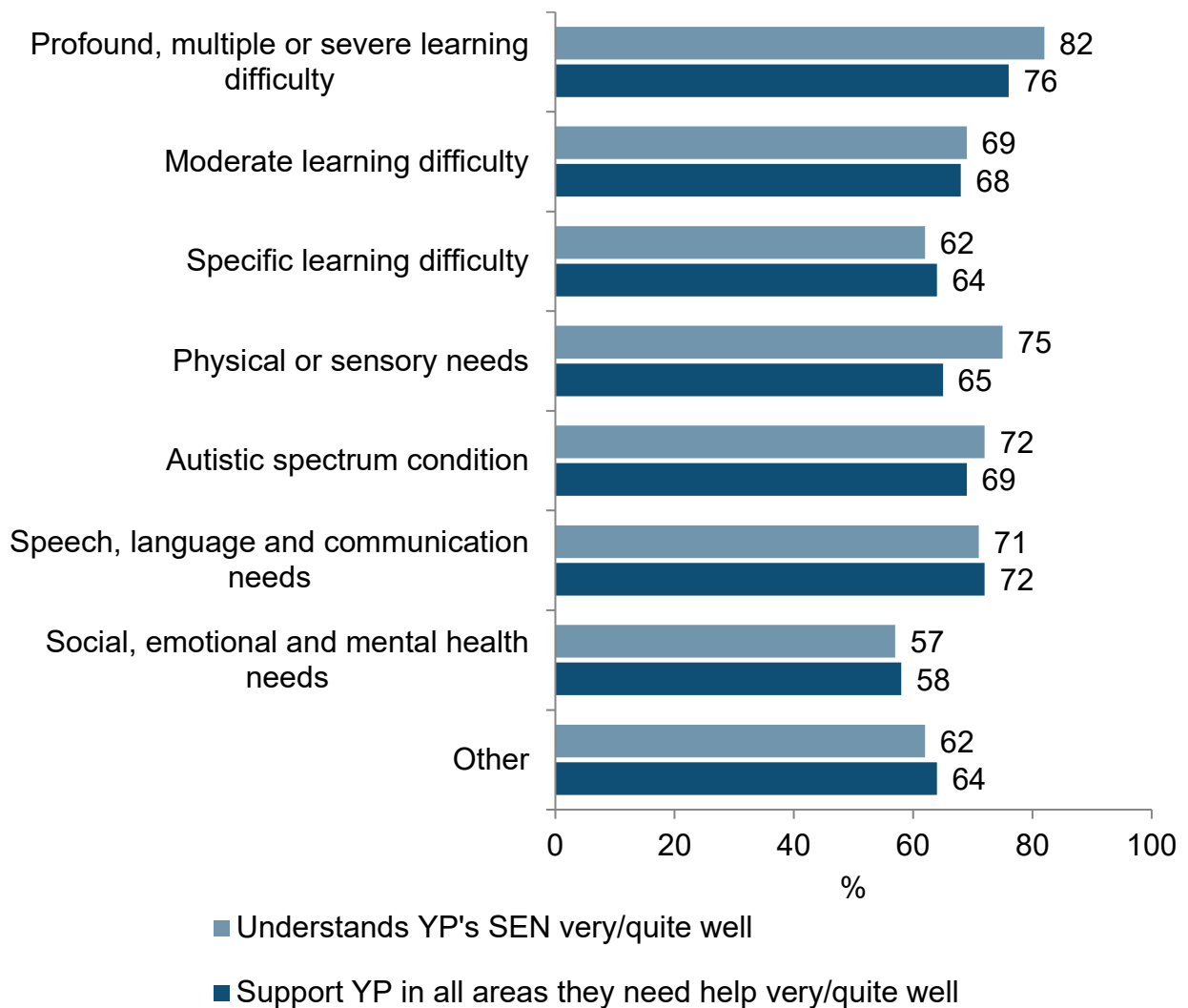
Given the wide range of needs young people with SEN have, it is likely that the type of need a young person has will influence their parent’s perceptions of the support they receive at school. Some types of needs may be better catered for than others, which will in all likelihood affect how parents perceive the support provided by the school. This section explores how parental perceptions of support differed according to the type of primary need their child had. Figure 7 presents the proportion of parents who felt their child’s school did either very or quite well in supporting their child with any extra help they required and in understanding their needs, by the young person’s main type of SEN, as reported by their parent¹⁰.

¹⁰ To identify what types of SEN young people had parents were first asked which of a list of eleven potential needs their child experienced. Parents who selected more than one were then asked to choose which was the ‘main area’ their child had special educational needs in. This main type of SEN, reported by the parent, is the focus of reporting throughout this report. This also includes those who had only one type of SEN, as this was defined as their main area of need.

Figure 7 shows that parents of young people with a profound, multiple, or severe learning difficulty had the most positive views. Eighty-two per cent of these parents felt the school supported their child in all the areas they needed extra help either very or quite well and 76% thought the school understood their child's SEN very or quite well. Conversely, parents whose child had social, emotional, or mental health needs or a specific learning difficulty had the least positive perceptions. Among these parents, 58% and 54% respectively thought the school had supported their child quite or very well in all the areas they needed extra help and support. The largest difference in the proportion who thought the school did well in terms of understanding their child's SEN and who thought they did well in providing support for their child was seen among parents whose child had physical or sensory needs and those whose child had a specific learning difficulty. For both groups, a noticeably larger proportion of parents said that the school understood their child's SEN than said the school did well in supporting their child (differences of 10 and 8 percentage points respectively). This may indicate that for these types of needs there was a particular gap between the level of recognition and understanding of what support the young person needs and what support was provided in practice.

The patterns seen in Figure 7 were more or less replicated for each of the individual areas of support parents were asked about (e.g. supporting mental health and wellbeing, developing confidence, etc.). These results can be seen in full in the tables accompanying this report.

Figure 7. Proportion of parents who said the school did very or quite well in understanding and supporting their child, by primary SEN

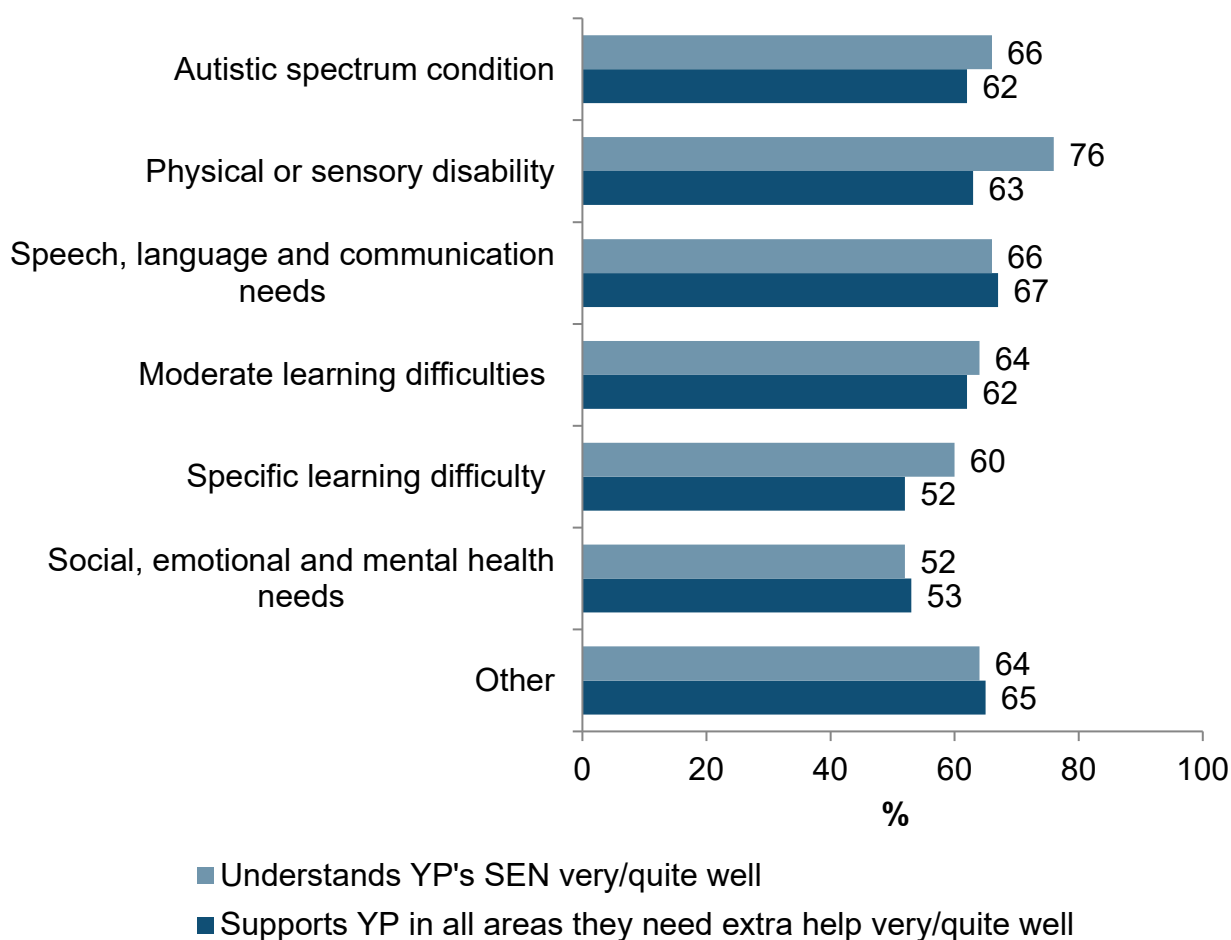


Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. ASC, N=552; SEMH, N=486-487; SpLD, N=409-412; MLD, N=386-388; SLCN, N=102-103; Other, N=86-87; PSN, N=66; PMSLD, N=66.

Given that young people with certain types of needs are more likely to attend special schools (e.g. those with profound, multiple and severe learning difficulties), it is likely that the patterns in parental perceptions by the type of need the young person had are, at least to some extent, a reflection of the type of school the young person attended. Figure 8 takes this into account by showing parental perceptions of school support grouped by their child's primary SEN, but only for young people attending mainstream schools. As shown, parents of children with a specific learning difficulty or with social, emotional and mental health needs had less positive perceptions of the levels of support and understanding of their child's SEN than parents of young people with other types of primary needs.

Note that the sample sizes for parents whose child had profound, multiple and severe learning disabilities and attended mainstream schools were too small for meaningful analysis.

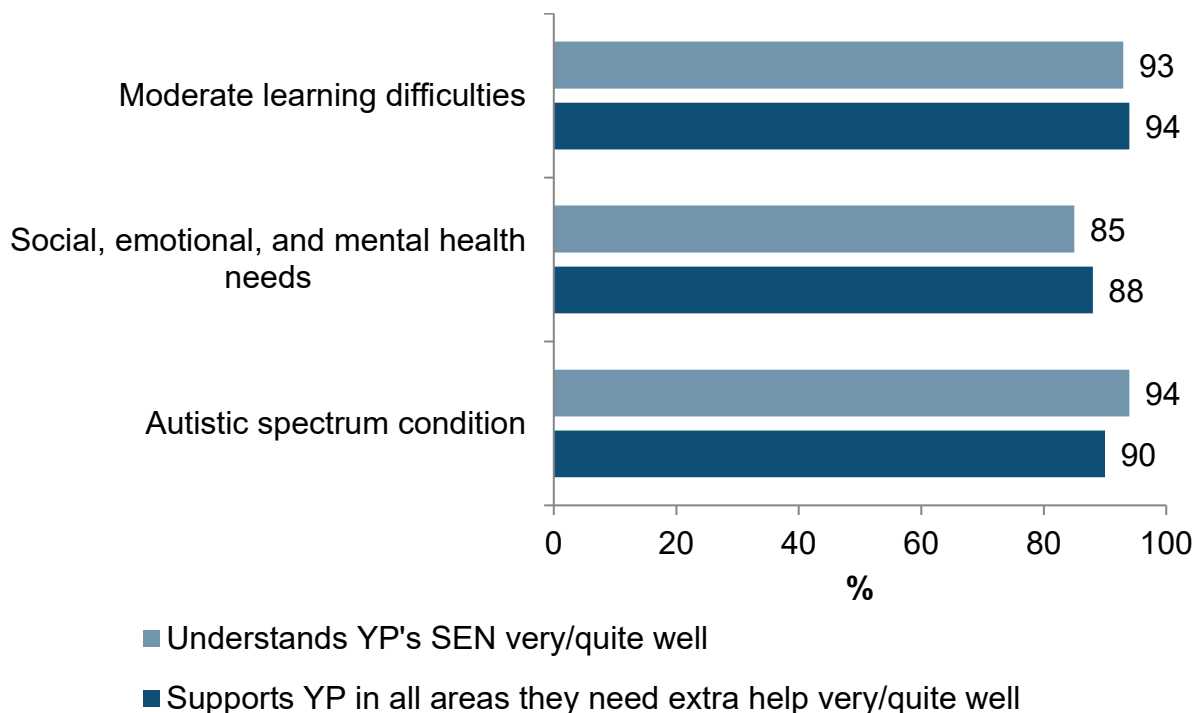
Figure 8. Proportion of parents who said the school did very or quite well in understanding and supporting their child, by primary SEN; mainstream schools



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a mainstream school. ASC, N=395; PSD, N=52; SLCN, N=79-80; SEMH, N=388; SpLD, N=385-388; MLD, N=299-300, Other, N=74-75.

Figure 9 shows a breakdown of perceptions by their child’s primary type of need for parents whose child attended a special school. Due to small sample sizes for some groups, not all types of need are shown here. Within the context of special schools, there was very little variation in parental perceptions, which were consistently very positive. For example, around 9 out of 10 of parents whose child had SEMH needs (88%), had an autism spectrum condition (90%) or a moderate learning difficulty (94%) reported that the school supported their child very or quite well across all the areas where they needed support. Although it should be noted that the sample size for analysis of special school pupils by primary SEN type was relatively small (see sample sizes in Figure 9).

Figure 9. Proportion of parents who said the school did very or quite well in understanding and supporting their child, by primary SEN; special schools



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a Special school. ASC N=135; SEMH, N=67-68; MLD, N=73-74.

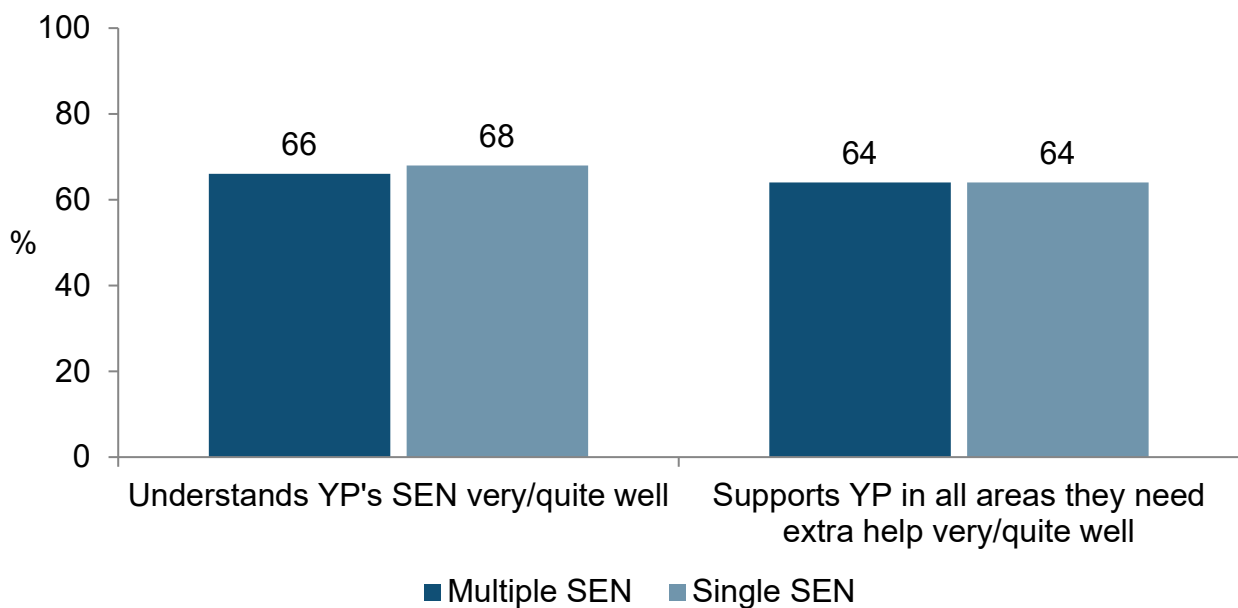
Perceptions of support by whether young person had multiple SEN

Other aspects of young people’s needs which are likely to affect parental perceptions of the support provided by the school are the ‘levels’ and complexity of their support needs. Currently, there is no agreed approach to defining and measuring the ‘level’ or complexity of SEN in a survey or administrative context, e.g. on the different types and amount help they require. To provide an indication of which young people may have more wide-ranging levels of needs, in this report we use an indicator of whether the parents had reported that their child had more than one type of SEN. Parents were asked to select

from a list of twelve types of SEN, aligned with the four broad areas of need identified in the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). The full list can be seen in the Details of key subgroups section of the methodological appendix. In the analysis that follows, young people were considered to have 'multiple SEN' when their parent indicated that their child had more than one of the types of SEN listed or if they had one of two types of SEN which already implied multiple SEN – namely multi-sensory impairment and profound and multiple learning difficulties. In total, 53% of young people had multiple SEN.

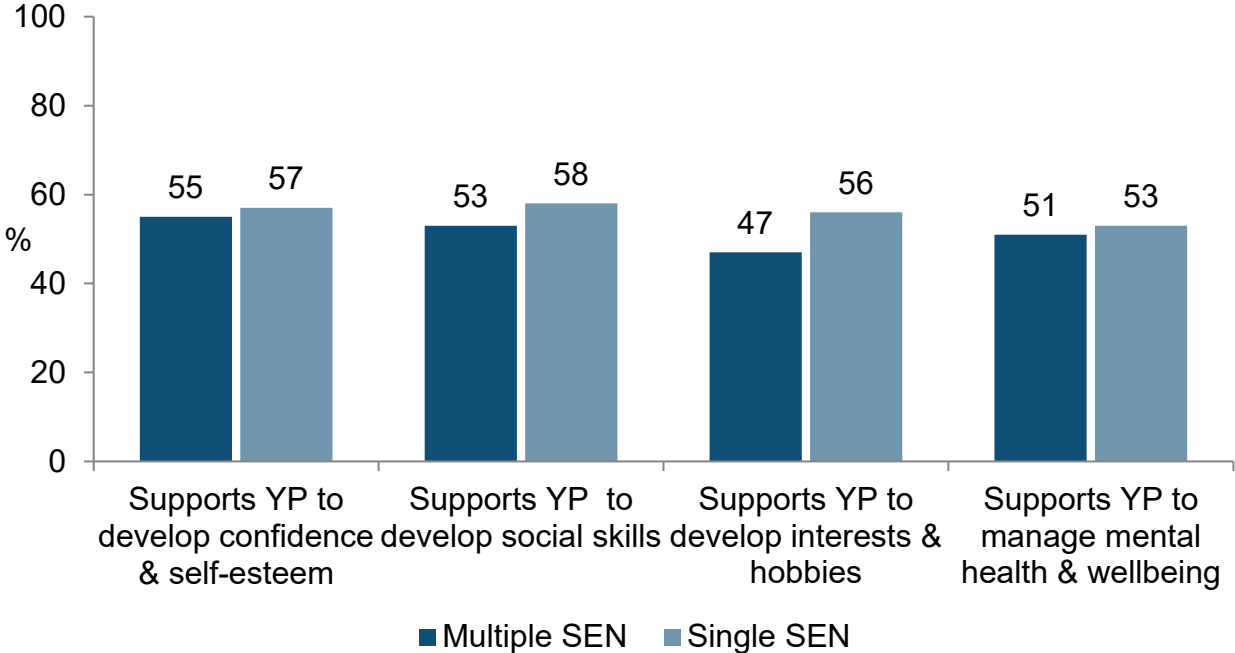
The results illustrated in Figure 10 and Figure 11 show either no or minor differences in perceptions between parents of young people who did and did not have multiple types of SEN. Minor differences were seen in relation to support for confidence and self-esteem and social skills. On both these measures, parents who reported their child had just one type of SEN were slightly more positive than those who reported that their child had multiple types of SEN.

Figure 10. Proportion of parents who said the school did very or quite well in understanding and supporting their child, by whether YP had multiple SEN



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Multiple SEN, N=1228; Single SEN, N=1014.

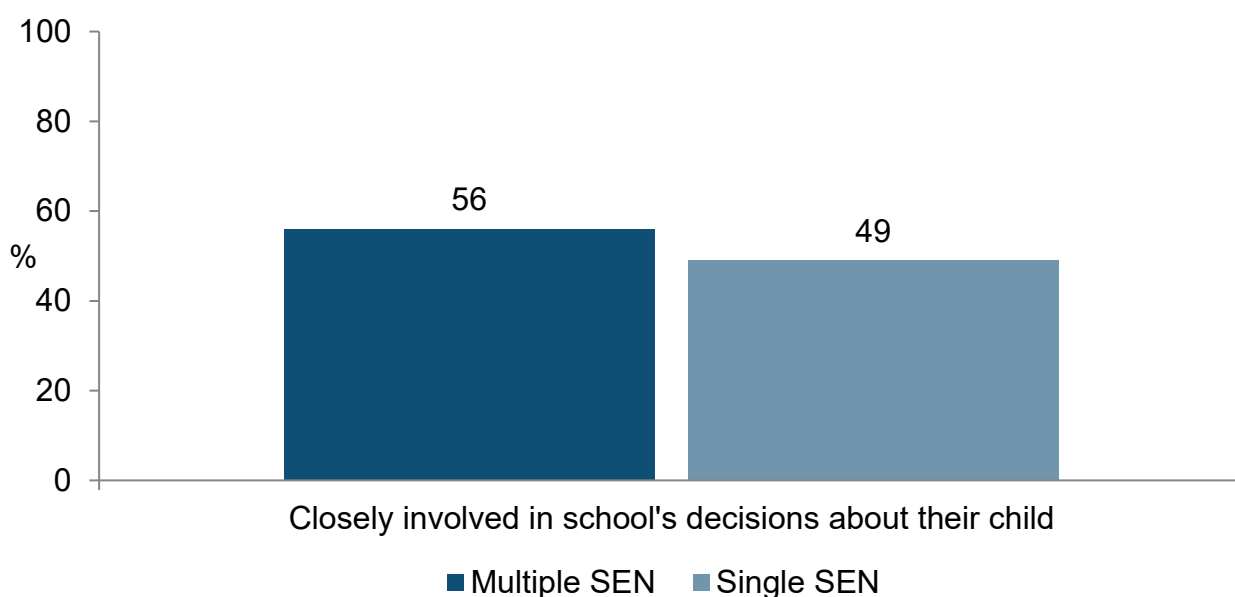
Figure 11. Proportion of parents who agreed/strongly agreed with statements about school support, by whether YP had multiple SEN



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Multiple SEN, N=1221-1226; Single SEN, N=1013-1018.

Looking at the extent to which parents felt closely involved in the school's decisions about their child, there was a more noticeable difference between parents whose child had one type, compared with multiple types of SEN. Parents who reported their child to have multiple types of SEN were more likely to feel closely involved – with 56% reporting that they agreed, compared to 49% of parents whose child had one type of SEN (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Proportion of parents who feel closely involved in school decisions about their child by whether YP had multiple SEN



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Multiple SEN, N=1229; Single SEN, N=1022.

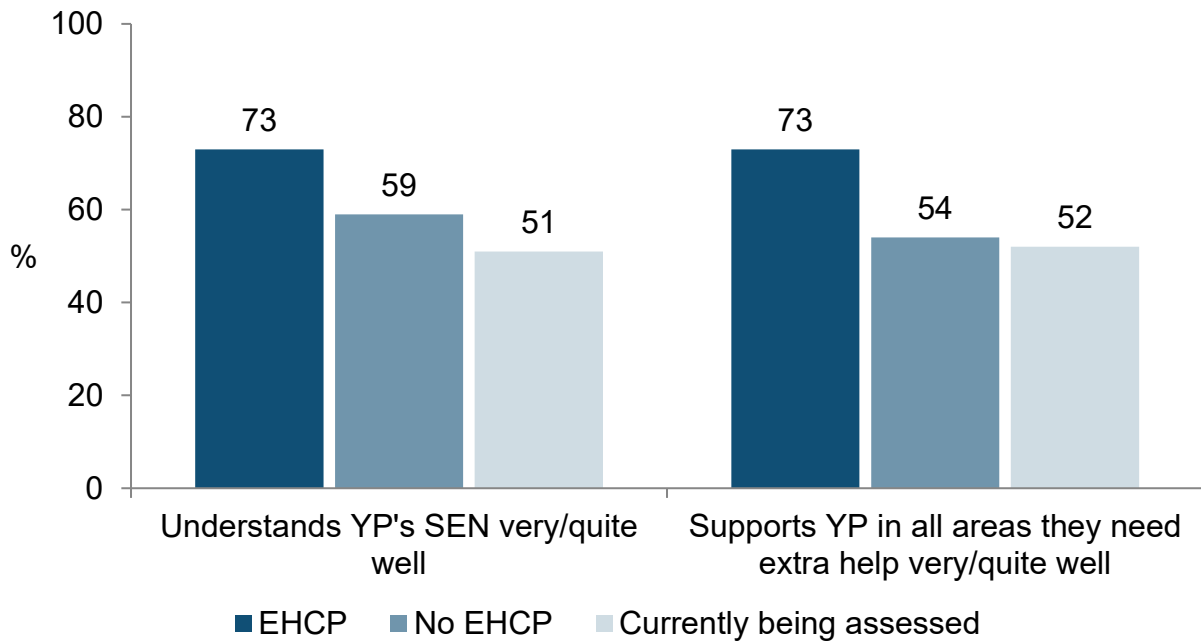
Perceptions of support by whether young person had EHCP (mainstream only)

Young people with SEN can be supported with an EHCP that outlines the different needs and support that should be offered to assist that young person with their learning. The most common type of need among young people with an EHCP is autistic spectrum condition. Figure 13 and Figure 14 show parental perceptions by whether or not their child had an EHCP, or whether they were currently being assessed for one, for parents whose child attended mainstream education only. Parental perceptions by EHCP status were not examined within special schools due to the close link between having an EHCP and attending a special school¹¹.

¹¹ According to Explore Education ([Create your own tables, Table Tool – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)), 99% of pupils in special schools in England have an

Figure 13 and Figure 14 show consistently more positive perceptions of the support provided by their child’s school among parents whose child had an EHCP compared with those who had SEN but did not have an EHCP. For example, 73% of parents whose child had an EHCP agreed the school supported their child in all the areas they need extra help, compared with 54% of parents whose child had SEN but did not have an EHCP.

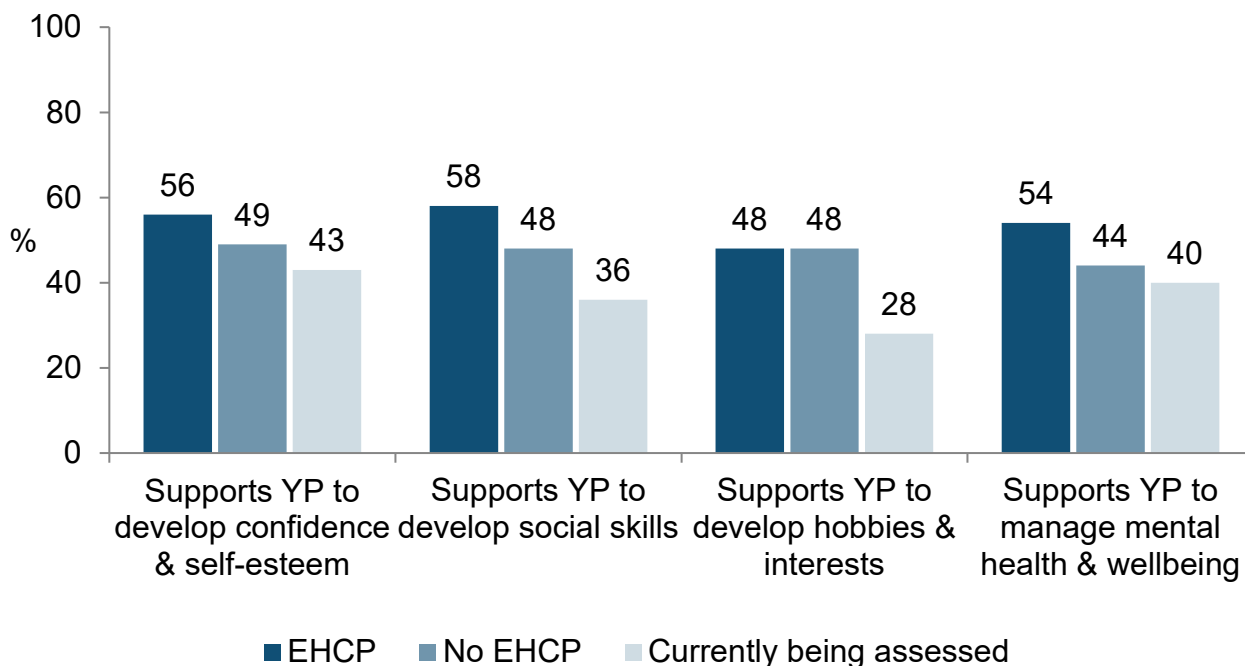
Figure 13. Proportion of parents who said the school did very or quite well in understanding and supporting the YP, by EHCP status; mainstream schools



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a mainstream school. EHCP, N=456-457; No EHCP, N=1174-1177; Currently being assessed, N=84.

EHCP. This is higher than the proportion of parents in this study whose child was in a special school and who reported their child had an EHCP – 89%. Further analysis would be required to understand what drives this difference.

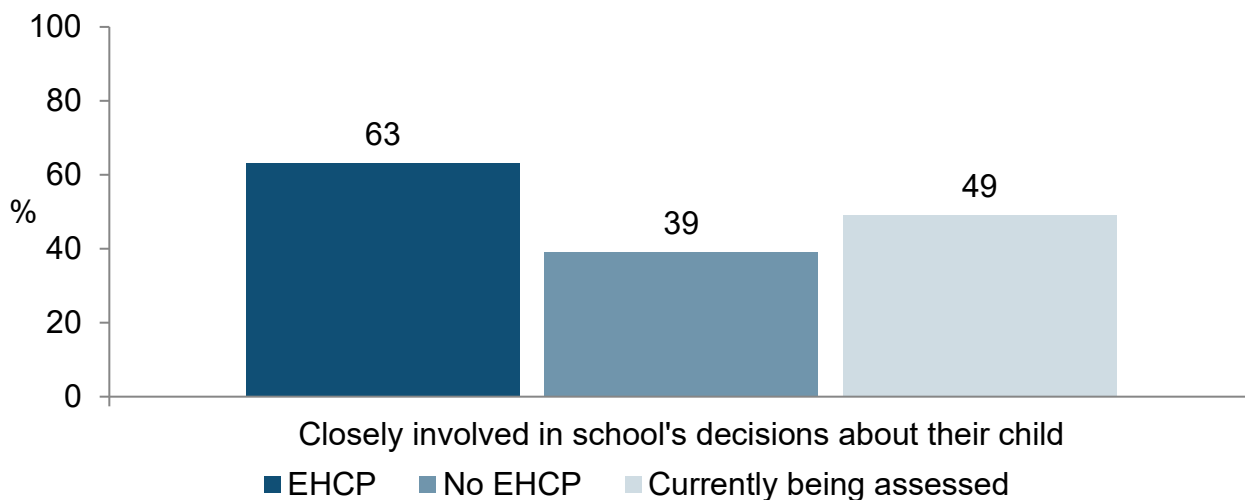
Figure 14. Proportion of parents who agreed/strongly agreed with statements about school support, by EHCP status; mainstream schools



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a mainstream school. EHCP, N=456-457; No EHCP, N=1179-1185; Currently being assessed N=84.

There was also a notable difference between the proportion who agreed or strongly agreed that they felt closely involved in the school’s decisions regarding their child: 39% of parents whose child did not have an EHCP agreed with this statement compared with 63% of parents whose child did have one (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Proportion of parents who feel closely involved in school decisions about their child, by EHCP status; mainstream schools



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a mainstream school. EHCP, N=457; No EHCP, N=1185; Currently being assessed N=84.

Perceptions of support by age of SEN identification

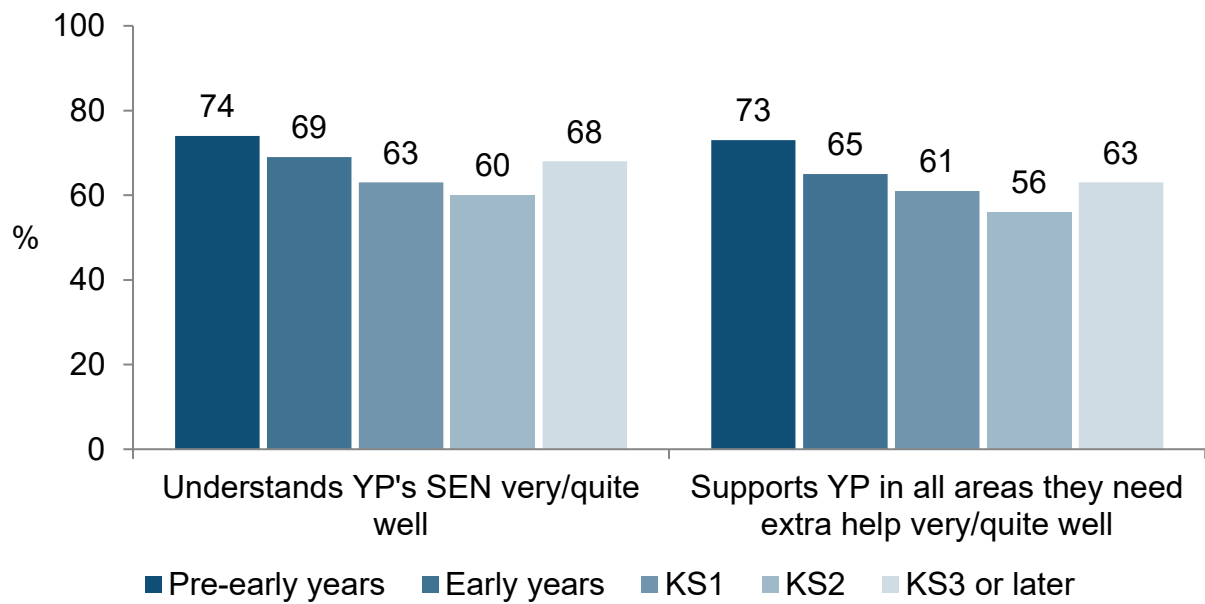
This section explores how parental perceptions of school support varied by the age at which the young person was first identified as having a SEN. Figure 16, Figure 17 and Figure 18 show parental perceptions by the age at which their child's SEN was first identified – ranging from pre-early years education through to those who were identified in Key Stage 3 (KS3) or beyond¹².

All three charts show a similar pattern, namely, the earlier the young person's SEN was identified, the more positively parents viewed the support and understanding from the school up to Key Stage 2 (KS2) across all measures, with the exception of KS3 where views were more positive again. For example, the proportion of parents who agreed they felt closely involved in school decisions about their child fell from 65% among those whose child's SEN was identified in the pre-early years period to 45% among those whose child's SEN was identified at KS2, before rising again to 55% for those where the SEN was identified most recently, at KS3 or later. The increase at KS3 varied depending on the type of support looked at, and the sample size for this group was smaller than for other groups, thus, this finding should be treated as tentative.

It should be noted that being identified as having SEN at an early age is also associated with being more likely to have an EHCP and of attending a special school. For example, of young people with SEN identified before age 2, 62% had an EHCP and 38% attended a special school, compared to 26% and 8% respectively among young people with SEN identified at KS3. As already reported, parents whose child attended a special school or attended a mainstream school and had an EHCP were more likely to hold positive views of the support provided. There may also be links to the types of needs a child or young person has, with certain types of needs more likely to be identified at earlier ages.

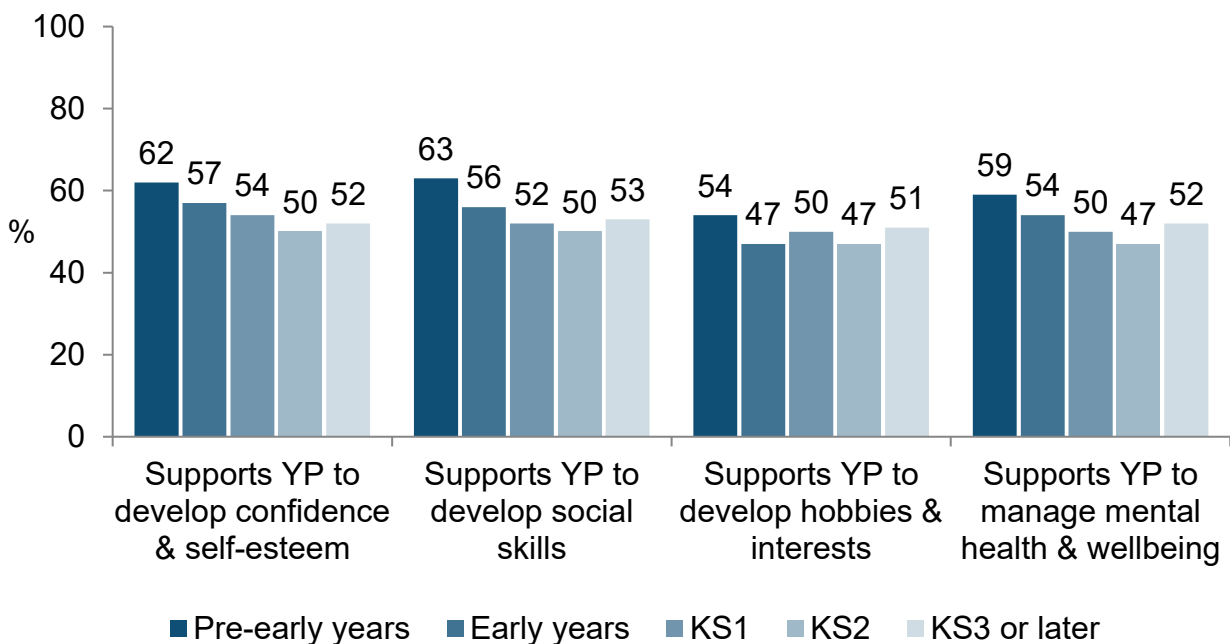
¹² Early years education covers children aged 3 to 5 and includes nurseries, preschools, childminders, and school Reception classes. Key Stage 1 covers ages 5–7 (Years 1 and 2), Key Stage 2 covers ages 7–11 (Years 3 – 6), and Key Stage 3 covers ages 11–14 (Years 7 – 9).

Figure 16: Proportion of parents who said the school does very or quite well in understanding and supporting their child, by age of SEN identification



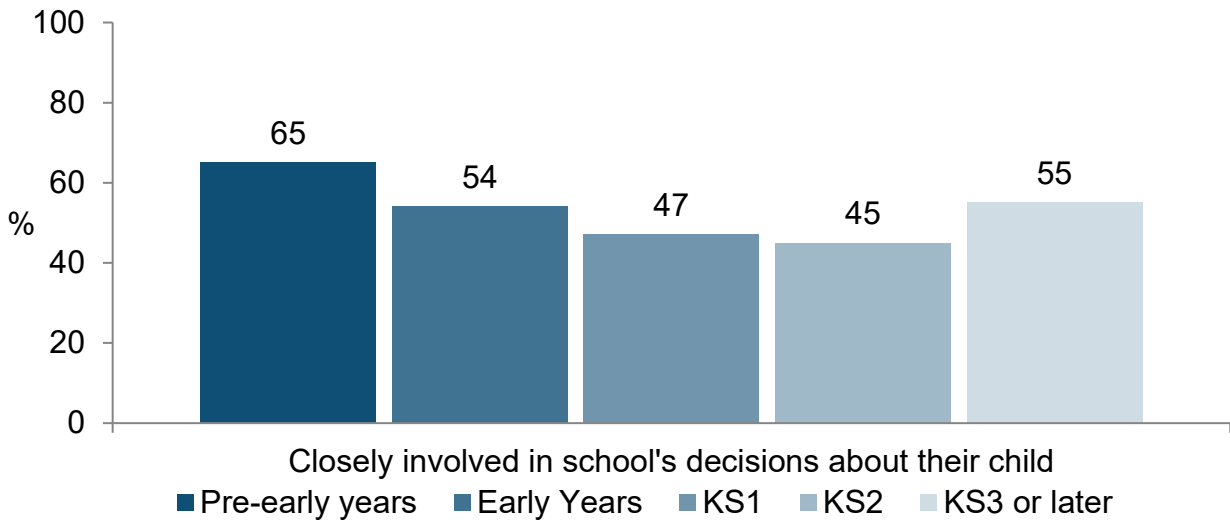
Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Pre-early years, N=397-398; Early years N=479; KS1 N=462; KS2 N=590-592; KS3 or later N=140-141.

Figure 17: Proportion of parents who agreed/strongly agreed with statements about school support, by age of SEN identification



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Pre-early years N=395-398; Early years N=475-477; KS1 N=457-460; KS2 N=589-590; KS3 or later N=140.

Figure 18: Proportion of parents who agreed/strongly agreed the school closely involves them in decisions, by age of SEN identification



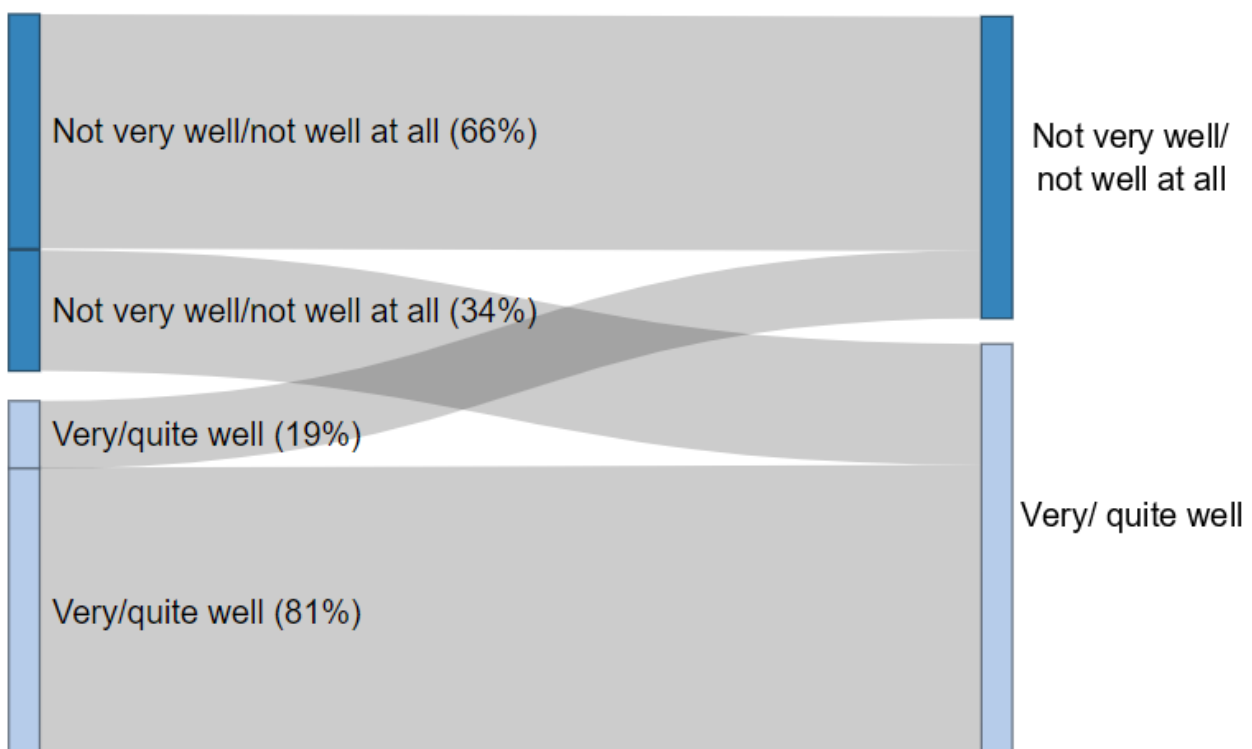
Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated. Pre-Early Years N=399; Early Years N=480; KS1 N=462; KS2 N=592; KS3 or later N=141.

Change in parental perceptions between Year 8 and Year 9

This section looks at the extent to which parental perceptions of the support provided by their child’s school changed over the course of a year, between the point where young people were at the end of Year 8, in summer 2022, and when they were in Year 9, in summer 2023. This helps gauge the extent to which parents’ views were, as measured here, relatively stable, or whether they changed noticeably between these two school years. Understanding this helps provide context for interpreting the findings in the remainder of the report.

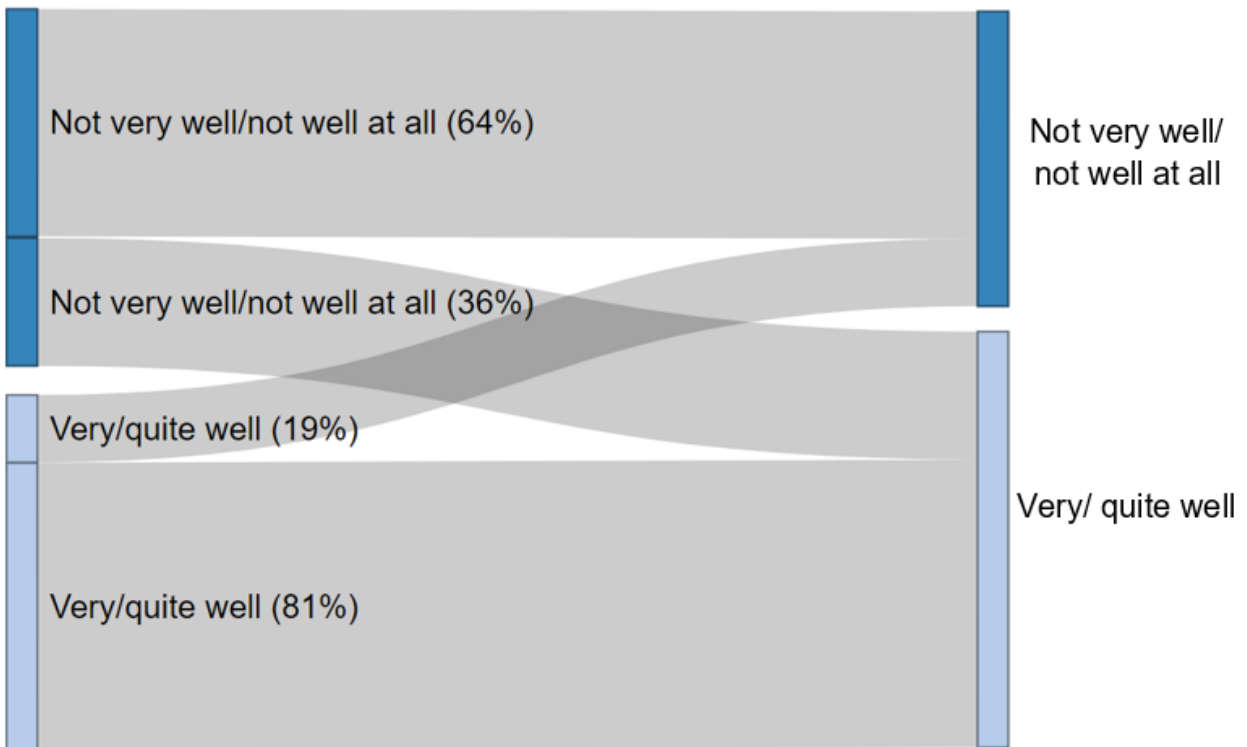
Figure 19 and Figure 20 show a similar pattern across both questions, with the majority of parents who reported positive views in 2022 also doing so a year later – 8 in 10. Among parents who had reported negative views when their child was in Year 8, around a third (36% and 34% respectively for each question) reported a positive view one a year later, while the remaining two thirds (64% and 66% for each question) continued to report negative views. The most common scenario was for parents to hold positive views across both time points. On average, there was no difference in the proportion of parents who reported positive or negative views across the two time points – on both measures, around two thirds of parents reported positive views.

Figure 19. How well parents thought the school understood their child's SEN from Year 8 (2022) to Year 9 (2023)



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated and answered the questions at both time points. Understands YP's SEN: Very/quite well, N=884; Not very well or not well at all, N=408. Note: The relative reduction in sample size is due to the 'understand' question only being issued to W1 participants who completed the long survey mode, approximately half the wave 1 sample. This chart only includes these cases who have a valid response in wave 1 and 2.

Figure 20. How well parents feel the school supports their child from Year 8 (2022) to Year 9 (2023)



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated and answered the questions at both time points. Supports YP in all areas they need extra help: Very/quite well, N=1,367; Not very well or not well at all, N=751.

The question about to what extent parents agreed or disagreed they were closely involved in school decisions about their child was also asked in both years and showed similarly consistent results (these results are available in the accompanying set of tables). At both time points – end of Year 8 and end of Year 9 – just over half (52%) of parents strongly agreed or agreed they felt closely involved in the school’s decisions about their child, and most did not change their view across the two time points.

Key drivers of overall parental views on support for SEN provided by the school

The previous chapter explored parental perceptions of seven different areas of support provided by the school and feeling involved in decision making in relation to their child's SEN. This included an overall measure of how well the school supported their child across all the areas where they needed extra help or support, as well as six more specific measures related to the school's approach to supporting their child's SEN. These included how well the school understood the child's SEN, how involved parents felt in the school's decision making relating to their child's SEN, and the extent to which parents felt the school supported their child across four areas: mental health and wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem, social skills, and hobbies and interests.

In this chapter we seek to establish which of the six more specific measures appear to drive parents' views of the support provided by the school across the areas where their child needed support. In the context of the SEND and AP reforms – which are seeking to address parental concerns and, ultimately, improve parents' views on and satisfaction with the SEND support provided by schools – understanding what drives parents' views on support provided by the school is useful for policy makers and schools trying to address the core issues parents report affect their children the most.

Readers should note that the analysis looks specifically at the six measures included in the SEND Futures Discovery Phase survey about parental perceptions of support – it does not attempt to understand all the factors that could drive parents' views on school support.

Key findings

- How well parents felt the school understood their child's SEN was the most important factor driving parents' views on the support provided by their child's school at an overall level.
- The extent to which the school understood their child's SEN was a more important driver of parents' overall views in the context of mainstream education than in special schools. In the context of special schools, the extent to which parents felt the school understood their child's SEN explained 18% of parents' views of support at an overall level. This compared with 31% in mainstream schools.
- For parents whose child attended mainstream education, the extent to which parents felt closely involved in school decisions about their child was the second most important factor in driving parents' views on the support provided to their child across all the areas where they needed help. For parents of young people in special schools, despite the majority of drivers being of similar importance to those

in mainstream schools, this was one of the least important drivers of overall positive views of support.

Analytical approach

Key Driver Analysis (KDA) is a statistical technique used to identify and understand the components that most significantly affect an outcome. In this instance, we were interested in which of the six specific measures related to the school's approach to supporting their child's SEN (the components) were most strongly linked to parents' overall views of the support provided by the school at an overall level (the outcome). The KDA sought to identify a linear relationship between the components and the outcome.

Our focus was on the relative importance of each type of school support and feeling closely involved in decisions when we sought to explain overall parental views. KDA estimates were made while controlling for the role of the other components. Such analysis can reveal cases where a component, despite being highly associated with the overall outcome, actually only explains a small proportion of the outcome once other components are also considered.

In the analysis undertaken here, LMG R^2 decomposition was used to estimate the relative importance of each component for our outcome. They show the proportion of variance in the outcome that each component explained, i.e., what proportion of overall parental views on the support provided was explained by each component. Detailed results can be found in the Key driver analysis section of the methodological appendix.

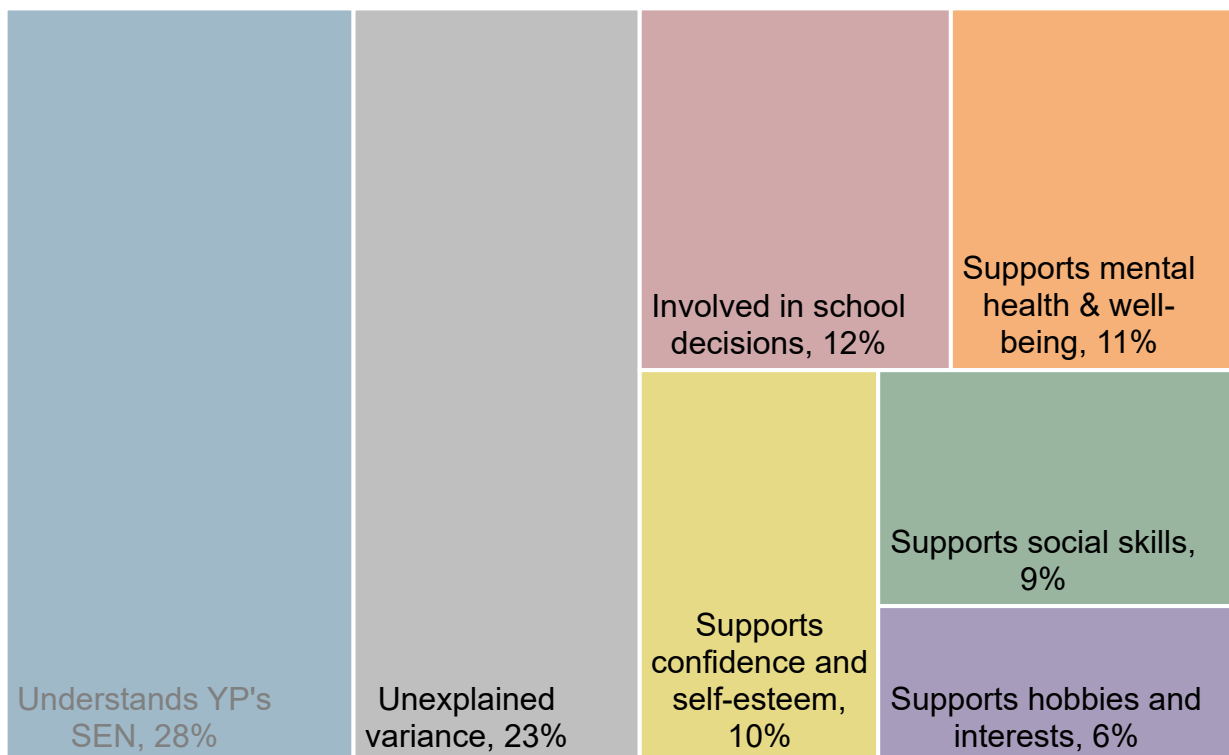
The KDA does not include all possible components (i.e. influences on 'parental views on school support'). Therefore, a proportion of the outcome remains unexplained. This is shown as 'Unexplained variance' in Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23. It is also important to note that this analysis is limited to identifying drivers based on only the measures included in this model. If different components were included, different drivers may be identified as the most important.

Drivers of overall parental views on school support

Figure 21 shows the estimated relative importance that parents placed on each of the measured components of school support. Parents' views on how well the school understood their child's SEN was identified as the most important out of the six components we assessed. Specifically, this aspect explained more than a quarter, 28%, of the variance in overall parental views on the support provided by the school when controlling for the role of the other components.

Other components played a much smaller role in explaining overall views on the support provided. How closely involved parents felt in the school’s decision-making about their child explained about 12%, followed by how well they felt the school supported their child with managing mental health and well-being, developing confidence and self-esteem, and developing social skills, which each explained between 9% and 11% of overall views on support. Finally, the least important component was found to be whether parents felt the school supported their child to develop hobbies and interests, accounting for 6% of overall views.

Figure 21. Relative importance of components of parents’ overall views of school support¹³



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who were not home educated; N=2215.

Additional results of the KDA, including confidence intervals for these estimates, are included in the Key driver analysis section of the methodological appendix.

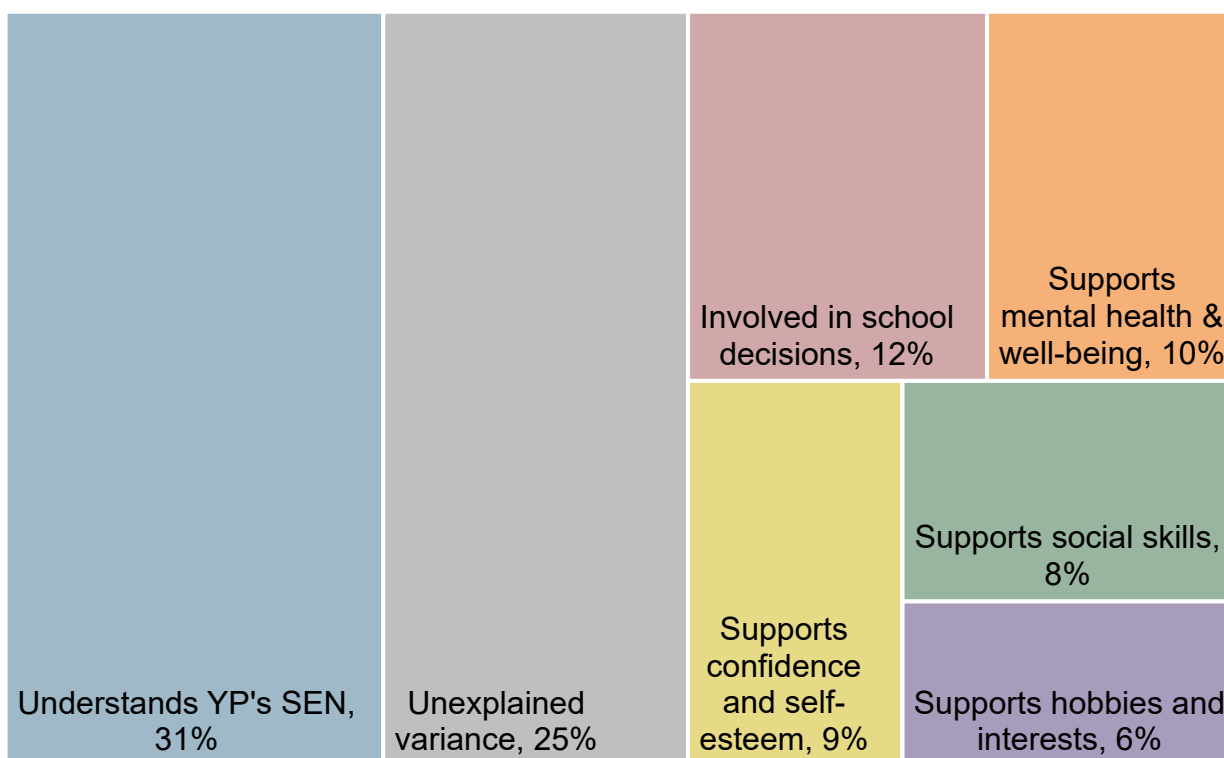
¹³ The figure displays the relative importance assigned to each component (LMG R² decomposition), with higher numbers indicating a stronger relationship to overall level of parental views of support by schools. Please refer to the methodological appendix for further details.

Relative importance by school type

The chapter on Parental perceptions of school support showed marked differences in parents' perceptions of school support between mainstream and special schools. To explore whether there were also differences in the relative importance of individual components in driving parents' overall views across these two contexts, the KDA was conducted for each school type separately.

The results of this analysis in Figure 22 and Figure 23, show some differences between mainstream and special education. For parents whose child was in mainstream education, the relative importance of the individual components was very similar to those seen for all parents (Figure 21). This is unsurprising given that young people in mainstream education make up the vast majority of young people with SEN.

Figure 22. Relative importance of components of parents' overall views of school support in mainstream schools

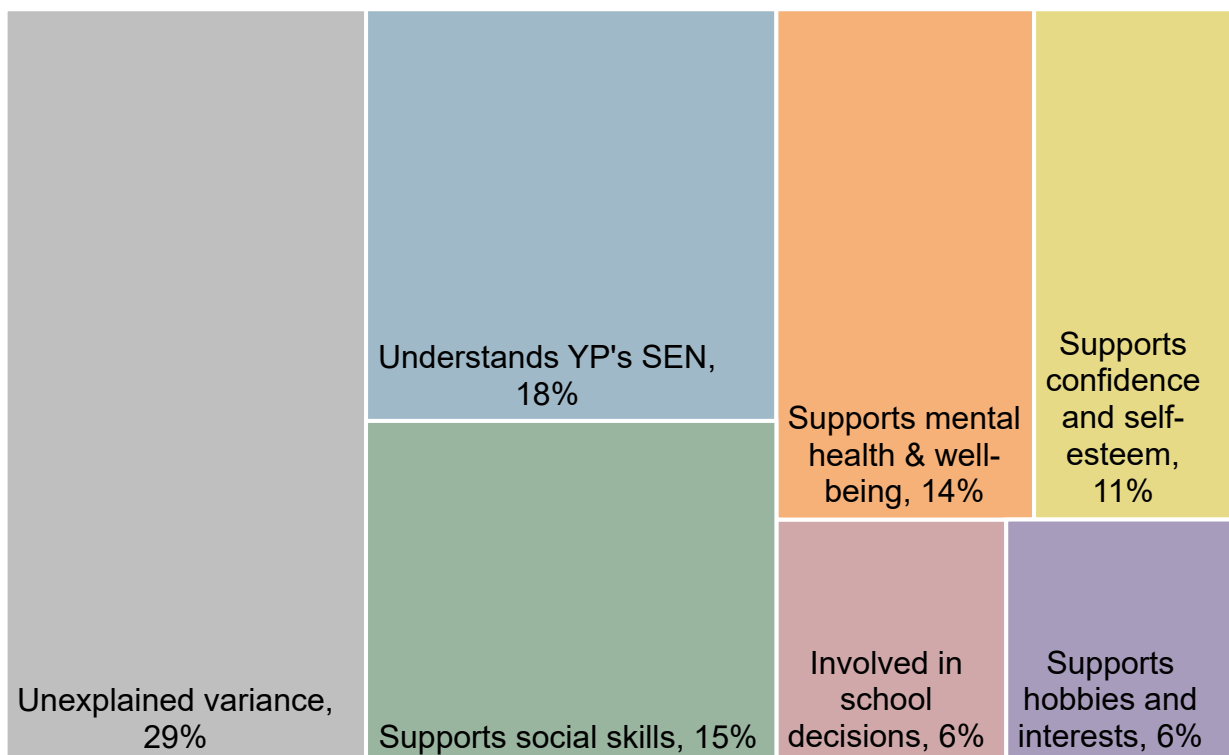


Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a mainstream school; N=1740.

For parents of young people in special schools, how well the school understood their child's SEN was still the most important element, but it explained a (statistically) significantly smaller proportion of overall views (18% compared with 31% in mainstream schools). Instead, the relative importance of each of the remaining five components was greater than was seen in the context of mainstream schools. The order of relative

importance among the remaining five components also shifted. Feeling closely involved in the school’s decisions about their child dropped from being the second most important factor among parents whose child attended mainstream education to one of the least important drivers for parents whose child attended a special school. This suggests that the extent to which they felt closely involved in school decisions about their child played a lesser role in parents’ overall views on school support among those whose child attended a special school than among those whose child was in mainstream education.

Figure 23. Relative importance of components of parents’ overall views of school support in special schools



Unweighted base: All parents of young people with SEN who attended a special school; N=384.

Discussion and conclusions

In this final chapter we summarise the key findings of the report and discuss these in relation to their potential implications for policy and the questions they raise for further research.

Parental views on support provided for their child's SEN

The data drawn on in this report were collected in summer 2023, shortly after the launch of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (see Background and policy context). One of the central aims of these reforms is to improve support provided to children and young people with SEND in mainstream education, so that the vast majority of children and young people can access the support they need to thrive without the need for an EHCP. By doing so, the ambition is to alleviate current pressures on the system, and increase parents' levels of confidence in, and satisfaction with, the support provided through the SEND system – across the board but, particularly, among those with a child attending mainstream education. This would be because their needs would be identified promptly, and appropriate support would be put in place at the earliest opportunity before needs can escalate.

Focusing on parents who had a child with SEN in Year 9 (aged 13-14), this study found that parents of young people in mainstream education had markedly less positive perceptions of the support provided by their child's school than parents whose child attended a special school. Among parents whose child was in mainstream education, those whose child did not have an EHCP had less positive perceptions of the support provided than those whose child did have an EHCP. These less positive views were evident both at an overall level and across several more specific aspects of support provided by the school such as managing mental health and wellbeing, developing social skills, confidence and self-esteem and hobbies and interests. Similar differences were evident in parents' assessment of the extent to which the school understood their child's SEN and the extent to which they felt closely involved in the school's decisions about their child.

Within mainstream education, the more positive views of parents whose child have an EHCP may be an indication that the support being provided for these young people better meets their needs than is the case for those who do not have one. It may also be that parents feel more confident in the support provided because they trust that the EHCP will play a key role in ensuring this is the case. Either way, these markedly less positive views among parents whose child did not have an EHCP indicate that there is some way to go to achieve the aim of building parent's confidence in the ability of mainstream settings to effectively meet the needs of children and young people with

SEND. Parental views on the support provided in special schools were also more likely to be positive than those from parents with children in mainstream education.

Within the context of mainstream schools, parents of young people with a specific learning difficulty or with social, emotional, and mental health needs were generally less positive about the support provided by their child's school than parents whose child had other primary needs. A review of the current approaches and support available in mainstream education for young people with these needs may be useful to identify any requirements for additional resources which could make a difference here, such as specialist support packages and interventions.

The report also showed a relationship between the age at which the young person's SEN had first been identified and parents' views on the support provided by the school by the time their child was in Year 9. Earlier identification was generally associated with more positive parental perceptions. This finding corresponds to the widely recognised benefit of early identification and making effective provision to meet needs improving long term outcomes for children and young people with SEND (DfE, 2015). It is likely that earlier identification is linked to the child or young person's type and complexity of needs. The findings also indicated that recent SEN identification may be linked to more positive views on the support provided, but further research (e.g. with a larger sample size) would be needed to establish why this is the case.

Key drivers of parents' overall views of school support provided for their child's SEN

The study also showed that, in mainstream schools in particular, the key driver of parents' overall views on the support provided by their child's school across all areas where their child needed support, was how well they thought the school understood their child's SEN. This is hardly surprising – understanding the needs of each individual young person is widely acknowledged as fundamental for meeting those needs. If a school does not understand a pupil's needs – for example, they misunderstand where and why difficulties arise and/or use ineffective interventions – it cannot meet those needs effectively. Conversely, where parents trust that the school, and teachers, have good up-to-date knowledge of SEND and how this affects their child, they will likely also trust the school to provide and put in place the right interventions to meet their child's needs at a broader level – even if they may not be equally positive about the support provided in specific areas. Put slightly differently, providing parents with a sense that the school grasps the nature of their child's needs may be an essential precondition for parents feeling generally positive about, or satisfied with, the support provided by the school. In practical terms, this raises questions about what schools are already doing to improve and demonstrate this understanding, and ensuring that this applies to all pupils, irrespective of their need or background.

The relative importance of the school understanding the young person's needs was noticeably higher among parents whose child attended a mainstream school rather than a special school. These parents were also noticeably less likely to say the school understood their child's needs – 62% compared with 91% of parents in special schools. Increasing the level of understanding of SEND among teachers and school staff in mainstream schools may help improve parents' overall perceptions of SEND provision in schools – an important aim of the Improvement Plan.

Among parents whose child attended a mainstream school, feeling closely involved in the school's decisions about their child was the second most important driver. This may suggest that, within the context of mainstream education, engaging parents better in decision making, including schools providing updates on interventions and decision-making processes, may go some way to improving parent's overall levels of confidence in and satisfaction with support for their child's SEND.

Noticeably, the relative importance of feeling closely involved in the school's decision making about their child was much lower in special schools – ranked fifth rather than second. This may be because parents feel more confident in the ability of special schools to meet their child's needs and are therefore also more confident to let the school 'get on with it', rather than needing higher levels of involvement in decision making. It may also be the case that special schools generally are better at involving parents in decision making, meaning that this was not seen as a potential issue for parents when thinking about the support the school provided – indeed, 84% of parents whose child attended a special school said they felt closely involved in the school's decisions about their child, compared with 46% of parents whose child was in a mainstream school. Among parents whose child attended a special school, the extent to which the school was perceived to support their child's mental health and wellbeing and develop their social skills were the second and third most important drivers of overall views of the support provided – suggesting, perhaps, that these areas could be pertinent for special schools to focus on.

Conclusions and suggestions for further research

The SEND Futures Discovery Phase data provide numerous avenues for exploring the questions addressed in this report further. With two waves of data collected from the same parents and young people, it is possible to explore a wide range of topics related to parental views on SEND provision, alongside multiple other aspects of life affecting young people with SEND and their families.

Against the backdrop of the rollout of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, these findings provide early insights into parental views on school support for pupils with SEN, albeit limited to a representative subset of parents of young people who were in Year 9 in the 2022/23 academic year. They provide pointers to key areas where policies may want

to target efforts to improve support given to pupils with SEND, and, in line with this, levels of confidence and satisfaction among parents. Within mainstream schools, prioritising resources to improve awareness of SEND among teachers and other staff, reflecting this in policies and practices, and ensuring parents are involved in decision making related to their child, could be useful starting points. Mainstream schools will not have the same ability to develop and maintain similar levels of specialist expertise as special schools. Therefore, working more actively with parents and conveying to them that they, the parents, are the experts on their child's needs may help parents feel more involved and, as a result, more positive about the support their child receives. Within special schools, where positive views were held by a higher proportion of parents, having the resources and increased focus on individual pupils' needs may be a higher priority. Due to relatively small sample sizes, additional research would be needed to gain a more detailed understanding of parental views on support provision among parents of young people in AP.

General pressures facing schools (primary and secondary) – budgets, teaching resource, etc. – will likely impact on both the quantity and quality of support provided to pupils with additional needs. Future research may want to understand more about if, and how, parental perceptions and satisfaction with support for their child's SEN are related to school policies and practices in relation to support for SEND. This could include some of the aspects touched on in this report, such as the age of SEN identification and obtaining an EHCP, etc. One specific area to consider here could be what drives the relationship between early SEN identification and parental views on support? And how is this related to the types of needs the child or young person has? Another area to consider could be the less positive views among parents of young people with certain types of needs – in particular, those with social, emotional and mental health needs. Recent qualitative research¹⁴ has suggested that meeting the needs of pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs is a particular challenge for schools, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, with increasing demand for services and waiting lists for referrals such as school counsellors and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Looking at parental views on support, alongside school-level policies, practices and experiences could help get a fuller understanding of how parents' perceptions relate to concrete aspects of support provision. This would mean expanding beyond the views of parents. It could involve, for instance, looking at how parental views are reflected in those of professionals involved in providing the support (including teachers and other school staff (e.g. SENCOs) and external specialists), and how parents' views correlate with other measures of quality of SEN provision, for example held by the school. There may also be an interest in looking at the relationship with wider aspects of provision in the school not specifically related to support for SEND (for example, breakfast clubs, activities, homework support, etc) on parental views on support.

¹⁴ Recent work undertaken by NatCen for DfE on ASCE Authoritative School Climate Enabling Policies.

Another aspect of parental views on support to explore further would be to understand more about the nature of parental views on support as an indicator of the quality of the support their child receives – or, at least, whether these views have a bearing on their child's outcomes. One part of this would be to understand more about how parental views are connected to actual school policies and practices, as set out above. Another could be to look at how parental perceptions of support are (or are not) related to their child's outcomes – in terms of educational outcomes and other outcomes, including health and wellbeing, and independence in adulthood.

This research focussed specifically on the experiences of parents whose child was in Key Stage 3 (Year 9). Future research may want to look at how parents' (and children's) experiences of support for SEND differ as the child goes through primary and secondary school. For example, primary schools may be able to engage in more participatory communications with parents in comparison to (larger) secondary schools. How and to what extent does this affect what influences parents' views on the support provided – are some aspects more important during the primary school period than in secondary?

It is worth noting that this report has not looked in detail at socio-economic or demographic factors – though tables are provided in the methodological appendix for anyone interested in exploring this further. A unique feature of the SEND Futures Discovery Phase study was that it was designed to specifically ensure high levels of representation of subgroups which are often underrepresented in survey research. This was done to enable analysis exploring the circumstances and views of subgroups within the population of young people with SEN such as those in low-income households, from an ethnic minority background and those who are in contact with social services (have 'Child in Need' status) or are 'looked after'. Future research may want to look more specifically at the role of parents' (and pupils') socio-economic characteristics in shaping the views of parents on the support provided – and, indeed, the quality of this support. For example, what role (if any) do parents' ability to pay for things like private assessments, private help with learning and/or other needs play in how they interact with and view the school? What role does parental background play in parents' ability to 'be heard' and 'navigate the system' – and how does this affect their views on the support their child receives and, ultimately, how (if at all) does this affect the support in place for their child?

The findings presented here are also part of a broader picture of parental views on, and satisfaction with, the system of support for SEND. Whilst focus here has been on the support provided in and by schools, the support provided by the school and parents' views on this will likely be influenced by wider support provision (or lack thereof), including support provided via other services such as health and social care. Future research may want to consider this – for example, the extent to which parents' views on

the support they receive at school are influenced by their experiences and views on support provided by other services.

The SEND Futures Discovery Study already provides robust data for exploring a number of these questions. A full-scale mainstage SEND Futures study could help further uncover these questions, providing a picture of the experiences and views of parents across different spheres and stages of education – and potentially beyond.

Finally, but importantly, future research will also want to explore the views of young people themselves. The SEND Futures Discovery Phase study provides robust data for exploring young people's views, and a mainstage study will further add to the research possibilities here.

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Appendix A. Glossary

Term	Definition
Alternative Provision (AP) settings	Alternative Provision (AP) settings provide education for pupils who do not attend a mainstream school or special school full time. Education in alternative provision often takes place at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), AP academy or AP free school, but placements can also be arranged in another mainstream or independent school that provides AP, or in an educational setting that is not registered with DfE
Children in Need (CiN) / young people with 'in need' status	<p>Children in Need are a legally defined group of children (under the Children Act 1989), assessed as needing help and protection as a result of risks to their development or health. This group includes children on child in need plans, children on child protection plans, children looked after by local authorities, care leavers and disabled children. Children in need include young people aged 18 or over who continue to receive care, accommodation or support from children's services, and unborn children.</p> <p>Whilst disabled children come under the definition of CiN, it is the case that not all children with a disability receive support from Children's Social Care services. Around 12% of CiN have a disability recorded.</p>
Disability	A disability is physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on an individual's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)	For children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support. EHCPs identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.
Free School Meals (FSM)	Children eligible for free school meals
Looked after Children (LAC) / young people with 'looked after' status	A child in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours. Includes children: living with foster parents; living in a residential children's home; or living in residential settings like schools or secure units.

Ethnic minority (excluding white minorities)	This includes people from ethnic groups other than those from white ethnic groups, including those from black, Asian, mixed and multiple ethnicities and those classified as 'other' ethnic groups. In this report 'ethnic minority' does not include white minorities such as Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups, or those where there was no information available about ethnicity on the sample frame.
National Pupil Database (NPD)	The National Pupil Database contains all pupils attending English state education.
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)	A teacher who is responsible for making sure special educational needs are catered to within schools.
Special schools	Special schools provide education for children with a special educational need or disability. Pupils can only attend special schools if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Appendix B. Methodological appendix

This appendix provides additional detail on the methodology of the SEND Futures Discovery Phase study and the data used in the report. It also provides more detail on the variables used for subgroup analysis, describes how the analysis presented in the report was conducted, and additional detail on how to interpret the findings.

The SEND Futures Discovery Phase study

The SEND Futures Discovery Phase study was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to inform the methodology of a mainstage longitudinal study of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families. The National Centre for Social Research (NatGen) were commissioned, in collaboration with the National Children's Bureau (NCB), to conduct a large-scale test of various aspects of survey methodology to inform the mainstage study design (see the [Wave 1 Methodological report](#) and the [Wave 2 Methodological report](#) for further information). In the process of doing so, the Discovery Phase study has collected valuable substantive information on the experiences, circumstances, and views of young people with SEN and their parents or guardians. It provides a unique resource for those wishing to explore and understand more about the diverse lives of young people with SEN and their families.

This report draws specifically on data collected from parents who took part in the study. The Discovery Phase comprised two waves of data collection with young people with SEN and their parent or guardian, conducted when the young person was at the end of Year 8 (wave 1, conducted between May and September 2022) and when they were at the end of Year 9 (wave 2, conducted between April and September 2023). Figure 24 gives an overview of the study design. All households where either the parent or young person took part at wave 1, and where the parent had not objected to being re-contacted were invited to take part at wave 2.

Data collection at wave 2 took place through a sequential mixed-mode survey approach which included surveys conducted with young people and their parents or guardians online, over the telephone (using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing – CATI), or in-person (using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing – CAPI). The surveys were designed to take around 30 minutes to complete. At wave 1, parents and young people took part either online or via CAPI.

A key aim of the SEND Futures Discovery Phase was to collect information on how to improve survey response and retention among different groups, including groups often under-represented in survey research. Therefore, the study incorporated and compared different ways of conducting fieldwork and improving response rates. The study has a complex design, consisting of two 'strands': Strand 1, where fieldwork initially took place face-to-face (wave 1), followed by a sequential web-CATI-CAPI approach at wave 2; and

Strand 2 which was implemented as an online survey at wave 1, and a sequential web-CATI survey at wave 2. Those selected for Strand 1 were a subset of the SEN population believed to be less well-represented in survey research, and face-to-face fieldwork was chosen to encourage higher levels of response at the initial wave. Four groups were selected for Strand 1: young people with 'looked after' status, young people classified as 'in need' (i.e. in contact with social work), young people from minority ethnic groups (excluding white minorities), and young people eligible for Free School Meals. Strand 2, in contrast, was a stratified random sample of all young people with SEN in the relevant year group (Year 8 in the 2021/22 academic year).

The two strands were brought together for this analysis, and weights were developed to provide estimates of the Year 9 SEN population as a whole. Thus, the findings presented in this report were weighted to be nationally representative of Year 9 pupils with SEN (in 2202/23) who were in Year 8 in England and registered as having (SEN support or EHCP) in the National Pupil Dataset (NPD) Autumn Census 2022 and the Alternative Provision Census 2021 (APD).

Figure 24 SEND Futures Discovery Phase design overview

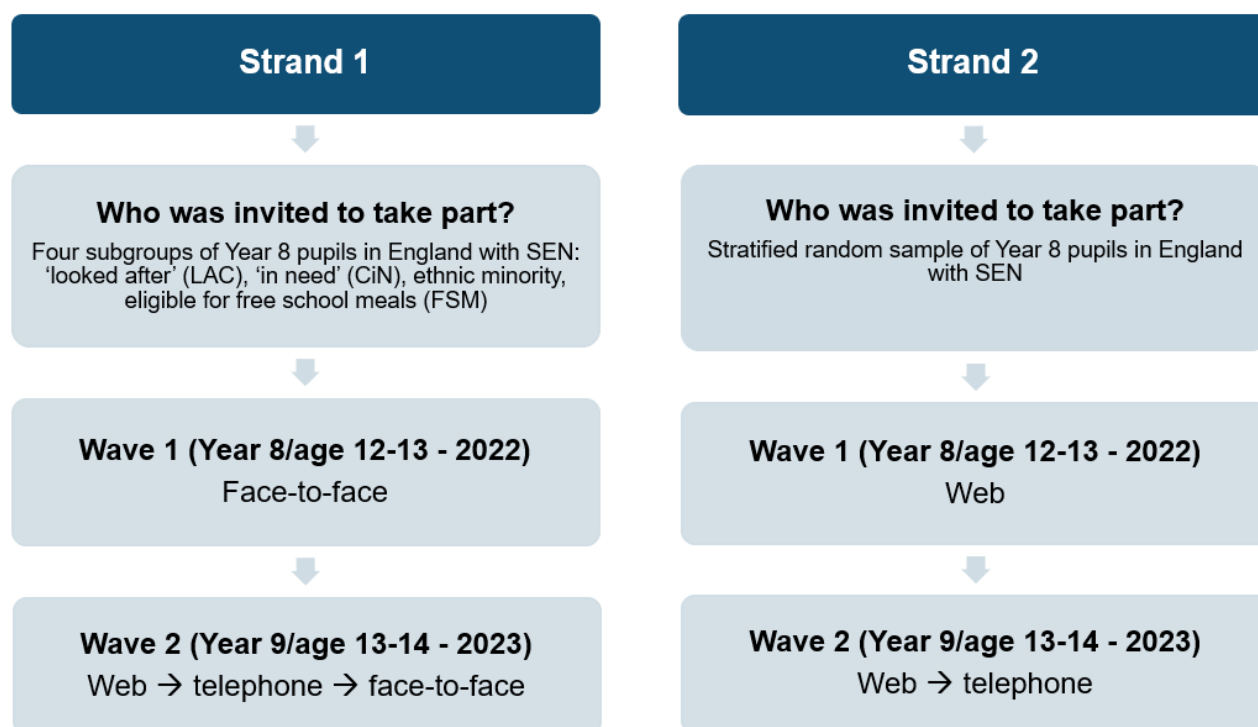
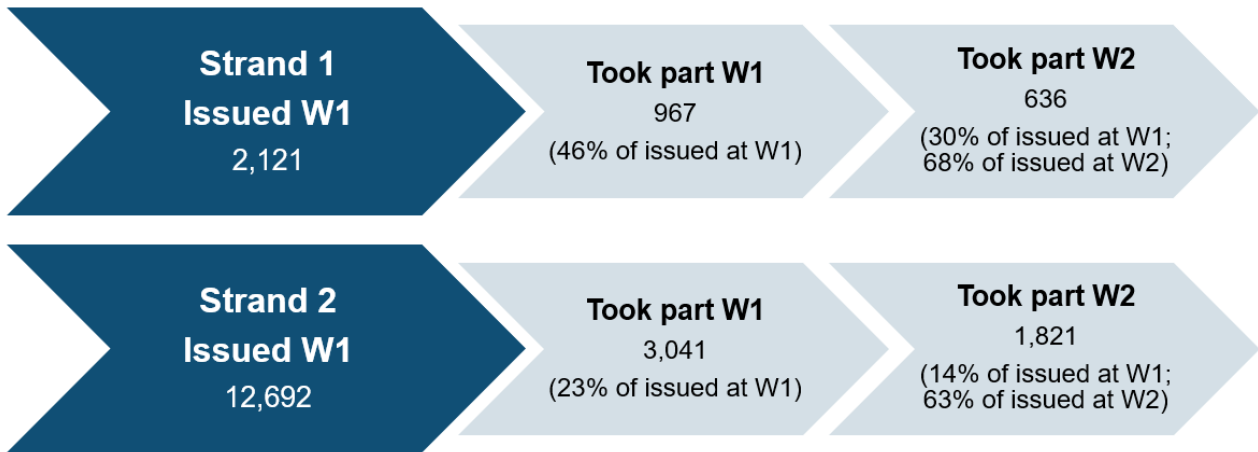


Figure 25 provides an overview of the number of households which were invited and took part in the study: 4,008 households at Wave 1 and 2,457 households at Wave 2.

Further details about the study, including the sampling design, questionnaire documentation, and details about response, weighting and representativeness, are available in the [Wave 1 Methodological report](#) and the [Wave 2 Methodological report](#).

Figure 25 SEND Futures Discovery Phase response overview (household level)



Details of key subgroups

This section describes how each of the variables used in the subgroup analyses were measured and presents some descriptive statistics to show how common each of these different characteristics were among young people with SEN in Year 9. The prevalence figures provided are based on weighted data, meaning that they are roughly representative of all young people in English state education with SEN who were in Year 9 in the academic year 2022-23.

Primary special educational needs

Generally, SEN is a term used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child or young person to learn compared with children or young people of the same age. All young people who were part of the SEND Futures longitudinal study were recorded as having SEN (either as receiving SEN support or with an EHCP) on the National Pupil Database (NPD) at the time the sample was drawn. The NPD also provides a classification of each pupil's primary special educational need.

For the analysis presented in this report, the young person's primary type of SEN was determined based on parent report. Where no data were available here (e.g. if only the young person took part), NPD data on primary SEN was used.

The list of needs parents were asked to choose from was as follows:

1. Autistic spectrum condition (e.g. autism, Asperger's syndrome)
2. Speech, language and communication needs
3. Social, emotional and mental health issues, including attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)
4. Physical disability (e.g. issues with movement or other functions that impact on day-to-day life, cerebral palsy)
5. Hearing impairment or deafness
6. Visual impairment or blindness
7. Multi-sensory impairment (i.e. hearing and visual impairment)
8. Specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia)
9. Moderate learning difficulties (incl. basic literacy and numeracy skills, speech and language delay, problems concentrating, under-developed social, emotional and personal skills)
10. Severe learning difficulties (incl. having little or no speech, needing support with daily activities, needing life-long support)
11. Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)

12. Something else

To ensure sample sizes were sufficient to conduct robust analyses some less common types of SEN were combined into larger groups, in line with the broad areas of need outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disability code of practice (DfE, 2015). The resulting eight primary SEN types used in the report are described below, drawing on definitions from the SEND Code of Practice.

Profound, multiple, or severe learning difficulties

This group includes two types of SEN from the list parents were asked to choose from: 'Severe learning difficulty', and 'Profound and multiple learning difficulties'. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs. Young people with 'Severe learning difficulties' are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication, while those with 'Profound and multiple' learning difficulties are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment.

Moderate learning difficulty

These are learning difficulties that affect cognition and learning and young people are likely to need support in many or all areas of the curriculum such as with communication and mobility.

Specific learning difficulty

These are learning difficulties that affect one or more specific areas of learning, and includes difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia.

Physical or sensory needs

This group was composed of four different sub-categories: physical disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments and multi-sensory impairments. These young people may require special educational provision because this disability or impairment makes it difficult for them to make use of educational facilities without additional help or support.

Autistic spectrum condition

This includes young people on the autistic spectrum including what has previously been referred to as Asperger's Syndrome. These young people are likely to have difficulties with social interaction, language, communication, and imagination, and this may impact their relationships with others.

Speech, language, and communication needs

These young people have difficulties in communication and interaction with others. It may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding others, or comprehending social rules.

Social, emotional, and mental health needs

These young people experience a range of social and emotional problems and may have underlying mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self-harm or substance misuse. Others may have a diagnosis of a disorder such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.

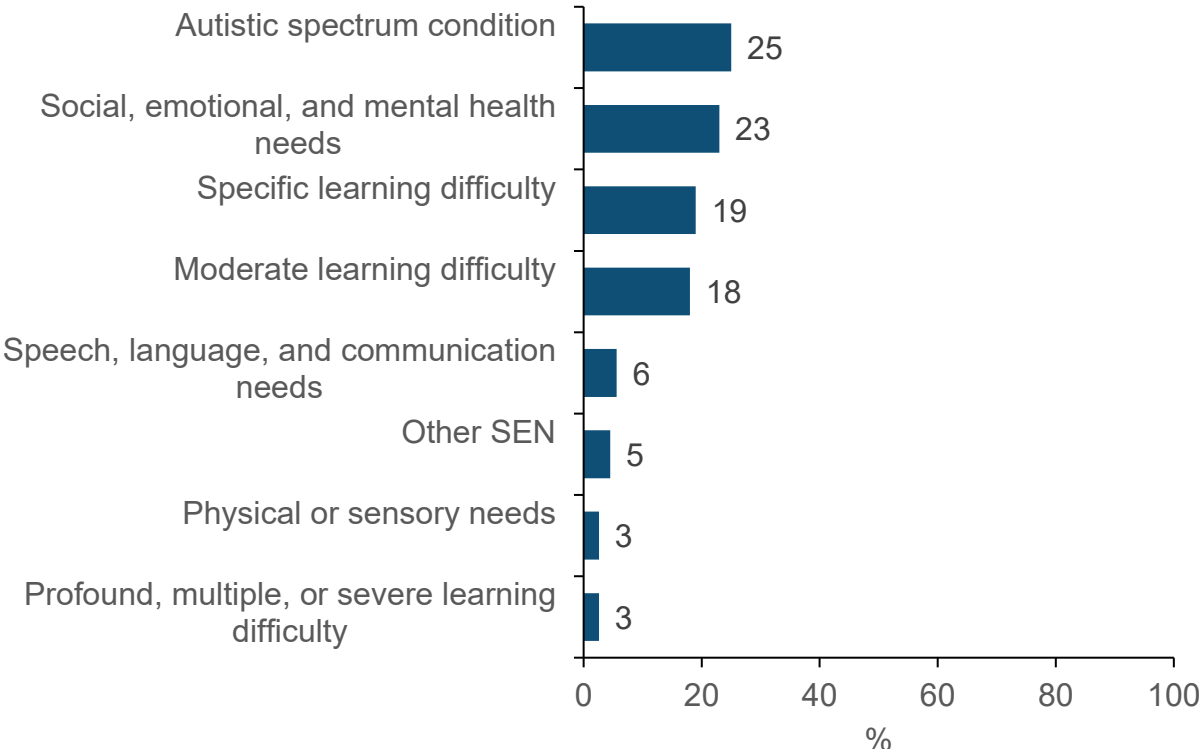
Other SEN

The 'other SEN' group includes those where the parents said 'Something else' or where there was no parent response and no information on SEN type on the NPD.

Prevalence of each type of primary SEN among young people with SEN in Year 9 (2023)

The prevalence of each of these eight types of primary SEN is set out in Figure 26. The chart shows the proportion of young people with each type of primary SEN, using weighted survey data. The least common primary SEN type reported was Profound, multiple, or severe learning difficulty (3%) while the most common was Autistic spectrum condition (25%).

Figure 26. Prevalence of different types of SEN among young people with SEN

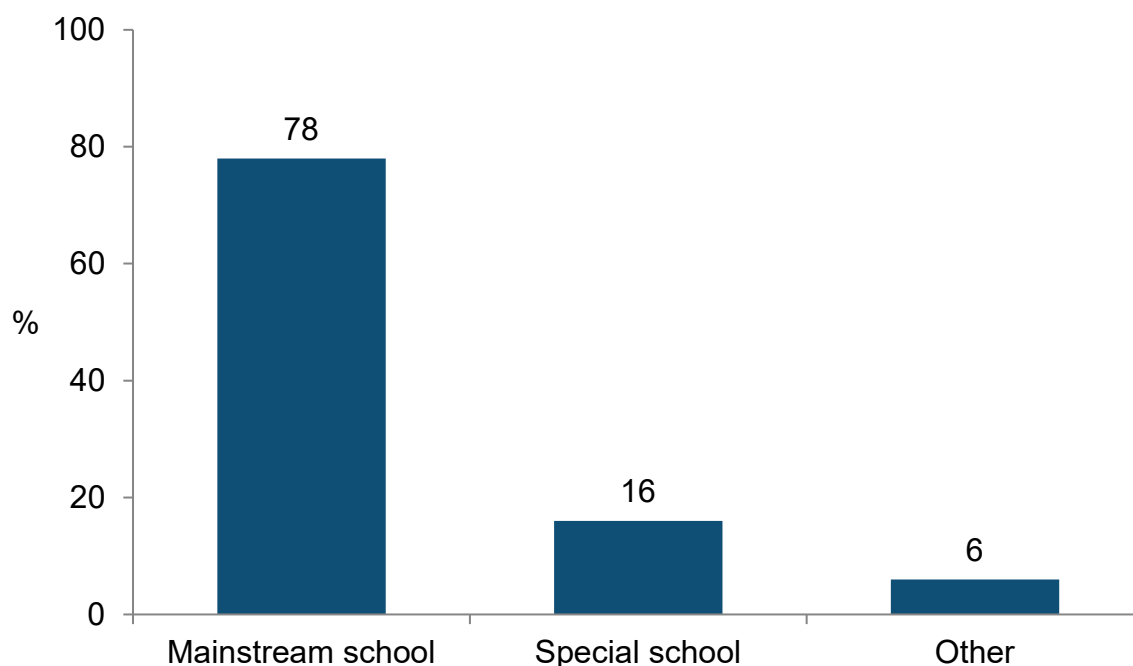


Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base = 2,234.

School type

Information about school type was obtained from parents. Most of young people with SEN attend mainstream schools, as seen in Figure 27. The ‘Other’ category comprises of a small number of pupils who did not attend either a mainstream or special school (n = 137). This group comprises approximately a third alternative provision (36%), a third home educated (31%), and a third attending other forms of schooling such as hospital schools or an independent school. Note that due to the focus on support provided by the school, the analysis presented in this report focuses on the views of parents whose child attended an educational setting – that is, it does not include data collected from parents whose children were home-educated.

Figure 27. Types of educational setting among young people with SEN in Year 9 (2023)



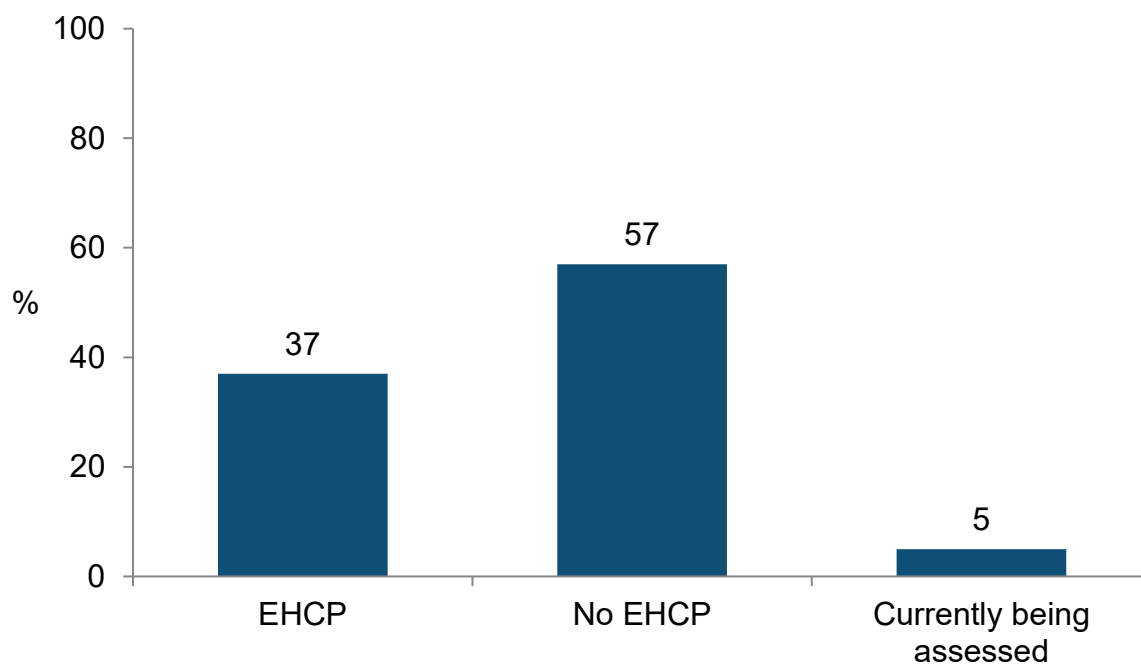
Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base = 2,326.

Education, Health, and Care plan (EHCP)

The type of support that young people with SEND receive can vary significantly, depending on their needs. Schools provide support to most young people with SEND through staffing and approaches based on funding relating to support for young people's SEND. However, some young people need more substantial support. EHCPs are based on an assessment of young people's needs and specify additional support to address those needs (DfE 2015). The information about EHCP status used in this report draws predominantly on parent report. Where no parent data were available, NPD information was used. As shown in Figure 28, around a third (37%) of young people with SEN had an EHCP in Year 9 in 2023¹⁵.

¹⁵ Drawing on national statistics of SEN pupils in England, this compares with 4% of those with an EHCP among all school students in all age groups, and 28% of Year 9 pupils with SEN. See: Special educational needs in England: January 2023 at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2023>.

Figure 28. EHCP status among young people with SEN in Year 9 (2023)

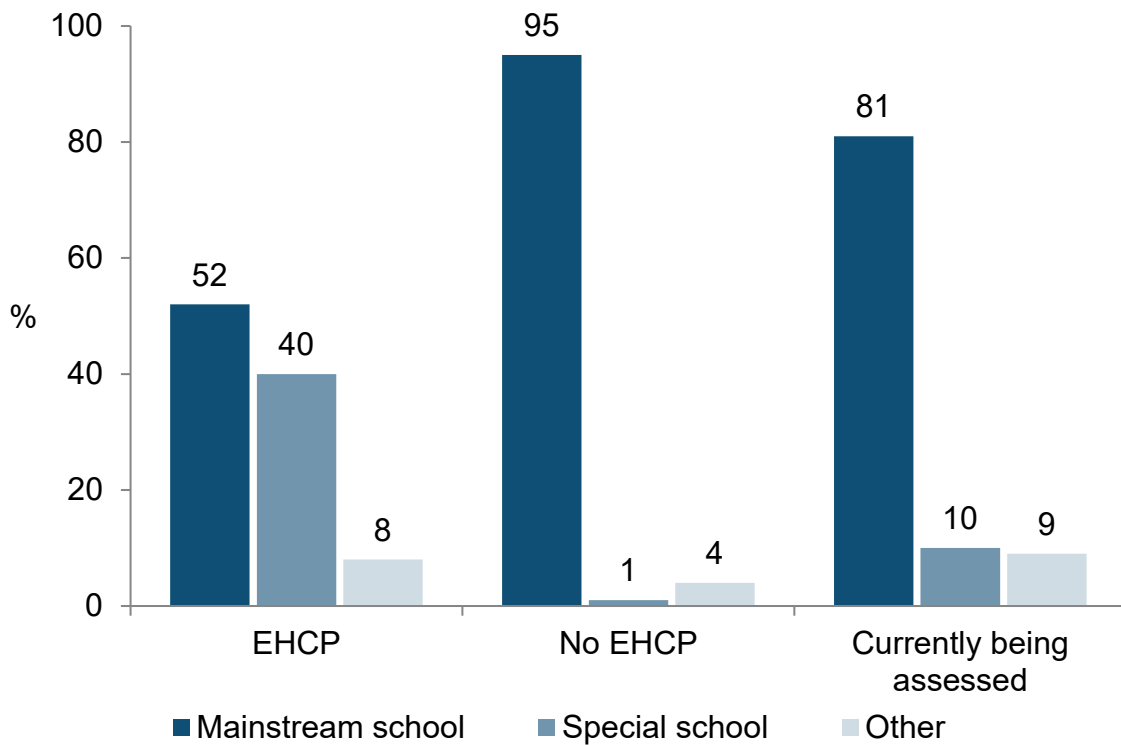


Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base = 2,263.¹⁶

Figure 29 shows the proportion of young people who attended each school type broken down by whether or not they had an EHCP. As can be seen, the overwhelming majority of young people who did not have an EHCP attended mainstream schools (as would be expected). Among those who did have an EHCP, 52% attended a mainstream school, 40% attended a special school and 8% attended some other form of educational setting or were home educated.

¹⁶ The 'Appealing refusal category' has been removed from the table and any discussion in the report due to its low base size.

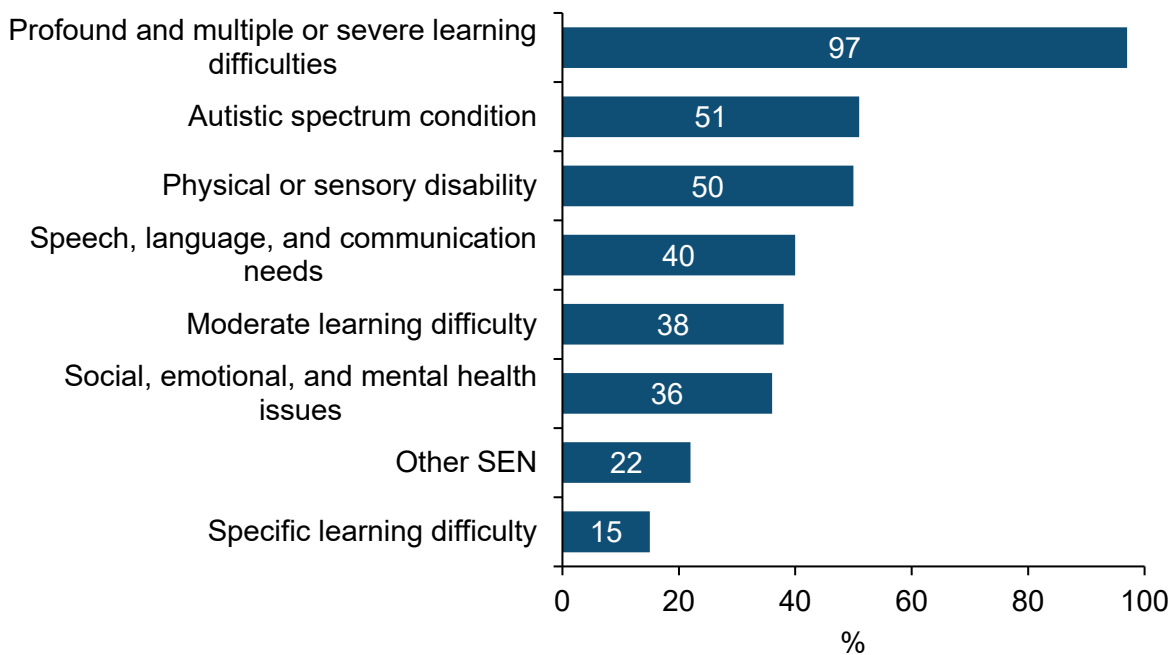
Figure 29. School type among young people with SEN in Year 9 (2023), by EHCP status



Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base for each category: No EHCP=2,034; Has EHCP=926; Overall=2,960.

Figure 30 illustrates the prevalence of young people with an EHCP among young people with different types of primary SEN. Those with a Profound, multiple, or severe learning difficulty were most likely to have an EHCP, with nearly all these young people (97%) having an EHCP. Those with a Specific learning difficulty were less likely to have an EHCP (15%) as were those in the 'other' group (22%).

Figure 30. Proportion of young people with SEN in Year 9 (2023) who had an EHCP, by primary type of SEN

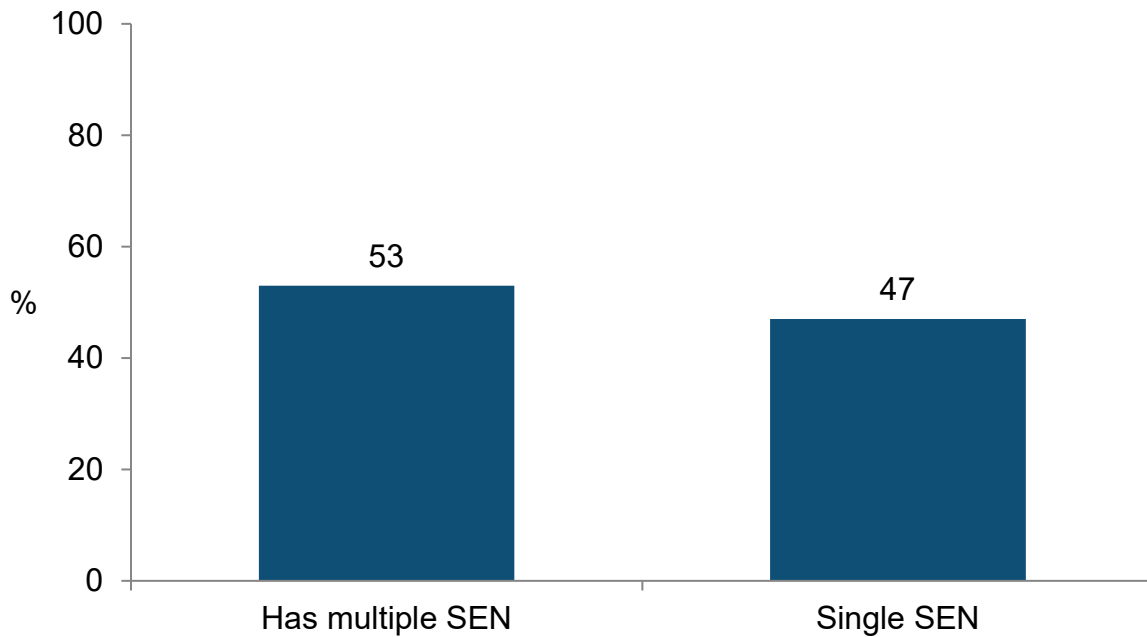


Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base for each category: PMSLD=56; A SC=275, PSD=29; SLCN=47; Moderate LD=148; SEMH=179; Other SEN=22; Specific LD=64.

Young people with multiple SEN

Multiple SEN was defined based on parent report of their child’s SEN. As already noted, parents were asked to indicate from a list which ‘types’ of SEN applied to their child. Where a parent indicated that the young person had more than one of these types of SEN, or a type of SEN that encompassed multiple facets, such as a profound, multiple, or severe learning difficulty, the young person was classified as having ‘multiple SEN’. Just over half of the young with SEN were reported as having multiple SEN, 53%. Figure 31 shows the proportion of young people with SEN who have either multiple SEN or a single type of SEN.

Figure 31. Proportion of young people with multiple types of SEN

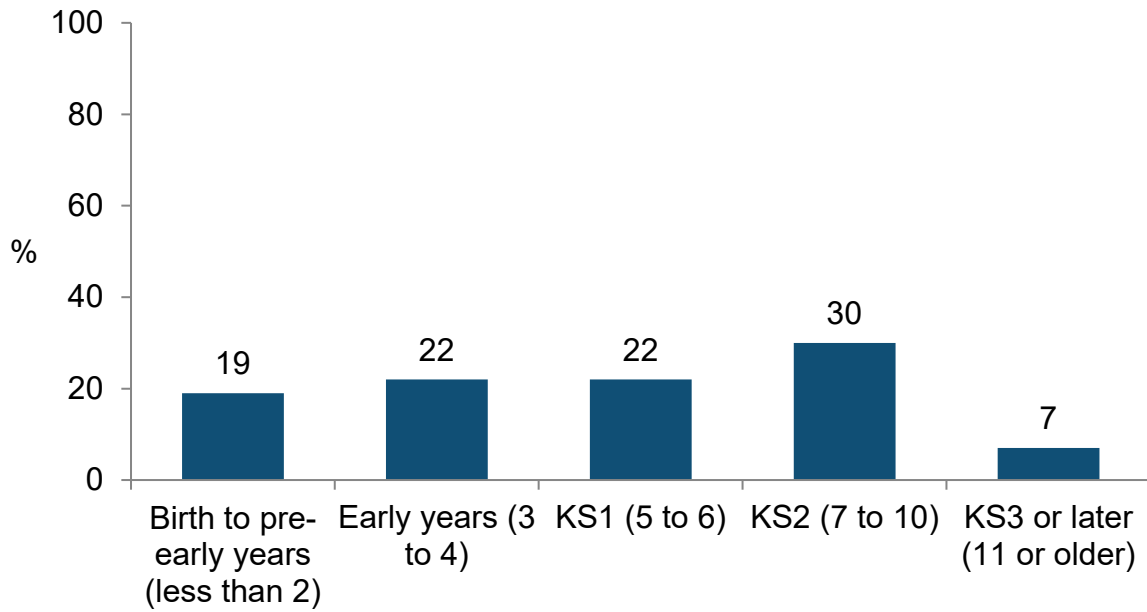


Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base = 2,317.

Age of SEN identification

Figure 32 shows the proportion of young people who were identified as have SEN at different times in their education journey, ranging from before early years education through to KS3 and beyond. The most common time for young people to be identified as having SEN was between the ages of 7 and 10, during KS2. Approximately 20% of young people were identified either before they entered early years education (18%), during Early years education (22%), or during KS1 (22%). Less than one in ten young people were identified as having SEN in KS3 or later.

Figure 32. Proportion of young people with SEN by age at which their SEN was identified



Base: All young people with SEN, unweighted base = 2,133.

Significance testing of descriptive subgroup analysis

Unless otherwise stated, where differences between subgroups are commented on in the text, they were statistically significant at the 5% level. In other words, differences are only reported where they are large enough that there was not more than a 5% probability of a difference as large (or larger) occurring by chance (assuming no differences in the population). Where it was used in the text, the term 'significant' refers to statistical significance (at the 5% level) and was not intended to imply substantive importance.

Unless otherwise indicated, statistical testing has been carried out to examine the relationship between two variables or characteristics; for example, a young person's wellbeing and the type of school they attend. These tests showed whether or not the differences seen in the data were 'statistically significant' i.e. whether they reflected 'real' differences in the population as a whole (for example, all young people in English state funded education in Year 9 with SEN) or could have occurred by chance/simply as a result of taking a sample of the population.

For variables with two or more categories, the statistical test used did not compare each pair of categories against each other; rather they were testing the observed variations across the various sub-groups. For example, when looking at differences in parental perceptions of school support between different types of SEN, the tests do not compare specific pairs of SEN types (for example, autistic young people versus those who had cognitive and learning difficulties). Rather they seek to test whether or not the observed differences could have occurred by chance (as a result of sampling) or are more likely to reflect 'real' differences in the population as a whole.

Key driver analysis

The following section outlines the detailed steps and results for conducting the Key Drivers Analysis (KDA) including underlying assumptions, regression results, and relative importance metrics. The purpose of the KDA was to understand the role each of the individual perception of support items in driving overall parental views of support by understanding the proportion of variance in the outcome that they explain.

Underlying assumptions

A key issue with using a typical linear regression in this case was the high levels of multicollinearity between the support items. That is, the individual support items are all highly correlated, meaning a high response in one item was related to a high response in the others¹⁷. Having high levels of multicollinearity in a linear regression model impacts the underlying assumptions and can lead to inflated and inaccurate model estimates. Table 1 presents the results of a correlation matrix showing the multicollinearity between the six support items, with correlation coefficients ranging from $\rho = 0.59 - 0.91$.

¹⁷ Büschken, J., Otter, T. and Allenby, G.M., 2013. The dimensionality of customer satisfaction survey responses and implications for driver analysis. *Marketing Science*, 32(4), pp.533-553.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of support items

	Social Skills	Hobbies & Interests	Confidence & Self-Esteem	Mental Health & Well-being	Involved in School Decisions	Understands YP's SEN	Supports YP
Social Skills	1.00	0.79	0.86	0.81	0.70	0.72	0.75
NA	Hobbies & Interests	1.00	0.80	0.75	0.59	0.63	0.66
NA	NA	Confidence & Self-Esteem	1.00	0.87	0.70	0.74	0.77
NA	NA	NA	Mental Health & Well-Being	1.00	0.70	0.74	0.77
NA	NA	NA	NA	Involved in School Decision	1.00	0.75	0.77
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Understands YP's SEN	1.00	0.91
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Supports YP	1.00

Base: All young people with SEN who were not home schooled. N=2215.

Note: the table shows polychoric correlations.

Linear regression results

Due to these high levels of multi-collinearity, an extension of linear regression has been used to determine the relative importance of each item, instead of focussing on estimates such as the regression coefficients. We adopt the approach proposed by Grömping¹⁸ that identifies which of the independent variables was the largest driver of the outcome variable ('overall support') by calculating how much of the variance in the outcome that the model explains (the R²) can be attributed to individual influencing items. This is less susceptible to issues with the underlying model assumptions, such as high multicollinearity, that can make the interpretation of individual regression coefficients unreliable.

¹⁸ Grömping, U. (2007). Relative importance for linear regression in R: the package relaimpo. Journal of statistical software, 17, 1-27.

To explore the relative importance of the six support elements in overall parental views of support, the first step in conducting this analysis was to run a set of three linear regression models. One was produced for the whole sample, one for young people in mainstream schools, and another for young people in special schools. The results of these models are outlined in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

Table 2. Linear regression results: whole sample

Support Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	Pr(> t) ¹⁹
(Intercept)	0.209	0.025	<0.001***
Social Skills	0.054	0.020	0.007**
Hobbies & Interests	0.005	0.015	0.765
Confidence & Self-Esteem	0.051	0.020	0.013*
Mental Health & Well-Being	0.097	0.020	<0.001***
Involved in School Decision	0.115	0.014	<0.001***
Understands YP's SEN	0.553	0.024	<0.001***

Variance: The Explained variance (R^2) is 76.8%.

Base: All young people with SEN who were not home schooled; N=2215.

Table 3. Linear regression results: mainstream schools

Support Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.234	0.031	<0.001***
Social Skills	0.036	0.021	0.088
Hobbies & Interests	0.014	0.017	0.384
Confidence & Self-Esteem	0.040	0.022	0.060
Mental Health & Well-Being	0.088	0.021	<0.001***
Involved in School Decision	0.114	0.014	<0.001***
Understands YP's SEN	0.577	0.024	<0.001***

Variance: The Explained variance (R^2) is 75.0%.

Base: All young people with SEN who attend a mainstream school, N=1740.

¹⁹ Significance levels: ≤ 0.001 : '***', ≤ 0.01 : '**', ≤ 0.05 : '*'

Table 4. Linear regression results: special schools

Support Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.179	0.054	0.001**
Social Skills	0.244	0.061	<0.001***
Hobbies & Interests	-0.061	0.038	0.115
Confidence & Self-Esteem	0.109	0.058	0.063
Mental Health & Well-Being	0.187	0.060	0.002**
Involved in School Decision	0.008	0.039	0.836
Understands YP's SEN	0.366	0.080	<0.001***

Variance: The Explained variance (R^2) is 70.4%.

Base: All young people with SEN who attend a special school, N=384.

Relative importance metrics

There are several potential approaches to calculating relative importance metrics that are robust to high levels of multicollinearity between predictors in a linear regression model, but the approach used for this report is referred to as LMG. LMG allocates each predictor a portion of the total variance in the outcome (R^2) explained by the model, providing a measure of the relative importance of each predictor while controlling for all the other potential drivers included in the model. It can be interpreted as the proportion of the variance in the outcome explained by that predictor.

LMG is obtained by making use of the sequential R^2 contributions of each predictor to the model's overall R^2 . Sequential R^2 is obtained by building a regression model one predictor at a time and at each step calculating the change in the model's overall R^2 from adding that predictor. Each predictor is allocated the change in the total R^2 from adding that predictor as its sequential R^2 .

In this approach, the portion of R^2 allocated to the first predictor is equivalent to the R^2 of a linear regression model with that predictor and no others. Then the second predictor is allocated the difference in R^2 between the model with only one predictor and the model with two. This is repeated until all predictors have been added and each allocated a portion of R^2 .

In and of itself, this approach has severe limitations, because the portion of R^2 allocated to a predictor is dependent on when in the sequence it was added to the model.

However, LMG leverages this feature of sequential R^2 by repeating the process of over all potential orderings of the predictors and calculating an average across them. This process is sometimes referred to as 'averaging over orderings.'

The KDA analysis used the R package 'relaimpo'²⁰ to produce the relative importance metrics using the LMG method.

Bootstrapping and confidence intervals

To test how robust the results were, bootstrapping of the results was conducted. The key driver analysis was repeated 1000 times from repeated, random samples of the same data, and then confidence intervals (CI) were produced from this set of relative importance metrics. The tables show the estimates for the importance metrics and the 95% confidence intervals to show the level of uncertainty surrounding the estimates calculated. Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7 show the relative importance of each of the individual support items in driving overall parental views of support, showing the order of importance, the share of R^2 that they account for, and the 95% CI around the estimate.

²⁰ Grömping, U. (2007). Relative importance for linear regression in R: the package relaimpo. *Journal of statistical software*, 17, 1-27.

Table 5. Relative importance estimates of support items: whole sample

Variance explained by model (R²) is 76.8%

Area of support	Share of R ²	95% CI
Understands YP's SEN	28.1	[25.7 – 30.4]
Involved in school decisions	12.4	[11.1 – 13.8]
Supports YP to manage mental health & well-being	10.7	[9.7 – 11.8]
Supports development of confidence & self-esteem	10.1	[9.2 – 11.1]
Supports development of social skills	9.2	[8.3 – 10.2]
Supports development of interests & hobbies	6.2	[5.5 – 7.1]

Base: All young people with SEN who are not home educated, N=2215.

Note: Estimates presented in this table were produced using the LMG method.

Table 6. Relative importance estimates of support items: mainstream schools

Variance explained by model (R²) is 75.0%

Area of support	Share of R ²	95% CI
Understands YP's SEN	30.7	[28.1 – 33.3]
Involved in school decisions	12.3	[11.0 – 14.0]
Supports YP to manage mental health & well-being	9.7	[8.5 – 11.1]
Supports development of confidence & self-esteem	9.0	[8.0 – 10.1]
Supports development of social skills	7.7	[6.7 – 8.9]
Supports development of interests & hobbies	5.5	[4.7 – 6.5]

Base: All young people with SEN who attend a mainstream school, N=1740.

Note: Estimates presented in this table were produced using the LMG method.

Table 7. Relative importance estimates of support items: special schools

Variance explained by model (R²) is 70.4%

Area of support	Share of R ²	95% CI
Understands YP's SEN	18.2	[12.7 – 25.4]
Supports development of social skills	14.5	[10.8 – 18.5]
Supports YP to manage mental health & well-being	13.8	[9.5 – 18.1]
Supports development of confidence & self-esteem	11.5	[8.5 – 14.9]
Involved in school decisions	6.5	[4.4 – 9.3]
Supports development of interests & hobbies	6.0	[4.3 – 8.1]

Base: All young people with SEN who attend a special school, N=384.

Note: Estimates presented in this table were produced using the LMG method.



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