

Research Report DCSF-RR034

Parental Involvement in Children's Education 2007

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BMRB Social Research



department for
children, schools and families

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Executive Summary

Background

BMRB Social Research were commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to conduct a survey of parents and carers of children, in order to examine parental involvement in children's education.

The then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned previous surveys in 2001 and 2004. The main objective of the 2007 survey was to investigate the extent and variety of parents' involvement in their children's schooling (including comparing data with the 2001 and 2004 surveys).

Summary of research method

A telephone survey of 5,032 parents and carers of children aged 5-16 attending maintained schools (living in England) was carried out by BMRB between August and October 2007. Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes on average and were conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

The survey was based on a nationally representative sample of this group. Differences are reported only when they are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

Key findings

- Around half (51%) of parents felt very involved in their child's school life: this is an increase from 29% in 2001, to 38% in 2004 to 51% in the 2007 survey. Women, parents with young children, parents who left full-time education later, those from Black or Black British backgrounds and parents of a child with a Statement of SEN were all more likely than average to feel very involved. Lone parents and non-resident parents were both less likely than average to feel very involved.
- Similar to survey findings in previous years, work commitments were the main barrier to greater involvement (mentioned by 44% of respondents).
- Parents are now more likely to see a child's education as mainly or wholly their responsibility (28%). This represents a shift from previous years, when parents were more likely to see it as the school's responsibility.
- Nearly all parents (96%) agreed that it was extremely important to make sure that their child attended school regularly and on time, a finding consistent with 2001 and 2004
- Around three in four of all parents felt that it was extremely important to help with their child's homework, a similar proportion to previous years. Further, the

same proportion said they felt confident always or most of the time when helping their children with homework; the proportion who said they are always confident has fallen a little since 2001.

- Informal discussions with school staff were seen as the most useful way of finding out about children's progress in school (28% found them the most useful method). In previous years of the survey, parents' evenings had been seen as the most useful means of communication.

Summary of Findings

Overall involvement and responsibility

- Around half (51%) of parents felt very involved in their child's school life: the proportion who said they were very involved has increased from 29% in 2001, to 38% in 2004 to 51% in the 2007 survey. Women, parents with young children, parents who left full-time education later, those from Black or Black British backgrounds, parents of a child with a Statement of SEN were all more likely than average to feel very involved. Lone parents and non-resident parents were both less likely than average to feel very involved.
- In two-parent households, it was common for both parents to share some involvement in their child's school life, although women tended to feel more involved than men (53% compared with 45% felt very involved).
- Two in three parents said that they would like to be *more* involved in their child's school life. Although this is slightly lower than in 2001, this reflects the fact that parents now feel that they are more involved.
- Those who said they felt uninvolved in their child's education were more likely than those who said they felt involved to desire greater involvement (73% compared with 65%).
- Similar to survey findings in previous years, work commitments were the main barrier to greater involvement (mentioned by 44% of respondents).

Parents attitudes to educational responsibility

- Parents are now more likely to see a child's education as mainly or wholly their responsibility (28%). This represents a shift from previous years, when parents were more likely to see it as the school's responsibility. Non-white parents were most likely to say it was the parent's responsibility rather than the schools.
- Nearly all parents (96%) agreed that it was extremely important to make sure that their child attended school regularly and on time, a finding consistent with 2001 and 2004.

- Around a half (48%) of parents said that they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time (for example to go on a family holiday), and this did not vary by the level of involvement the parents had in their child's school life. Parents were more reluctant to do this if their child was in year 10 or above (35% would be happy to do so). These findings are consistent with findings from previous surveys (46% and 49% said they would be happy to take their child out of school in 2004 and 2001 respectively).

Involvement with the child's education

- One in three parents (32%) said they help their children with their homework every time, while a further 26% do so most times. This represents a slight increase on previous years' figures.
- Around three in four parents felt that it was extremely important to help with their child's homework, a similar proportion to previous years.
- Three in four of all parents said they felt confident always or most of the time when helping their children with homework; the proportion who said they are always confident has fallen a little since 2001. The main reasons for lacking confidence were changing teaching methods and a lack of understanding of the child's work.
- Most parents also take part in other activities with their children, such as doing school projects together (83%), making things (81%), playing sport (80%) and reading (79%). These figures have increased since 2004, indicating that parents now participate in a wider range of activities with their children.

Involvement with the school

- Around one in three parents (35%) had helped out in class or at school at some point, while 30% had been involved with the PTA and 21% with a Parent Council or Forum; 15% had been involved with a homework club. In total, around half of parents (53%) had taken part in at least one of these activities.
- The majority of parents felt that it was extremely important to attend events such as parents' evenings (75%) and to support schools' policies on children's behaviour (80%). Both these attitudes and the level of involvement in school-based activities have remained similar to previous years of the survey.
- Although most parents (58%) felt there were enough opportunities for involvement in their child's school, 28% would like to see more opportunities.
- Certain groups of parents were more involved in both school activities and with their child's homework: women who were not working full-time and parents with younger children, as well as those from non-white ethnic groups. In addition, parents were more likely to take part in school-based activities if they had left

full-time education after the age of 16. Non-resident parents were far less likely to be involved in school activities or with homework, but were just as likely as other parents to do out-of-school activities with their child, such as reading, making things and sport.

- Parents who get involved in school activities (particularly homework clubs or parent councils) were most likely to want to get *more* involved in their child's education. This suggests that involvement breeds a desire to get more involved, although this contradicts some of the findings summarised earlier (notably that those who felt less involved were most likely to desire more involvement).

Communication with school

- Informal discussions with school staff were seen as the most useful way of finding out about children's progress in school (28% found them the most useful method). In previous years of the survey, parents' evenings had been seen as the most useful means of communication, but in the 2007 survey this had decreased in comparison with informal discussions. Parents of children in primary schools were particularly likely to value informal discussions.
- The two methods of communication that parents thought schools should use more were written communication, including notes brought home by children (21%), and email (16%).
- Parents were generally very positive towards information provided by the school, and the level of consultation and support provided. They were particularly positive towards the clarity of information provided about their child's progress (86% said their child's school provided clear information) and the school being welcoming to parents (92% said their child's school was welcoming to parents). Attitudes have also become more positive over time and views on communication and consultation were particularly positive amongst parents of children in primary schools.
- Three in four parents said that they were well informed about their options when choosing a school for their child, and this was consistently high across different groups of parents.
- Using School Profiles enables maintained schools to communicate with parents about many different facets of the school, including how the school is progressing, its priorities and also its performance. A total of 29% of parents had heard of School Profiles. Awareness was highest amongst parents of children in years 10-12 (33% were aware).
- Only half of those who were aware of School Profiles had read them (15% of all parents surveyed). Respondents mentioned various benefits and information on a

school's academic results and performance was considered most useful (41% thought this information was good¹).

Awareness of initiatives

- Awareness of Home School Agreements has not changed since 2001 and two in five parents had not heard of them. Overall, 39% of parents said that they had signed one. Just under half of parents had heard of Bookstart (this was higher among parents of younger children), while most respondents said they knew at least a little about school achievement and attainment tables. Awareness of Ofsted had increased since 2001.

Children's characteristics

- Overall, 12% of parents in the survey said that their child had been identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), and 6% had a Statement of SEN. In these households, parents were more likely than average to have a long-term illness or disability and to be in a lower social grade.
- One in five respondents said that their child attended a Supplementary or Complementary School or Homework Club.
- Almost all parents said they had internet access at home, although access was lower amongst disadvantaged groups² Access to the internet at home has risen over the years of this survey, from 69% in 2001 to 92% in the current survey.

Special Educational Needs

- The survey findings show various sub-group differences, but some of the strongest impacts and most consistent differences have been found in respect of parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- Parents of children with statements of SEN were more likely to feel very involved in their child's education (63% versus 51% overall). Parents of children with SEN were also more likely to want to increase their involvement in their child's school life (70% of parents of children with identified SEN and 73% of parents of children with a statement wanted to be more involved).

¹ Respondents were asked to list anything they thought was good about The School Profiles (i.e. responses were not prompted).

² Disadvantaged parents in this context refers specifically to lone parent households, households where English is not the main language and lower social grades.

- In line with the more general survey findings, 84% who felt not very or not at all involved wanted to do more. However, even amongst those who already felt very or fairly involved, 70% still wanted to do more. The data therefore show a clear desire for parents of children with SEN to be involved in their children's schooling.
- Parents of children identified as having SEN were also more likely to have children attending supplementary homework clubs and were more likely to say it was important that their child actually attended (52% versus 32% overall). They also thought it was extremely important to get in touch with their school when they had a specific request about how their child was getting on (amongst parents of children with a statement of SEN, 85% thought it was extremely important).
- Parents of children with SEN were less likely than other parents to feel they had opportunities to have a say in how their school is run (43% disagreed they had enough opportunities). They also had a preference for face-to-face modes of communication with their child's school rather than through letters, e-mails or on the telephone. More specifically, 29% said informal face-to-face discussions and 20% said other formal meetings were most useful.
- Parents of children with a statement of SEN were more positive in relation to information provided by the school that can help them support their child's progress. However, parents of children with SEN (statemented or otherwise) were more negative in relation to jargon in school information (39% agreed that there was too much jargon in school information).

Comparisons over time

- Previous surveys of parent's attitudes and involvement were carried out in 2001 and 2004 and it is possible to identify various trends over time.
- Generally speaking, there appears to be an increased perception of involvement amongst parents and this increase is partly borne out in the increased levels of involvement in activities which aid children's learning (eg reading, playing sport, cooking). The largest increase was in the proportion who read with their children (an increase from 70% in 2004 to 79% in 2007) and the proportion that play sport with their children (an increase from 71% in 2004 to 80% in 2007).
- There was also an increase in the proportion (28%) who felt a child's education is mainly the parent's responsibility (an increase from 20% in 2001 and 19% in 2004).
- Parents were also more positive about the ways in which schools communicate with them and valued informal discussions with schools more than they had done in 2004 and 2001. More specifically, 28% found informal discussions their most useful mode of communication, compared to 18% in 2004 and 10% in 2001.

- One area where the survey findings indicate less positive results was in relation to 'confidence'. Fewer parents (33%) felt confident helping their children with homework. The main decrease took place between 2001 and 2004 (when it decreased from 41% to 35%).
- Although parents were positive about communication issues, an increased proportion felt that school information contained 'too much jargon' (30% felt this was the case compared to 27% in 2001).

Implications for Policy and Further Research

The findings have a number of implications for policy and further research, which have been summarised below:

- Parents feel increasingly involved in their child's school life. They are also more likely to see education as their own responsibility as well as the school's, and this is likely to heighten their sense of involvement.
- The desire to get more involved tends to be stronger amongst disadvantaged groups (e.g. those in lower social grades, ethnic minorities, respondents with a long-term illness or disability). Further work may be needed to understand how to get these parents more involved and understand their barriers to involvement. For instance, the survey (and previous surveys in 2004 and 2001) have shown that work commitments are a significant barrier for some parents.
- The proportion of parents that would be happy to take their children out of school remains similar to previous years. There may be scope for further information in this area in terms of communicating the negative consequences of this to parents.
- In terms of future communication strategies, informal discussions are now seen as the most useful method of communication. Methods other than face-to-face contact (eg e-mail) were more popular with parents who are currently less involved, so these methods could be focused on such parents.
- Parents of children who had been identified as having SEN but who had not been stated were least positive about the communication they had with schools. It is possible that these parents need more consultation on their child's progress.
- Awareness of Home-School Agreements was limited and has not changed since 2001.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The benefits of parental involvement in a child's education have long been recognised. Parents play a crucial role in influencing the aspirations and achievements of their children.

“Research suggests that parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational achievement at age 10, which in turn is strongly associated with achievement in later life. Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers”.

(Every Child Matters, 2003)

Additionally, Desforges (2003)³ has demonstrated a large body of evidence which points to the link between a parent's involvement in a child's learning and a child's subsequent achievement.

The White Paper, 'Excellence in Schools', released in 1997 recognised the need for pupils to get support from parents to ensure they reach their full potential. A number of initiatives since this paper were introduced to encourage schools to involve parents and to encourage parents to become more involved.

In 1999, and again in 2004, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey of parents of children aged 5 to 16, which investigated the parents' attitudes towards their children's education.

Following on from these earlier surveys, in June 2007 BMRB was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to carry out a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of parents of children aged 5 to 16 who attended maintained schools in England. The primary objective of the 2007 survey was to investigate the variety and extent of parents' involvement in their children's schooling (including, where possible, updating tracking data to build on the 2001

³ 2003, Desforges, C with Abouchaar, A: *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Department for Education and Skills

and 2004 surveys); an additional aim was to examine the level of awareness parents have of government initiatives in this field.

1.2 Research design

The survey used a random sample design and largely replicates the 2001 survey. The sampling frame used was held by Survey Sampling International (SSI), an organisation dedicated to the provision of survey samples. Random digit dial (RDD) sampling (developed by SSI) was used to provide a nationally representative sample of the residential population in England, with both listed and unlisted phone numbers represented, drawn from all eligible exchange codes. The sample design differs slightly from 2004 when the survey was conducted as a quota survey.

1.2.1 Sample population

The sample definition was parents or carers of children aged between 5 and 16 who attend a maintained school in England.⁴ The sample population for the 2007 survey differs from 2001 and 2004 in the following ways:

- In 2007, it was decided to include non-resident parents in the sample (i.e. parents or carers of children who do not actually live in their household, but who said they have contact with the child discussed in the interview at least once a month). Non-resident parents were not included in either the 2001 or 2004 surveys.
- In 2007 and 2001, the survey included lone-parents.⁵ In 2004, however, interviews were only conducted with parents or carers who lived in a two-parent household.

A comparison of the sample populations in the 2001, 2004 and 2007 surveys is provided in Table 1.1.

⁴ References to “parents” throughout the report should be taken to include all parents and carers.

⁵ As well as lone parent households, the 2001 and 2007 surveys also included a small number of households containing more than two parents.

Table 1.1: Sample populations in 2001, 2004 and 2007 surveys

Sample population	2001	2004	2007
Parents of children aged 5 to 16 who attend a maintained school in England (comprising):	✓	✓	✓
• Two-parent households	✓	✓	✓
• Lone parent households	✓	X	✓
• Non-resident parents	X	X	✓
Minority ethnic group booster sample	X	✓	X

Throughout the report, where observations have been made between the different surveys, it should be noted that this 'trend data' is based only on two-parent households (for the purposes of comparability).

1.2.2 Establishing eligibility and child selection

Once a household had been contacted, the interviewer had to determine whether anyone in the household was eligible or not; this was done by asking a series of screening questions.

The first question identified whether the respondent was a parent or carer of a child between the age of 5 and 16. Respondents were then asked whether anyone else in the household met the necessary criteria. If there was more than one eligible parent in the household, the CATI programme randomly selected one of the parents to take part in the interview.

Once an eligible parent had been selected to take part, they were then asked how many children in the household were between the ages of 5 and 16 and attending a maintained school. If there was more than one eligible child, the parent was asked to give the age of each child and then the CATI programme randomly selected a 'reference child'; the interviewer subsequently prompted the parent to answer questions in relation to the selected child throughout the rest of the interview.⁶

⁶ Parents usually find it easier to talk about one child rather than their children 'generally'; this approach helps them focus their responses rather than attempt to generalise about all their children. It is also allows analysis of the data to be undertaken by certain variables specific to the selected child, e.g. their school year, whether the child has a disability, etc.

1.3 Questionnaire design and pilot survey

The questionnaire used for the survey had seven discrete sections:

- A. Introduction and screener
- B. Child selection
- C. Child's details
- D. Attitudes towards education
- E. Level of involvement
- F. Communications with school
- G. Demographics

A continuing research objective for the survey in 2007 was to examine awareness of current government initiatives in relation to parents and their children's education (see Section 1.1). Incorporating new questions to meet this objective into the existing questionnaire would have potentially resulted in an overly long and burdensome interview for respondents. It was therefore decided to devise two different versions: questionnaire A and questionnaire B. Both questionnaires had the same structure (as outlined above) and the content was also largely similar. However, questionnaire B contained some additional questions on current government initiatives (which were not included in questionnaire A), whilst questionnaire A included some further questions in Sections D-F (which were not included in questionnaire B).

It was decided that approximately 80% of respondents would receive questionnaire A and approximately 20% would receive questionnaire B; eligible parents were randomly allocated to either questionnaire A or B in these proportions by the CATI programme. This would achieve a very high base size for the core of questions (mainly 'all respondents', about 5000, or in some cases about 4000) to enable robust and detailed analysis, while also providing a sufficient base size for the more topical questions included in questionnaire B. This utilises the total sample size more effectively by only asking a limited proportion of the total sample certain topical questions that do not require the full robust sample size. Throughout the report 'all respondents' has been used when a question was included in both questionnaires. here a question was asked in only one of the questionnaires (A or B), this is clearly stated in the relevant text or chart/table.

A pilot survey was conducted to test aspects of the questionnaire including the initial contact stage (i.e. the introduction and screening), the interview length (of

questionnaire A and B) and the actual questions themselves (especially the questions being used for the first time on this survey).

Fifty interviews were conducted during the pilot stage. Around half of these interviews included additional 'cognitive questions' specifically to test parents' understanding of some of the new questions being introduced for the first time in this survey. Revisions to the questions were made on the basis of the pilot findings.

A copy of both versions of the questionnaire (A and B) can be found in the Technical Appendix.

1.4 Analysis and weighting

Once interviews had been conducted, data was collated and open-ended responses were coded. All code frames were approved before use. Tabulations of the data and an SPSS dataset were produced and checked. Further details on analysis are provided in the Technical Appendix.

A two stage weighting approach was carried out:

- design weights were applied to reflect the differential probability of selection for eligible parents in different size households;
- differential response weighting - once the design weights had been applied, the data was further interrogated for evidence of non-response bias using data from the Labour Force Survey. The characteristics compared were gender, ethnicity, age, household type and working status. A weight was then derived to correct for any differences.

The percentages reported throughout the report are based on weighted data.

1.5 Structure of report

The report is split into the following discrete chapters:

- Chapter 2 provides details of the sample profile and household characteristics.
- Chapter 3 looks at respondents' overall involvement in their children's education, as well as how responsible they feel for their child's education.
- Chapter 4 examines attitudes to educational responsibility.
- Chapter 5 explores the level of involvement parents have in their child's homework and other activities.
- Chapter 6 discusses involvement with the school.

- Chapter 7 looks at communication with the school.
- Chapter 8 focuses on awareness of current initiatives.
- Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are summary chapters which discuss, respectively, children with Special Educational Needs, comparisons between the 2001, 2004 and 2007 surveys over time, and implications for policy and further research.

The report also includes a Technical Appendix containing: questionnaire A, questionnaire B and final fieldwork figures.

1.6 Explanatory notes

1.6.1 Interpreting the survey findings

When interpreting the findings for this survey, it should be borne in mind that the survey is based on a large sample (but not the total population of parents of 5-16 year olds). This means that all findings are subject to small sampling tolerances. In the report, differences are reported only when they are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (and if the differences were considered relevant and/or interesting to the topic being discussed). Further, where differences by two (or more) variables are potentially correlated (e.g. gender and working status of parent), basic multivariate analysis has been undertaken to determine which, if any, are the key drivers.

1.6.2 Data tables

The report includes tables showing findings analysed by various characteristics (e.g. child's school year, social grade). In some cases the percentages do not always add up to exactly to 100 for each column and this is normally due to rounding of individual percentages to the nearest whole number. It may also be because multiple responses are possible in some cases. The following symbols have been used throughout:

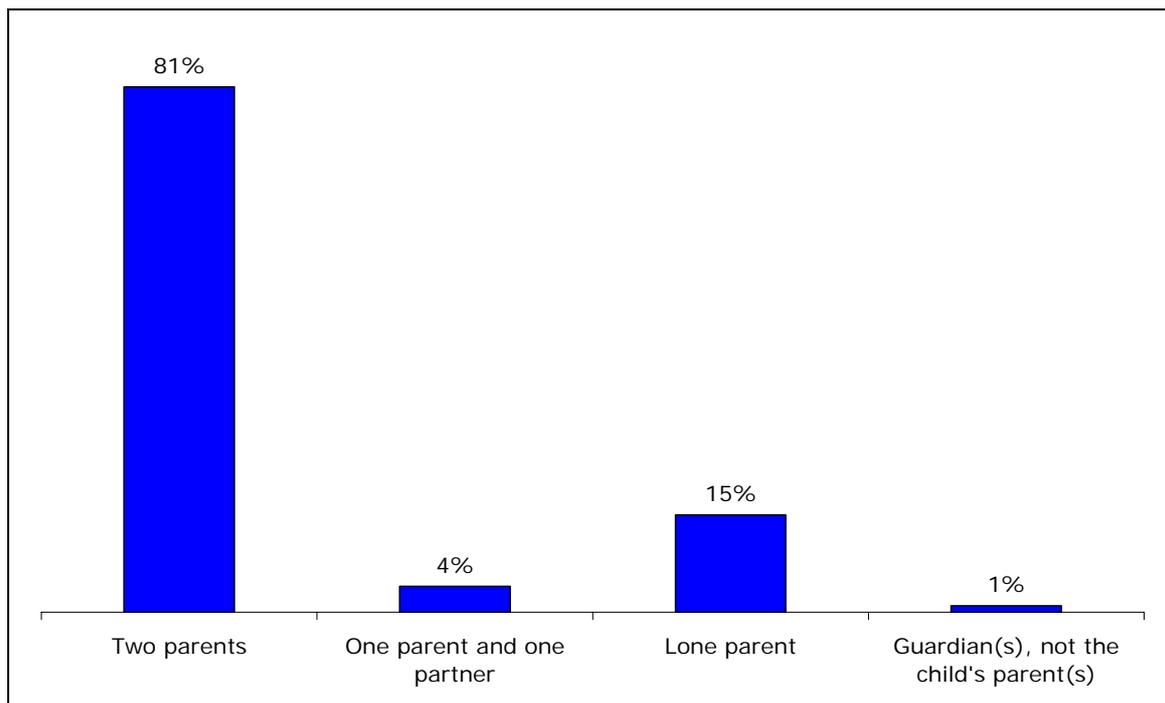
- * Less than 0.5 per cent
- No observations

2 Child and household characteristics

2.1 Household composition

As shown in Chart 2.1, four in five school age children live with both of their parents (81%), while 4% live with one parent and a partner, and 15% live in a lone parent household.

Chart 2.1: Summary of household characteristics



Base: All respondents (5032)

Lone parents interviewed in the survey were mostly female (in 78% of cases), and tended to be slightly younger (24% are aged under 35 compared with 18% of parents overall). Lone parents have slightly older children than two-parent households. In comparison with two-parent households, lone parents were more likely to be from a Black or Black British ethnic group, and less likely to be from an Asian or Asian British background. Lone parents were also less likely to be working, were in lower social grades and tended to have left full-time education at an earlier age. It is known from previous research that lone parent families tend to live on lower incomes than other households^{7,8}

⁷ 2007, *Every Parent Matters*, Department for Education and Skills

⁸ 2004, Marsh, A and Vegeris, S (Policy Studies Institute): *The British Lone Parent Cohort and their Children* (DWP report series No.209 - Part of the DWP Programme of Research into Low Income Families: PRILIF).

Three per cent of respondents in the survey were non-resident parents. These respondents were predominantly male (in 85% of cases). As with men who lived with their children, they were likely to be in full-time work (in 67% of cases), but tended to have left full-time education earlier than other parents (53% had left school by the age of 16 compared with 42% of other parents).

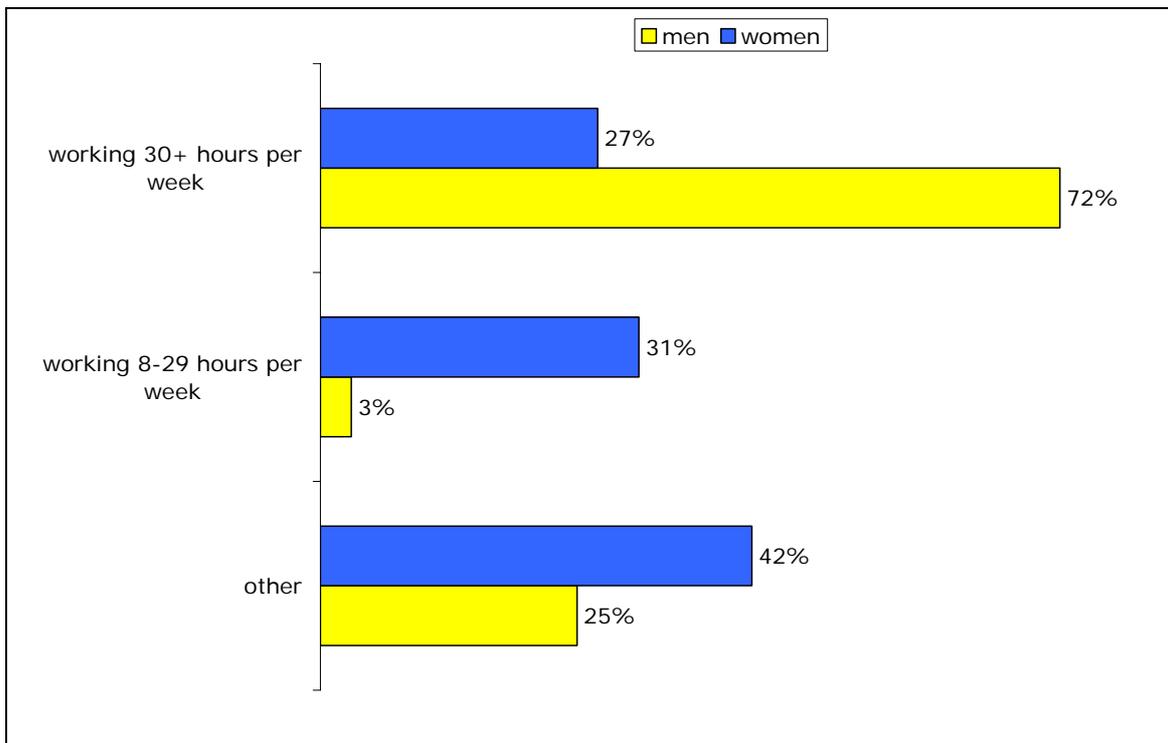
2.2 Respondent age

One half (52%) of respondents were aged between 35 and 44, a quarter (27%) were aged between 45 and 54, while one in six (17%) were aged between 25 and 34. Respondents aged 55 or over accounted for 3% of the sample and those aged under 25 comprised 1%.

2.3 Economic activity and terminal education age

Overall, just under half (46%) of the parents interviewed in the survey were working full-time (30 or more hours per week), while a further 19% were working part-time (8-29 hours). However, as shown in Chart 2.2, this varied by gender, with men more likely to be working and considerably more likely to be working full-time.

Chart 2.2: Summary of household characteristics



Base: All respondents (5032)

Around two in five parents (43%) left school by the age of 16. Terminal education age is linked with other characteristics: parents who left school by the age of 16 were more likely than average to be in lower social grades, not in work, and to have a long-standing illness or disability.

2.4 Social grade

Table 2.1 shows a breakdown of respondents by social grade.

Table 2.1 Respondent's social grade

Social grade	% of respondents
A	8
B	21
C1	30
C2	21
D	10
E	7

Base: All respondents (5032)

A comparison with the previous surveys in the series shows that respondents are broadly broken down into social grade in similar proportions to those in 2001. In 2004 there were fewer respondents in the AB grades, while there were more respondents in the other social grade categories.

Table 2.2 Social grade comparison between surveys

	2001	2004	2007
AB	33	17	32
C1	27	35	30
C2	25	28	22
DE	14	19	13

Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2001 = 1513, 2004 = 2021, 2007 = 4277)

2.5 Marital Status

The majority (82%) of respondents were married or living as married. Eight per cent of respondents were single while a further 5% were divorced and 3% separated. One per cent of respondents widowed and a further 1% were in a civil partnership.

2.6 Ethnicity

Eighty-six per cent of respondents described themselves as white and the majority of these described themselves as White British (95%). Seven per cent of respondents described themselves as Asian or Asian British of which 41% were Indian and 31% were Pakistani. Three per cent of respondents were from a Black or Black British background.

2.7 Disability and caring responsibilities

One in nine parents (11%) said they had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. As with the public as a whole, older parents were more likely to have a long-standing illness or disability (14% of those aged 45 or over), as were those not working (16%) and in lower social grades. Lone parents were also more likely than average to have a long-term illness or disability (18%).

One in seven respondents (14%) said that they provided care, help or support for someone because of illness, disability, old age or infirmity. This is relevant, as parents who have caring responsibilities may find it difficult to devote as much time to their children's education and school activities.

Caring responsibilities were more common amongst older parents (ranging from 12% of parents under 35 to 22% of those aged 55 or over) and women (16% compared with 13% of men). They were also more common among parents who were not working (20%) and in lower social grades. There was also a link between caring responsibilities and respondents having a long-term illness or disability themselves (24% of parents with a long-term illness or disability also had caring responsibilities).

2.8 Language

Six per cent of parents said that English was not the first or main language of their household. Younger respondents were more likely to say that this was the case (11% of those aged under 35). Where English was not the main language of the household, respondents were less likely to be working and tended to be in lower social grades, despite having left full-time education at a later age. They were less likely to be lone parent households.

In the London region, 21% of parents said English was not the main language spoken in the household.

2.9 Internet access

Nine in ten parents (90%) said that they had access to the Internet at home, while 6% had no access at all (including at work, school or college).

Table 2.3 shows how access to the internet at home varies by sub-group. Access is significantly lower amongst a number of disadvantaged groups; specifically, lone parent households, households where English is not the main language and lower social grades.

Table 2.3: Internet access at home by subgroups

		% with internet access at home
All		90
Child's school year	Years 1-2	89
	Years 3-6	88
	Years 7-9	91
	Years 10-12	93
Respondent age	Less than 35	84
	35-44	92
	45-54	91
	55+	83
Social grade	AB	97
	C1	93
	C2	87
	D	81
	E	69
Respondent work status	Working 30+ hours per week	93
	Working 8-29 hours per week	90
	Other	85
Lone parent household		79
Respondent illness or disability		85
Child has statement of SEN		85
English not main language in household		77

Base: All respondents (5032)

The proportion of households with internet access at home has risen from 69% in 2001, to 78% in 2004, to 92% in the current survey (based on two-parent households only).

2.10 School year of selected child

All parents were asked the school year of the selected child (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: School year of selected child

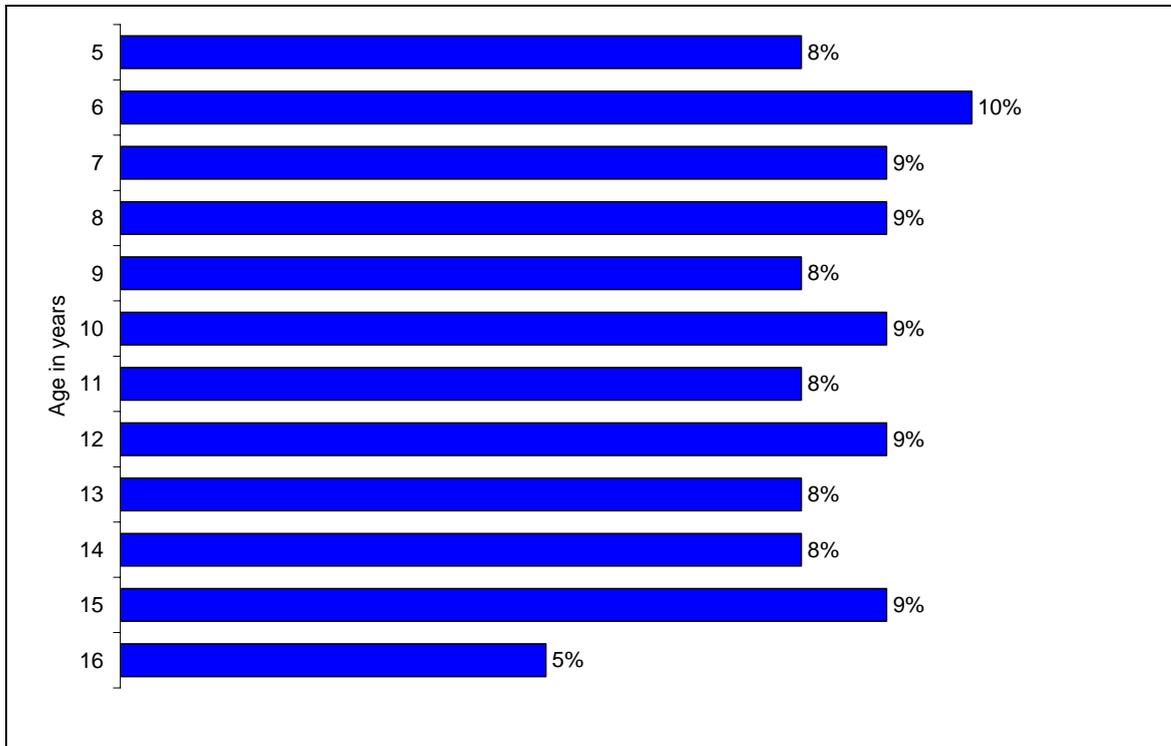
Year	% of selected children
1-2	20
3-6	34
7-9	25
10-12	20

Base: All respondents (5032)

2.11 Age of selected child

As shown in Chart 2.3, there is a fairly even dispersion of selected children across the different ages in the eligible range (5-16).⁹

Chart 2.3: Age of selected child



2.12 Gender of selected child

The proportions of selected children who were boys and girls were approximately equal (53% boys and 47% girls).

2.13 Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Table 2.5 shows the proportion of parents who said that their child:

- had a long-standing illness or disability
- had been identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- had a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

⁹ Note that as the age and school year of the selected child are clearly correlated, the findings in this report have generally only been analysed by school year.

In each case, the proportion was higher amongst older children, boys, those in lower social grades and in lone parent households. It was also higher where parents had a long-term illness or disability.

Table 2.5: Disability and Special Educational Needs by subgroups

		% with long-term illness or disability	% with SEN	% with statement of SEN
All		9	12	6
Child's school year	Years 1-2	7	8	3
	Years 3-6	8	11	6
	Years 7-9	11	14	8
	Years 10-12	10	13	7
Child's gender	Male	11	15	9
	Female	7	8	3
Social grade	AB	7	9	4
	C1	9	12	6
	C2	9	10	5
	D	10	13	8
	E	19	22	15
Lone parent household		14	15	7
Respondent has an illness or disability		20	18	10

Base: All respondents (5032)

One in seven children who had been identified as having Special Educational Needs attended a special rather than a mainstream school (14%), and this increased to 26% among children with a Statement of SEN.

2.14 Supplementary or Complementary School or Homework Club

One in five respondents (19%) said that their child attended a Supplementary or Complementary School or Homework Club. This was slightly higher amongst older children (ranging from 17% in years 1-2 to 23% in years 10-12) and was also higher amongst children with a Statement of SEN (26%). Black or Black British respondents were also more likely to say that their child attended a Supplementary or Complementary School or Homework Club (35%), as were parents in the London region (29%).

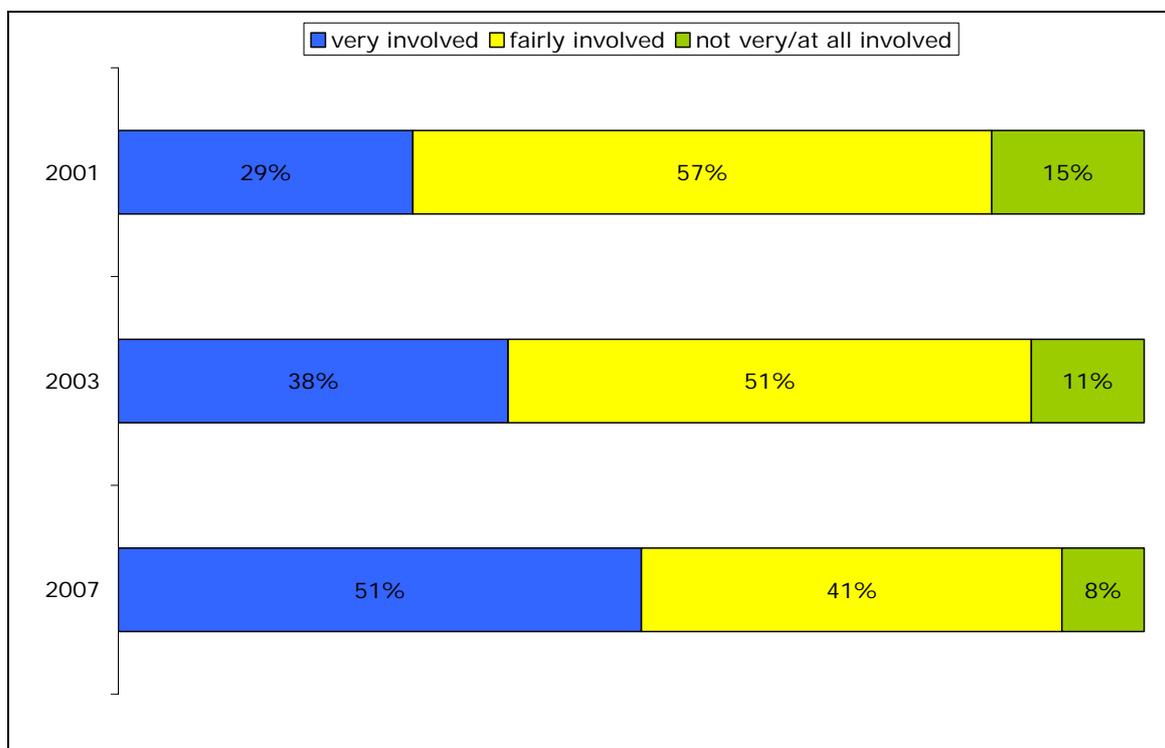
3 Overall involvement and responsibility

This chapter looks at parents' perceptions of their involvement in their child's school life, whether they would like to be more involved and the barriers they have to greater involvement.

3.1 How involved parents feel in their child's school life

Most parents feel at least fairly involved in their child's school life, and 51% feel very involved. This represents the continuation of a steady increase since 2001, when just 29% felt very involved. This is shown in Chart 3.1. Note that in this chart and throughout the report, comparisons with previous surveys are based on two-parent households only.

Chart 3.1: How involved parents feel in their child's school life - trend data



Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2007 = 4277, 2004 = 2021, 2001 = 1513)

It is possible to identify a number of sub-groups who feel more or less involved:

- women were more likely than men to feel very involved (53% compared with 45%), as were those with young children (56% in years 1 and 2); these differences hold irrespective of work status.
- parents who left full-time education later were also more likely to feel very involved (53% of those who left full-time education at 21 or over, compared

with 51% of those who left at 17-20 and 47% of those who left by the age of 16)

- those from Black or Black British backgrounds were far more likely to feel very involved (72%) than those from White (49%) and Asian or Asian British (54%) backgrounds (irrespective of terminal education age).
- Parents of a child with a Statement of SEN (63%) were also more likely to feel very involved
- Lone parents (46%) were less likely to feel very involved, and the figure for non-resident parents was much lower (34%, with 27% feeling not very or at all involved).

There were no differences according to whether the parent had a long-term illness or disability or caring responsibility, and this remains the case throughout the report in relation to both involvement and attitudes.

Respondents' answers are linked to their actual level of involvement (covered in the next chapters), particularly their involvement in school activities. However, those with less actual involvement often still felt involved (37% of parents who were not involved in any school activities and who never or only occasionally helped their child with homework still said they felt very involved in their child's school life). It is also noticeable that while parents feel more involved than they did in previous years, their actual level of involvement in school activities and in homework has remained similar. What has increased in this year's survey is the level of parental involvement in out-of-school activities (eg reading, cooking and making things with the child and playing sport). It is this participation in wider activities that may account for the stronger feeling of involvement. It is also possible that parents are taking a greater interest in their child's education, even if this has not translated into greater day-to-day involvement.

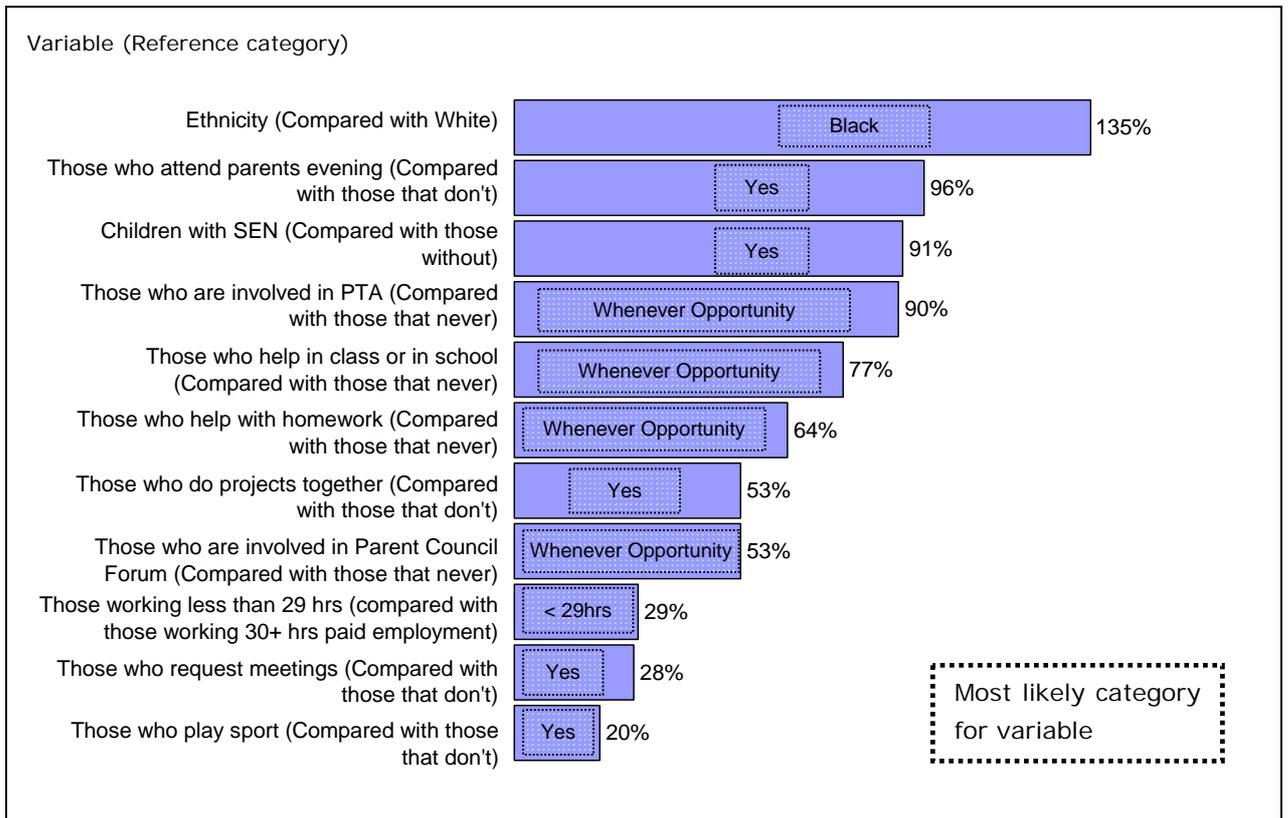
3.1.1 Types of parents most likely to be involved

Logistic regression was carried out on the parent's perception of involvement in the child's education. This analysis looked at parents who said they are 'very involved' in their child's education. This technique controls for other factors in the data and indicates how much more or less likely a parent is to say they are very involved in their child's education depending on the answers they give to other questions.¹⁰

¹⁰ Logistic regression was carried out using SPSS. It looks at the main effects of variables, whilst controlling for other factors within the data. The technique attempts to identify variables that contribute to explaining as much of the variance as possible for involvement in education, as well as indicating how much more or less likely a parent is to say they are very involved if they give a particular answer. Further details are provided in the Technical Appendix

The chart below shows the groups of parents who are most likely to say they are involved in their child’s education. The variables are listed on the left with their (reference categories) in brackets. The sub-groups who are ‘most likely’ are shown in the bars - along with how much more likely they are to say they are involved in their child’s education compared to the reference category.

Chart 3.2: Types of parents most likely to be involved



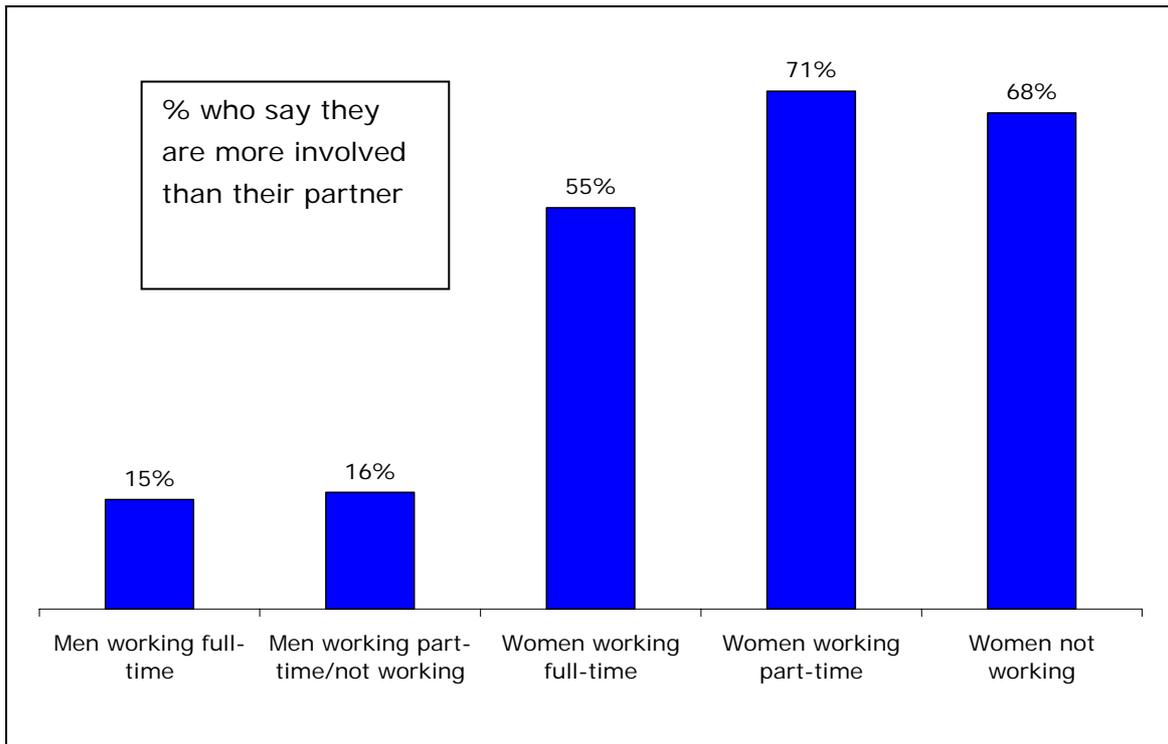
In summary, compared to the reference categories, the following parents were significantly **more likely** to say they are very involved in their child’s education:

- Black parents, who are more than twice as likely as white parents to say they are very involved (136% more likely).
- Those who personally talk about how a child is doing with teachers at regular events arranged by the school, such as parent’s evenings, meetings or review days (almost twice as likely).
- Those who have children with Statement of Special Educational Needs (91% more likely).
- Those involved in a PTA whenever the opportunity arises (90% more likely).
- Those who help in class or school whenever the opportunity arises (77% more likely).
- Those involved in Parent Council or Forum whenever opportunity arises (53% more likely).

3.2 Which parent is more involved?

Respondents were asked whether they felt more or less involved in their child's education than their partner. Female respondents were much more likely to say that they were more involved than their partner (65% compared with 15% of male respondents), and this was even more pronounced among female respondents who were not working full-time; this is shown in Chart 3.3.

Chart 3.3: Which parent is more involved in child's school life, by gender and working status



Base: All respondents in two-parent households (3,627)

Parents of children in secondary schools were more likely than those with children in primary schools to say that involvement was equal - this may reflect the more limited opportunities for parental involvement in secondary schools during the school day.

As one would expect, where respondents were more involved than their partner, they were more likely to say they were very involved in their child's school life. However, even amongst those who said they were less involved than their partner, two in five (39%) still said they were very involved in their child's school life, and 88% felt at least fairly involved. This suggests that, irrespective of which parent feels *more* involved, it is common for both parents to share a strong interest in their child's school life.

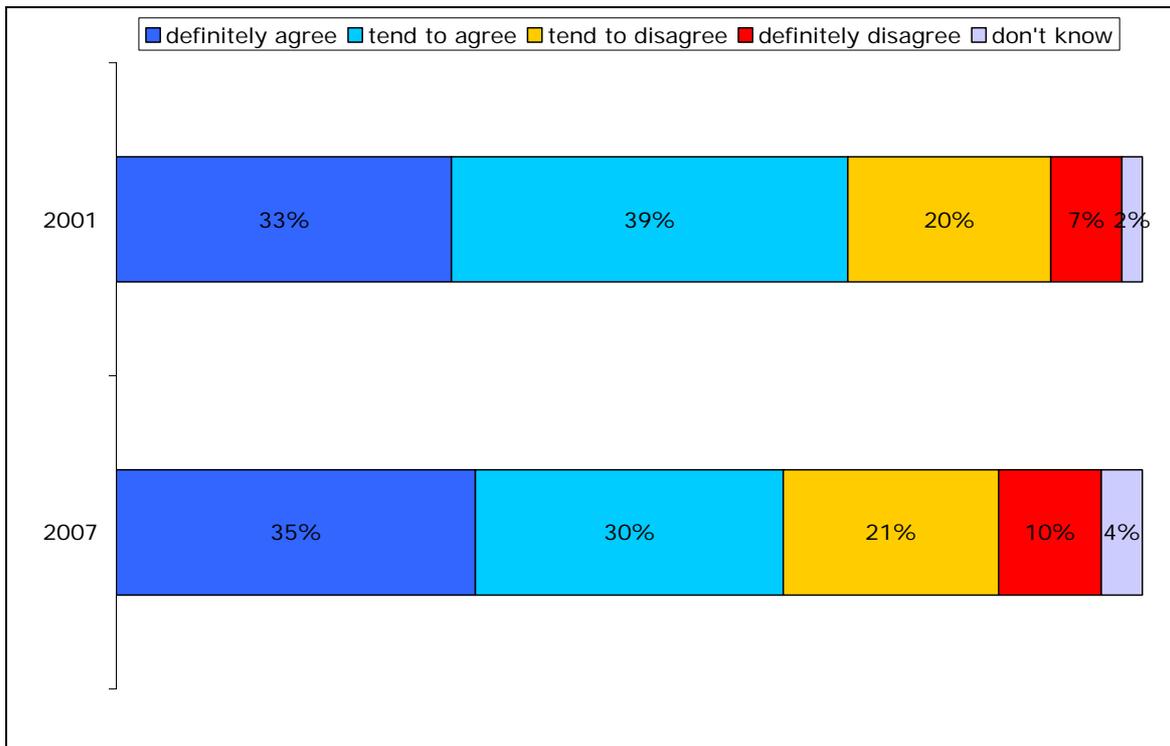
3.3 Parents' confidence in their own involvement

Almost all parents (94%) agreed that if the school told them that their child was not making good progress, they would be confident that their involvement could help. Overall, 62% agreed strongly with this statement, and this was higher amongst parents of children at primary schools than at secondary schools (65% and 57% respectively). More generally, answers reflected how involved parents felt they were in their child's school life overall.

3.4 Getting more involved

Two in three parents (66%) agreed that they would like to be more involved in their child's school life, while 31% disagreed. A comparison with 2001 (when the question was last asked) shows that parents were more likely to want greater involvement in 2001 than in the current survey (as shown in Chart 3.4). However, these findings reflect that parents felt they were actually less involved in 2001 than in the current survey, as noted above, and therefore had greater scope to do more. This is confirmed by analysis of the 2007 findings, which shows that those who said they were less involved with their child's school life, or who said the other parent was more involved, were more likely to say they wanted to do more.

Chart 3.4: Whether parents agree that they would like to be more involved in their child’s school life



Base: All respondents answering questionnaire A (4056)

To some extent, sub-group variations follow the general pattern described above: those groups who felt less involved in their child’s school life were those who wanted to be more involved. This applied particularly to men (69% agreed), non-resident parents (81%) and those who left full-time education at an earlier age (68% of those who left school by the age of 16).

Other sub-group differences, however, are not related to this pattern (i.e. there were also some groups of parents who, despite already feeling they were very involved, desired even greater involvement). In particular, those in non-White ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English were more likely than other parents to want to be more involved (and the difference by language still holds when analysing *within* ethnic group). The same applied to parents in lower social grades and those not in work, as well as respondents with a long-term illness or disability and those with a child who had a Statement of SEN. The desire to be more involved was also stronger amongst parents of younger children. These details are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Whether parents want to be more involved, by sub-groups

		% agree	% disagree
All		66	31
Child's school year	Years 1-2	71	26
	Years 3-6	67	29
	Years 7-9	65	32
	Years 10-12	59	37
Social grade	A	51	44
	B	58	37
	C1	66	30
	C2	70	28
	D	75	23
	E	74	23
Ethnic background	White	63	33
	Black or Black British	84	12
	Asian or Asian British	82	17
	other	85	12
Main language	English	64	32
	Not English	85	14
Child with Statement of SEN		73	19
Respondent illness or disability		74	22

Base: All respondents answering questionnaire A (4056)

3.5 Barriers to greater involvement

When asked whether anything stops them from getting more involved in their child's school life, parents were most likely to mention work commitments (44%). The only other reasons given by more than a handful of respondents were the demands of other children or childcare issues (7%) and lack of time generally (6%). These findings are very similar to those obtained in previous years of the survey.

The proportion mentioning work commitments ranged from 64% amongst those working full-time, to 41% of those working part-time, to 17% of those not working (or working less than 8 hours per week); the last figure is presumably a reflection of working patterns generally (even if they were not currently in a job) or of the restrictions caused by their partner being in work. Amongst women who were not working, 20% gave childcare issues or the demands of other children as a reason.

Overall, one in four (24%) said that they had no specific barriers, and this tended to be higher amongst the groups who said that they wanted to be more involved in their child's school life: parents from Black/Black British or Asian/Asian British backgrounds (35% and 40% respectively) and those whose main language is not English (39%). It was also higher among those with a child who has a Statement of SEN (33%).

4 Attitudes to parental responsibility

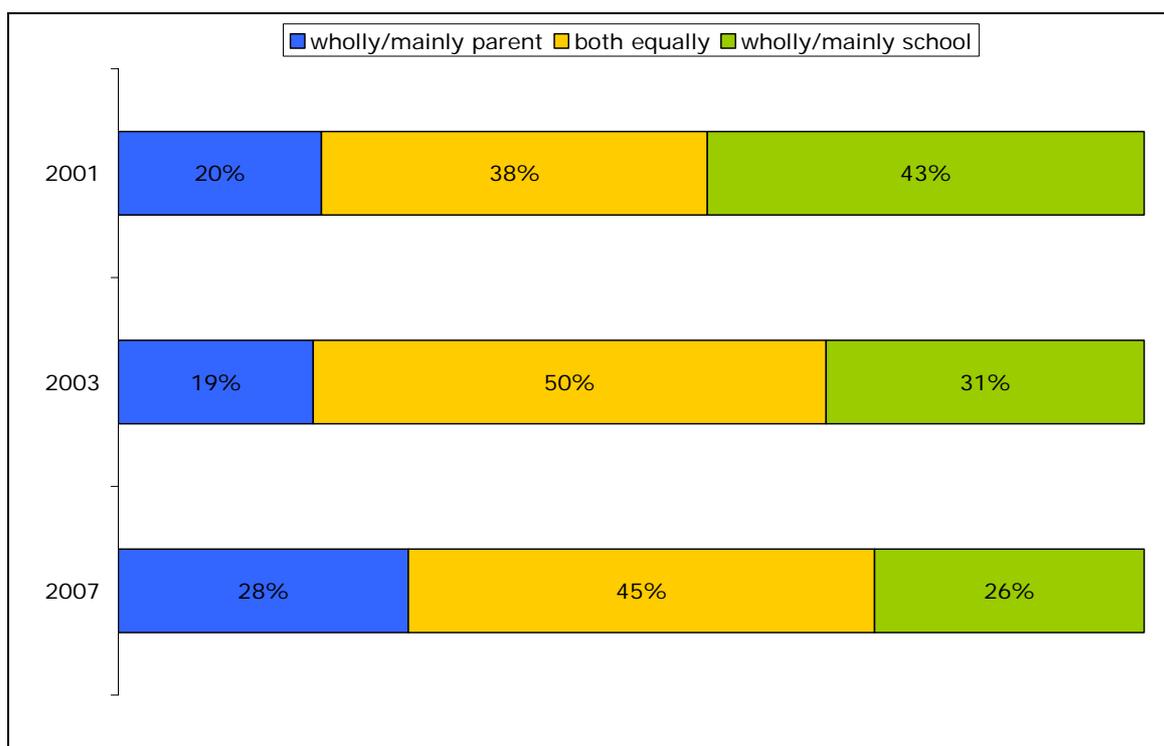
In this chapter, we consider parents' views on the balance of responsibility for children's education between themselves and the school, and also examine their views on their child's school attendance: how important they think it is to make sure their child attends regularly and on time, and what their views are on taking children out of school during term time.

4.1 Relative responsibility of schools and parents

Respondents were asked whether they thought, in general, that a child's education was wholly or mainly the responsibility of the parent or the school. Similar proportions felt it was the parent's responsibility as the school's (28% and 26% respectively).

As shown in Chart 4.1, this represents a shift in attitudes over time, with a greater proportion saying it is the parent's responsibility in the current survey than in 2004 and 2001.

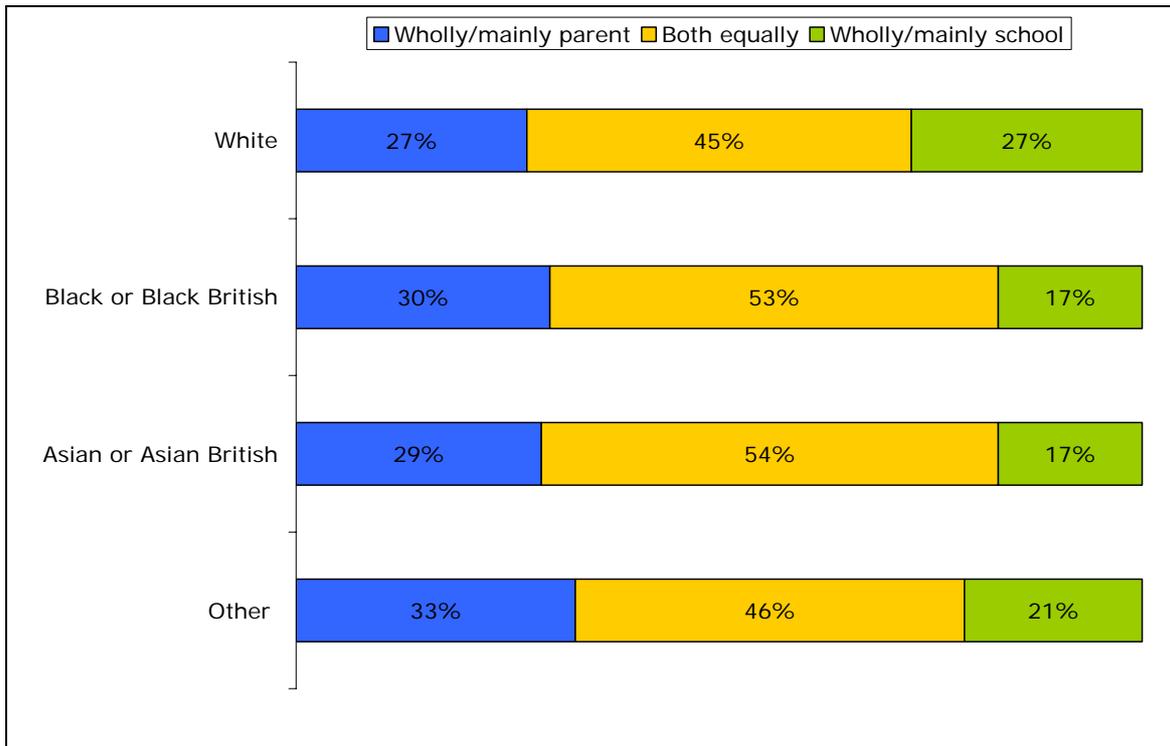
Chart 4.1: Relative responsibility for a child's education - trend data



Base: All respondents (5032)

Findings were very consistent across different sub-groups, with the exception of ethnic background: respondents from non-White backgrounds were least likely to say that a child's education is the school's responsibility rather than the parent's (even when controlling for terminal education age). This is shown in chart 4.2.

Chart 4.2: Relative responsibility for a child’s education by ethnic background



Base: All respondents (5032)

Respondents who said that a child’s education was wholly or mainly the school’s responsibility were still likely to feel at least fairly involved in their child’s school life (88%). This indicates that even where parents feel it is mainly the school’s responsibility, this does not necessarily denote a reluctance to be involved.

As might be expected, parents who felt that it is mainly or wholly the parents who are responsible for their child’s education were more likely than those who felt it was the school’s responsibility to feel very involved in their child’s education (52% compared with 40%).

4.2 Making sure child attends school

Nearly all parents (96%) felt that it was extremely important to make sure that their child attended school regularly and on time, exactly the same proportion measured in 2001 and 2004.

While very high amongst all groups, the proportion who said it was extremely important was slightly lower amongst men (94%), in particular men who were not in work (93%). It was also slightly lower amongst parents from Asian or Asian British backgrounds (93%) compared with parents from Black or Black British backgrounds (98%).

4.2.1 Taking children out of school during term time

The issue of children being absent from school, for example for term-time holidays, was highlighted in the Government's "Every Parent Matters" publication, which supported school and local authorities who decline approval of such absence ¹¹. Parents were divided on the issue of whether they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time (for example to go on a family holiday or extended family break): 48% said they would be happy to do this, but 42% said they wouldn't and 10% said it would depend. These findings are very similar to those obtained in the 2001 and 2004 surveys (49% and 46% said they would respectively).

Men were more likely than women to say they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time (52% compared with 44%), with women working full-time the most reluctant to do this (41% said they would be happy). Parents with younger children were also more prepared to take them out of school, as shown in Table 4.2. This table also shows that parents from non-White ethnic backgrounds would be less happy to take their children out of school, as were those who left full-time education at an older age.

¹¹ 2007, *Every Parent Matters*, Department for Education and Skills

Table 4.1: Whether parents are happy to take their child out of school during term time by subgroups

		% yes
All		48
Child's school year	Years 1-2	54
	Years 3-6	52
	Years 7-9	47
	Years 10-12	35
Terminal education age	16 or under	51
	17-20	47
	21 or over	45
Ethnic background	White	50
	Black or Black British	27
	Asian or Asian British	30
	Other	38

Base: All respondents answering questionnaire A (4056)

Parents' attitudes on this issue were not affected by their level of involvement (i.e. greater involvement did not appear to make parents more reluctant to take their child out of school).

5 Involvement with child's education

This chapter examines the level of involvement that parents have with their child's homework, as well as other educational and recreational activities. It also looks at parents' views on the importance of this type of involvement.

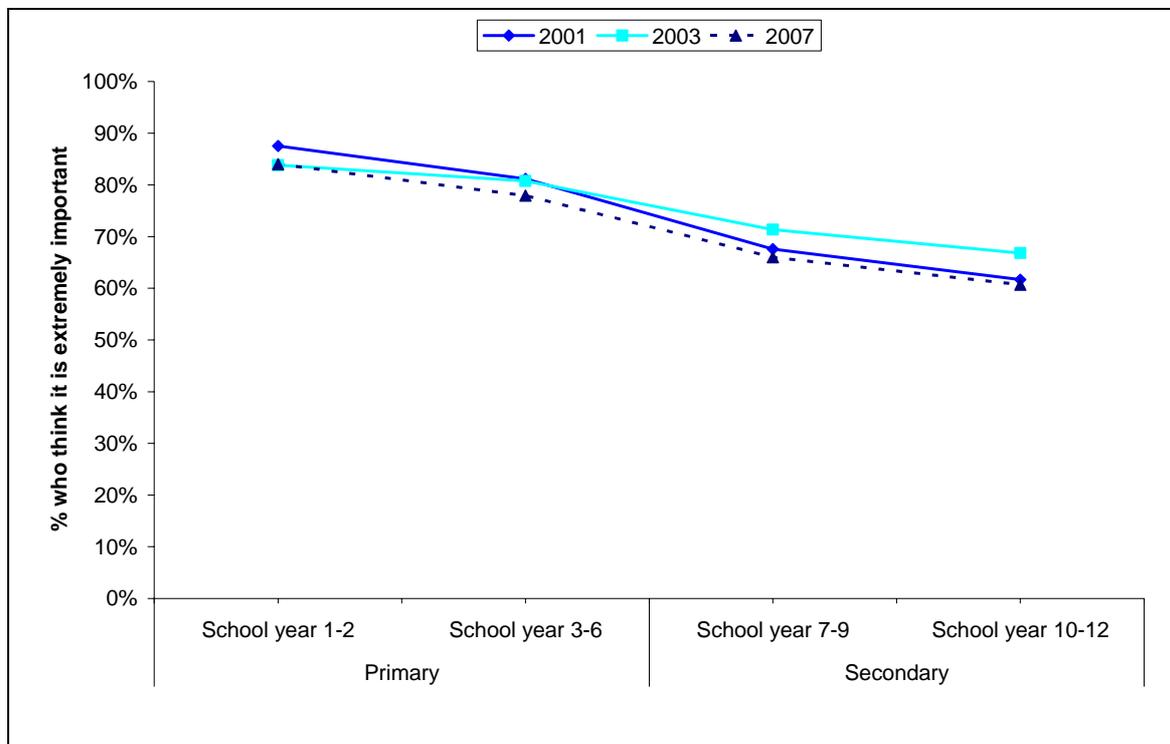
5.1 The importance of helping with homework

Parents were asked to rate how important it was that they help their child with homework on a five-point scale where 1 meant 'not at all important' and five meant 'extremely important'. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents said it was extremely important to help their child with homework.

It is clear that parents were less likely to think it is extremely important to help their child the older the child gets. As can be seen in Chart 5.1, this is a similar trend to that found in the 2001 and 2004 surveys where the proportion of parents rating it as extremely important to help their child with homework decreased gradually the higher the school year.

The overall proportions saying it is extremely important to help their child with their homework have remained very similar over time.

Chart 5.1: Proportion of parents who think it is extremely important to help their child with homework - trend data



Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2007 = 4277, 2004 = 2021, 2001 = 1513)

Table 5.1 shows that as well as the difference noted above by school year, women were more likely than men to say it is extremely important to help their child with homework (and this is particularly high amongst women not working full-time), while perceived importance was also higher in the C2DE social grades.

Black or Black British (84%) and Asian or Asian British (82%) respondents were more likely than White respondents (72%) to feel it is extremely important to help their child with homework. Respondents who left education at an earlier age were more likely than those that stayed in education beyond the age of 21 to think it extremely important to help their child with homework.

Table 5.1: Proportion of parents thinking it is extremely important to help their child with homework by subgroups

		% thinking it is extremely important to help their child with homework
All		73
Respondent gender	Male	69
	Female	76
Ethnic background	White	72
	Black or Black British	84
	Asian or Asian British	82
Terminal Education age	16 or under	75
	17-20	74
	21+	68
Social grade	AB	69
	C1	73
	C2	76
	DE	76

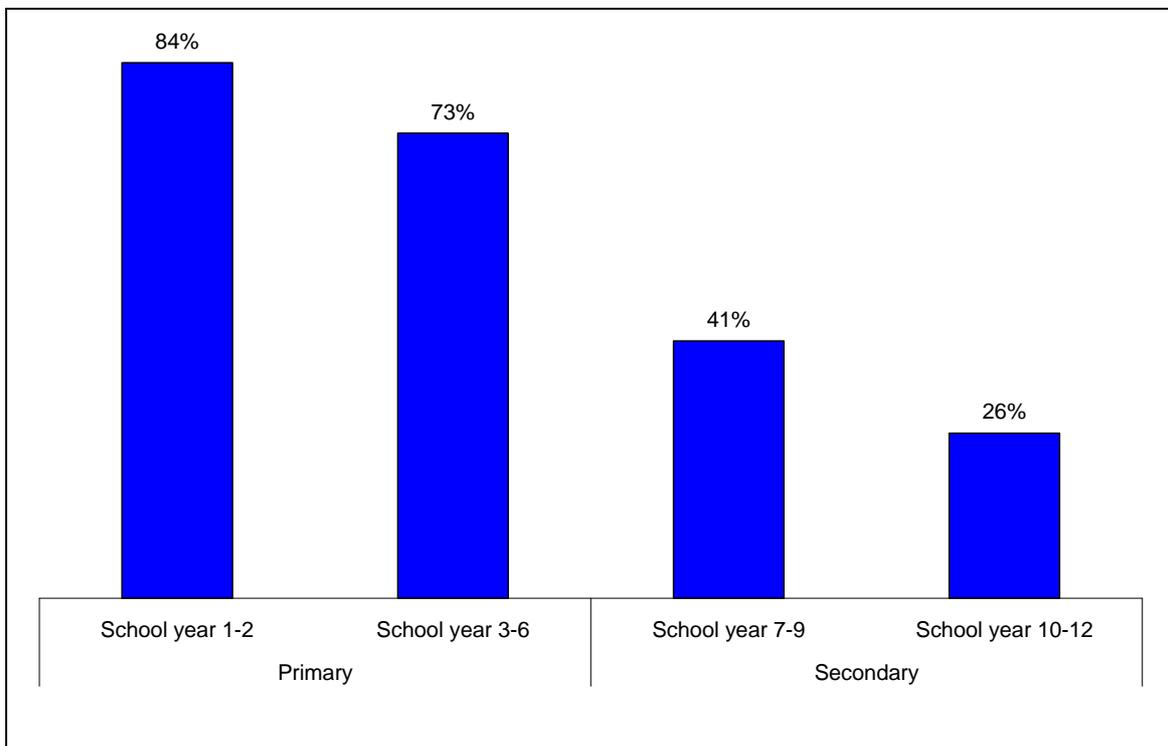
Base: All respondents (5032)

5.2 How often parents help their child with homework

Parents were asked how often they helped their child with their homework. Around a third (32%) said that they helped their child every time with their homework; a quarter (26%) indicated that they helped their child most times and 31% helped their child occasionally. Just 6% of respondents said they helped only if their child asked while only 2% said that they never helped with their child's homework.

Consistent with ratings of how important it is to help their child with homework, the frequency of helping with homework is closely tied into which school year the child is in. Parents of children in lower school years were more likely than parents of children in later school years to help their child with homework every time or most of the time (see Chart 5.2).

Chart 5.2: Proportion of parents who help their child with homework every time or most of the time by school year



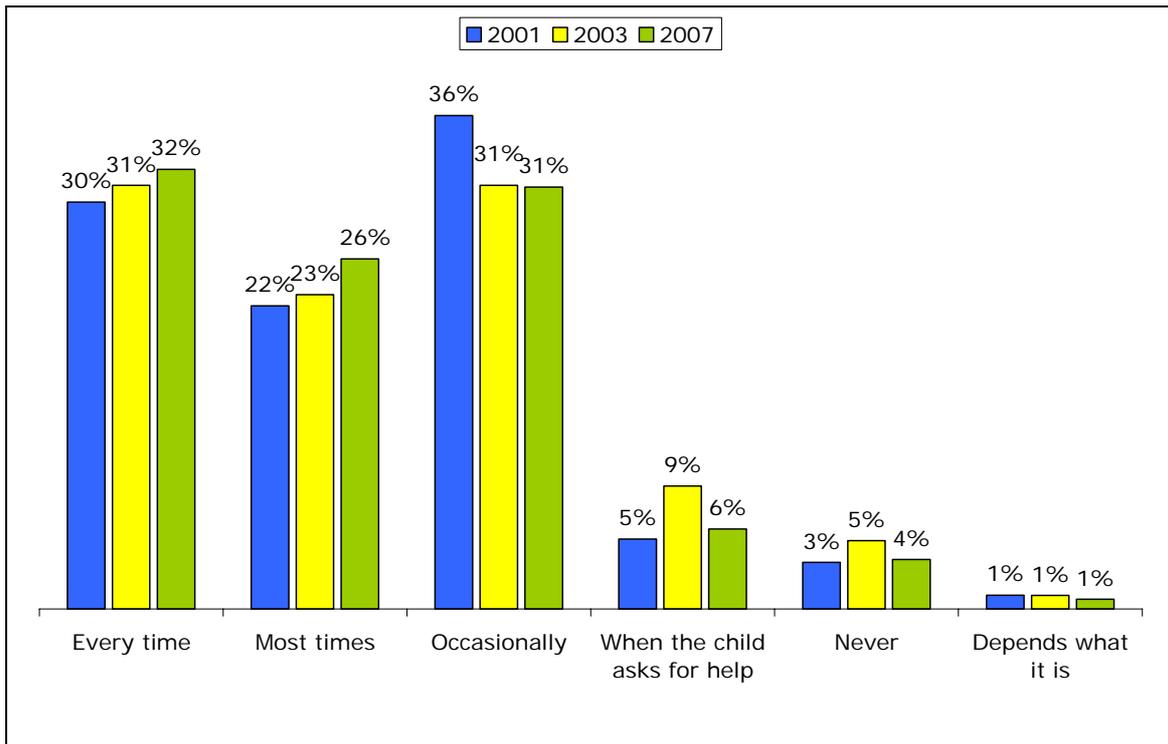
Base: All respondents (5032)

Once again, female respondents were more likely than male respondents to have helped their child with homework every time or most times (62% compared with 52%). Although there is no gender difference when looking at those working full-time, when looking at those working part-time or not at all, women were more likely than men to help their child with homework. One in three non-resident parents (34%) said they helped every time or most times.

Respondents from Black or Black British (69%) and Asian and Asian British (69%) backgrounds were more likely than White respondents (56%) to help their child with their homework every time or most times.

The proportion of parents who help their child with homework either every time, most times or occasionally has increased slightly since 2003. Chart 5.3 details changes in involvement since 2001.

Chart 5.3: How often parents help their child with homework - trend data

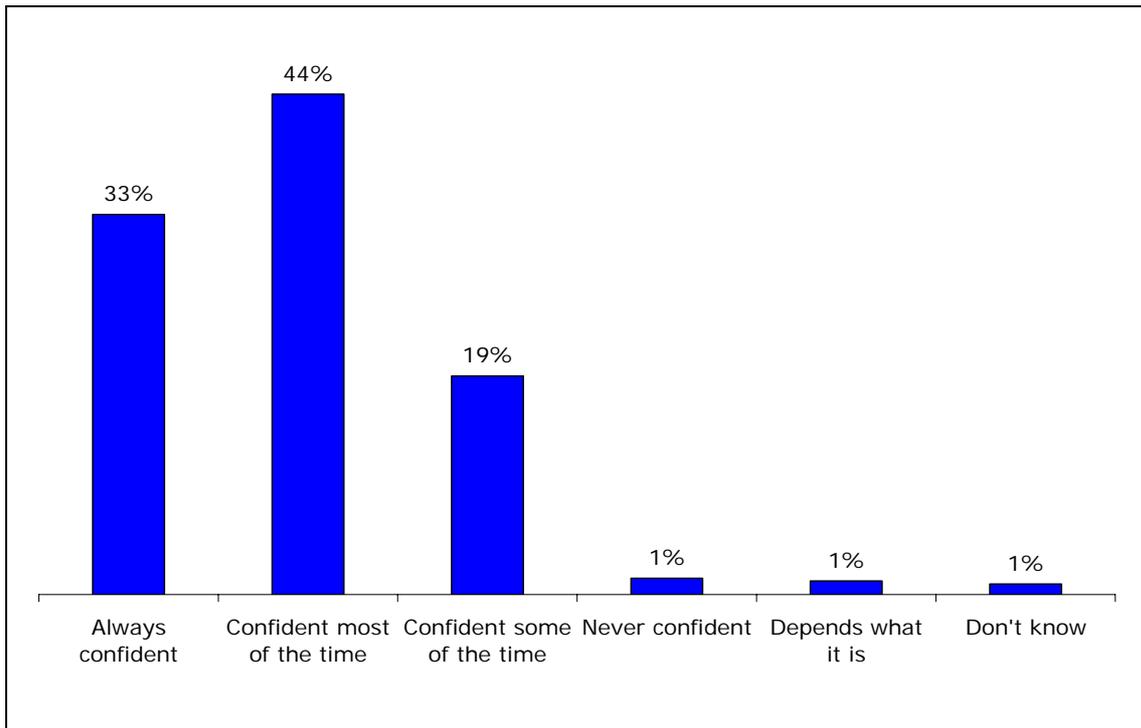


Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2007 = 4277, 2004 = 2021, 2001 = 1513)

5.3 Confidence in helping with homework

A third (33%) said they were always confident of helping their child with homework, while 44% indicated that they felt confident most of the time (see Chart 5.4). Around one in five (19%) respondents said they were confident some of the time.

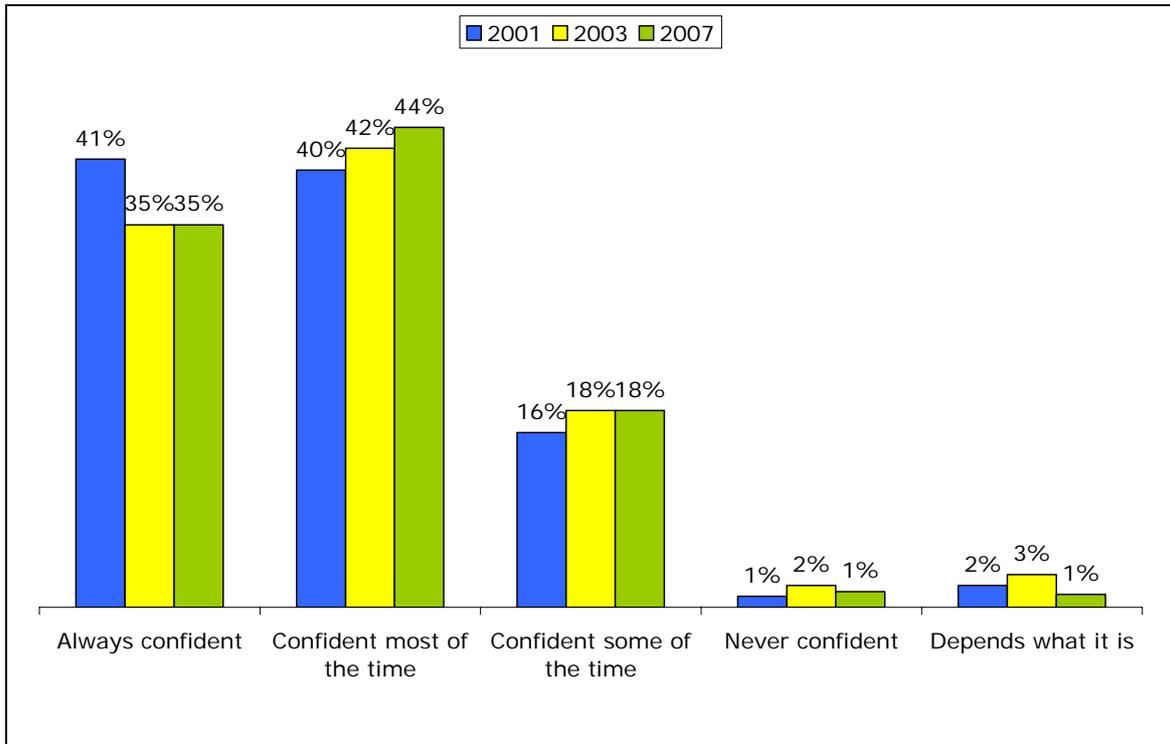
Chart 5.4: How confident parents feel helping their child with homework



Base: All respondents (5032)

The proportion of parents in two parent households who always feel confident helping their child with homework has decreased slightly over time, although the main change took place between 2001 and 2004 (see Chart 5.5).

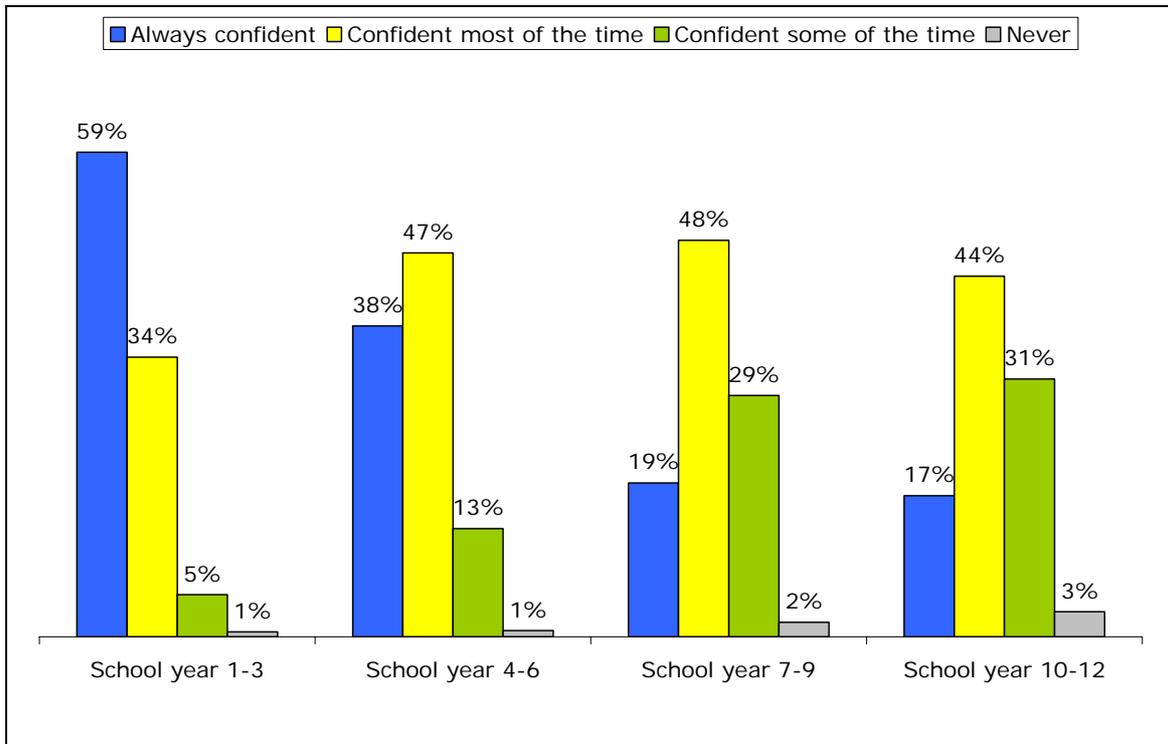
Chart 5.5: How confident parents feel helping their child with homework - trend data



Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2007 = 4277, 2004 = 2021, 2001 = 1513)

Parents of children in lower school years were more likely than parents of older children to feel confident about helping their child with homework (see Chart 5.6).

Chart 5.6: How confident parents feel helping their child with homework by school year



Base: All respondents (5032)

Despite spending less time helping with homework, male parents were more likely than female parents to always feel confident about helping their child (39% compared with 29%). In particular, a smaller proportion of lone parents (who were predominantly female) said they were always confident (26%). Non-resident parents were no different to other parents in the confidence they felt, again despite the fact that they spend less time helping their child with homework.

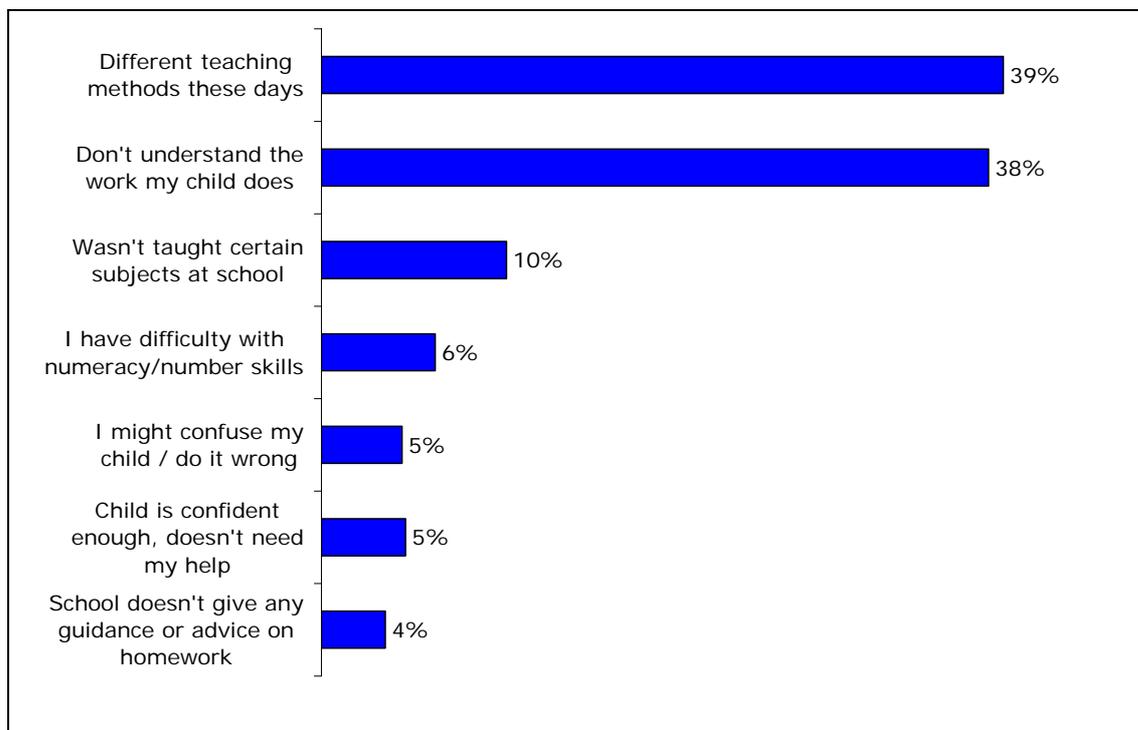
Respondents who stayed in education beyond the age of 21 were more likely than respondents who left education at the age of 16 or younger to always feel confident about helping their child with homework (47% compared with 27%). Related to this, respondents of social grade AB (41%) were more likely than those from C1 (33%), C2 (27%) and DE (27%) social grades to always feel confident about helping their child with homework.

Respondents from Black or Black British backgrounds (41%) were more likely than respondents from White (33%) backgrounds to always feel confident helping their child with homework.

5.4 Reasons for lack of confidence

Respondents who were never confident or only confident some of the time with their child's homework were asked why they did not feel very confident (responses are summarised in Chart 5.7). Around two in five respondents indicated that they were not confident helping their child with homework because of 'different teaching methods these days' (39%) and also because they 'don't understand the work their child does' (38%). Another reason given for not feeling confident was that the respondent 'wasn't taught certain subjects at school' (10%).

Chart 5.7: Why some parents are not confident helping with homework



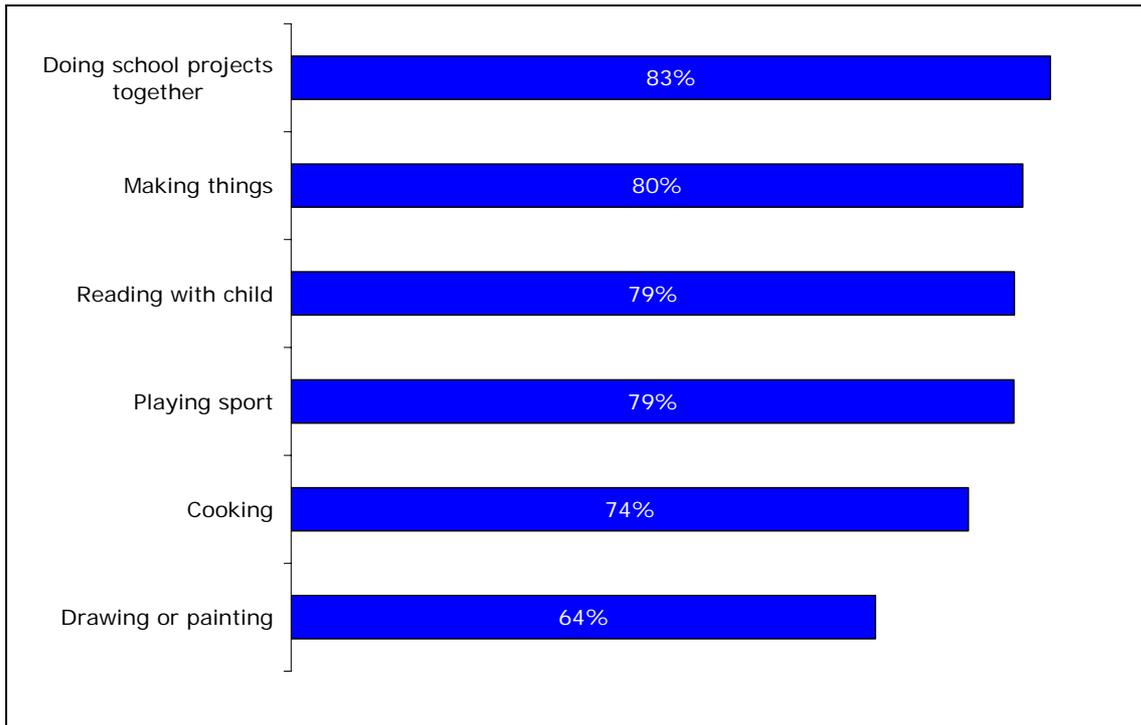
Base: All respondents who were sometimes or never confident with helping their child with homework (843)

Where comparison was possible across the three surveys the proportions stating each reason were very similar. Four in ten (42%) respondents in 2001 and 38% in 2004 said that different teaching methods were one reason for not feeling confident in helping their child with homework. Similarly, 37% in 2001 and 40% in 2004 indicated that they did not understand the work their child does.

5.5 Other activities: Which activities parents do with their child

Respondents were asked whether they personally did certain activities with their child to aid their learning (see Chart 5.8). Respondents were most likely to do school projects with their child (83%) with slightly fewer respondents indicating that they play sport (80%), make things (79%) or read with their child (79%).

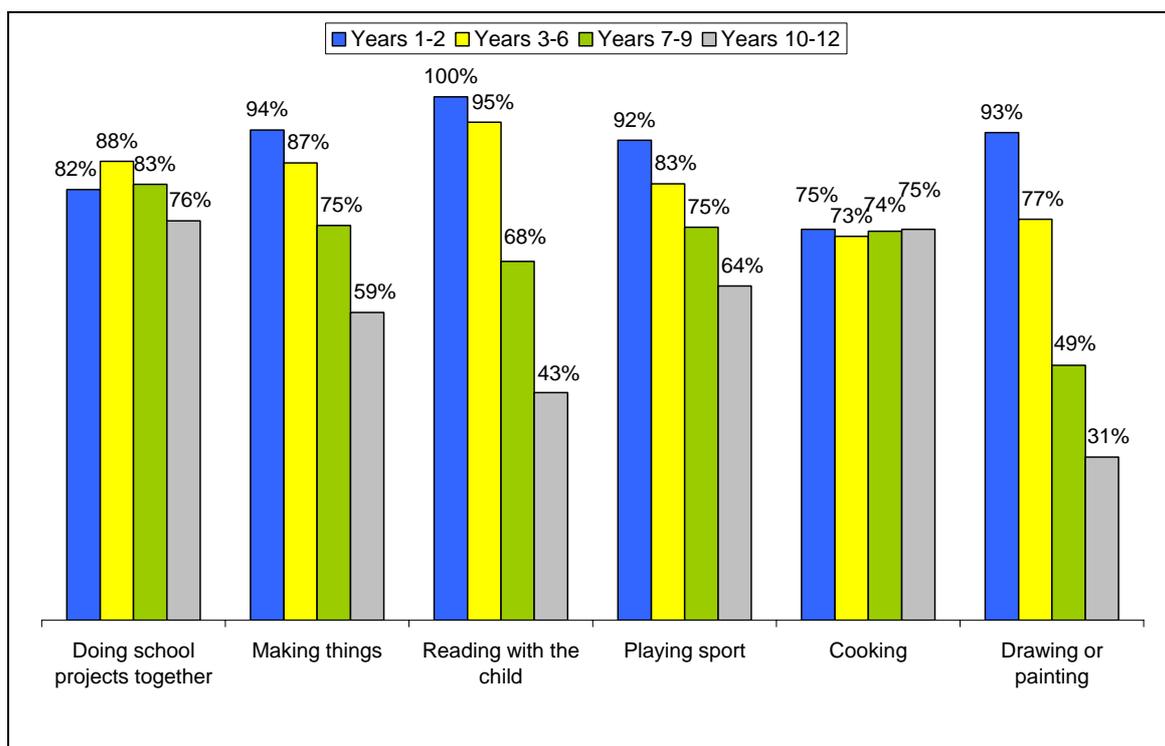
Chart 5.8: Other activities parents do with their child



Base: All respondents in questionnaire A (4056)

As expected, for most of the activities, parents were more likely to do them with children in early school years (See Chart 5.9). The exception to this is with cooking, where the proportion of parents cooking with their child stayed stable over the school years. The proportion of parents doing school projects together also only declined slightly for children in years 10-12.

Chart 5.9 Other activities parents do with their child - trend data



Base: All respondents in questionnaire A (4056)

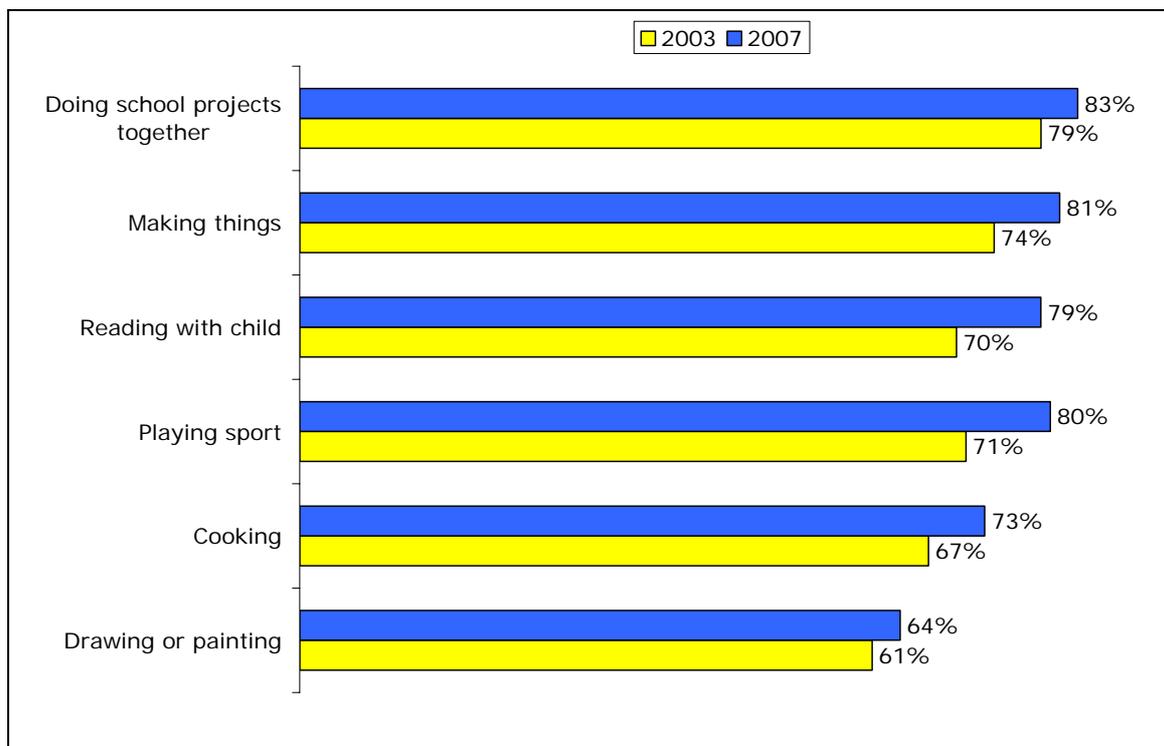
Parents whose child was male were slightly more likely to play sport with them than if the child was female (81% compared to 77%). If the child was female, parents were more likely to make things, cook, do school projects and draw and paint with their child than if the child was male.

Male parents were more likely than female parents to help with sport, while the opposite applied to cooking and drawing or painting. Otherwise, results were similar in terms of the parent's gender. There were few differences by work status, although help with drawing or painting was more common amongst parents who were not working. However, working parents were more likely than those not in work to help with school projects.

It is also noticeable that non-resident parents were as likely as other parents to help with most of the activities, the one exception being school projects, where they were less likely to be involved.

In general, parents were more likely than in 2004 to be involved with these activities with their child (see Chart 5.10). All activities have shown an increase from 2004 in the proportion of parents who indicated that they take part in each activity. While the frequency of helping with homework has remained relatively constant in recent years, this suggests that parents are now getting involved in a wider range of activities.

Chart 5.10: Whether parents take part in other activities with their child - trend data



Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2007 = 4277, 2004 = 2021)

Parents were also asked about other activities they did with their child. One in six (16%) said they take their child on outdoor activities or field trips, while 10% take their child to sporting activities or classes, and 8% to museums or art galleries. As with other activities, these were more common amongst parents of younger children.

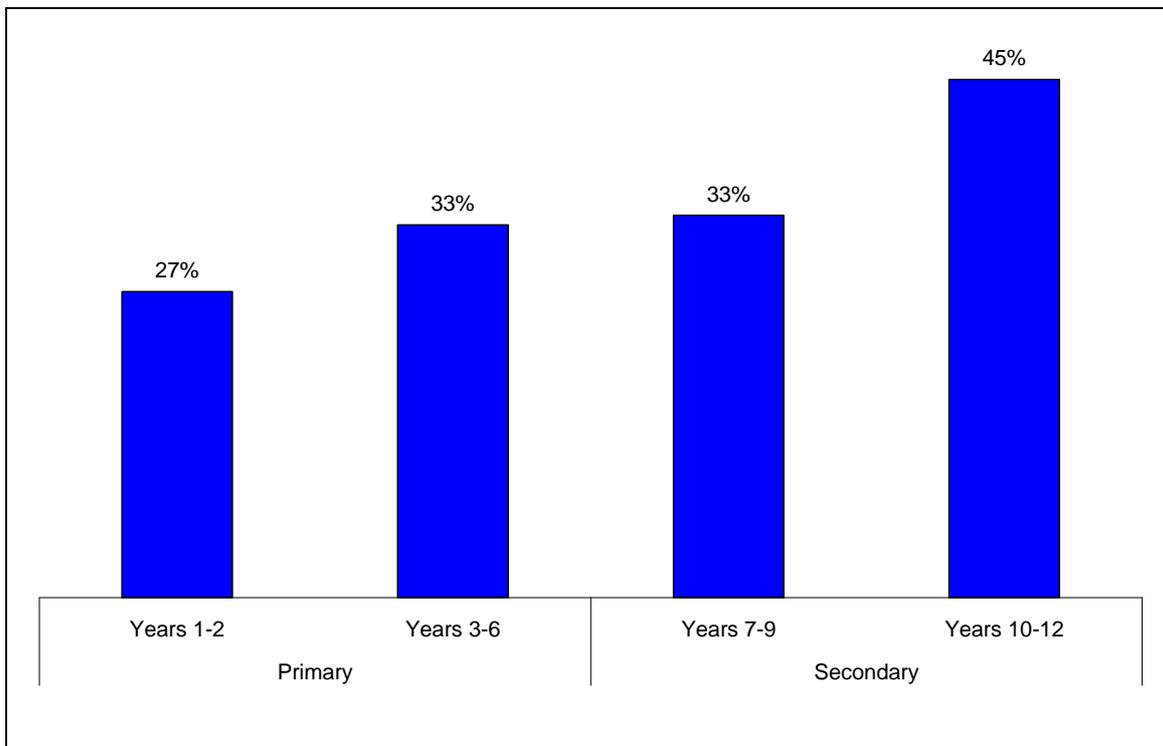
5.6 Importance of making sure children attend homework clubs

The chapter on child and household characteristics reported that 19% of children attended a Supplementary or Complementary School or Homework Club.

Of these, 35% of parents said that it was extremely important that they attend one. This is a decline from 2004 when 44% felt it was extremely important that their child attended a supplementary homework club.

Chart 5.11 shows the proportion of parents whose child attends a supplementary homework club who thought it extremely important that the child attends the club. Attendance at a Supplementary or Complementary School or Homework Club increases with the child's age, and it is also clear that the older the child, the more important parents felt it was for their child to attend the supplementary homework club.

Chart 5.11: Whether parent feels it is extremely important that their child attends supplementary homework club by school year



Base: All respondents whose child attends a homework club (777)

Female parents were more likely than male parents to think attendance was extremely important, particularly those not in work (48%). Parents from non-white backgrounds were also more likely than White parents to say it was extremely important (50% compared with 32%).

Parents who had left education at the age of 16 or younger were more likely than other parents to see attendance as extremely important (42%). This may be a reflection that parents who left education at the earliest opportunity feel that they cannot give their children as much educational help as they would like within their household.

Similarly, while there was not much difference in the proportion of parents across the social grades whose child attended a supplementary homework club, there was a difference in how important they felt it was for their child to attend. Respondents in social grade C1 (38%), C2 (35%) and DE (38%) were more likely than respondents in social grade AB (28%) to feel it was extremely important that their child attends a supplementary homework club.

Children who had been identified as having Special Education Needs (SEN) were more likely to attend a supplementary homework club than those that had not been identified as having SEN. Parents of children with SEN were also more likely than those that had not to feel it was extremely important that child actually attends (52% compared with 32%).

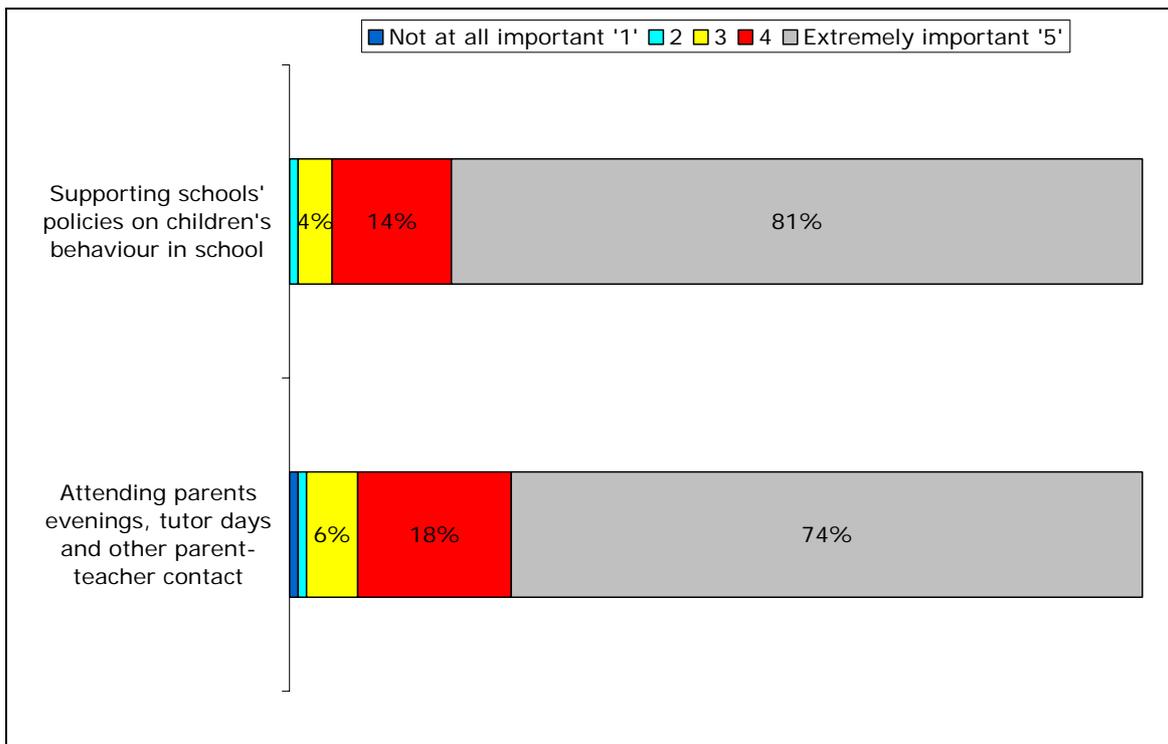
6 Involvement /partnership with school

This chapter looks at parents' involvement in activities at the school and their attitudes to their level of involvement.

6.1 Importance of involvement at school

Parents can be involved with a child's school by supporting the school's policies on children's behaviour, as well as attending events such as parents' evenings. Parents were asked how important they felt it was to participate in their child's school in this way (responses are summarised in Chart 6.1). Eight in ten respondents (80%) said that it was extremely important to support schools' policies on children's behaviour in school. Three-quarters (75%) also thought it was extremely important to attend parents' evenings, tutor days and other parent-teacher contact.

Chart 6.1: Importance of getting involved with school in other ways



Base: All respondents (5032)

The proportion of parents indicating that it was extremely important to support their child's schools on policies on children's behaviour has remained constant since 2004 (80% in 2007 compared with 81% in 2004). The same is true of how important parents feel it is to attend parents' evenings, with 76% saying it was extremely important in 2007 compared with 74% in 2004.

Table 6.1 summarises comparisons between subgroups. Parents of children in earlier school years were more likely to see the importance of attending parents' evenings and other events, but there was no difference in terms of support for policies.

There were significantly more female (83%) than male (65%) parents who felt it was extremely important to attend events such as parents' evenings, and this is the case irrespective of the respondents working status. Female respondents (84%) were also more likely than male respondents (75%) to think it extremely important to support schools' policies on children's behaviour in school. However, the difference was slightly less than that found for attending parents' evenings, and this may be a reflection that supporting schools' policies on children's behaviour is not something that regularly requires time from a parent.

Similarly, non-resident parents were less likely than parents whose children live in their household to think it was extremely important to attend parents' evenings (76% compared with 60%), but were no less likely than other parents to think it extremely important to support the child's school on policies to do with children's behaviour.

Table 6.1: Those who felt it extremely important to be involved in school in other ways by subgroups

		% thinking it is extremely important to support schools' policies	% thinking it is extremely important to attend parents evenings, tutor days etc.
All		80	75
Respondent gender	Male	75	65
	Female	84	83
Child's school year	Years 1-2	81	81
	Years 3-6	79	76
	Years 7-9	81	72
	Years 10-12	80	74
Non-resident parent		75	60

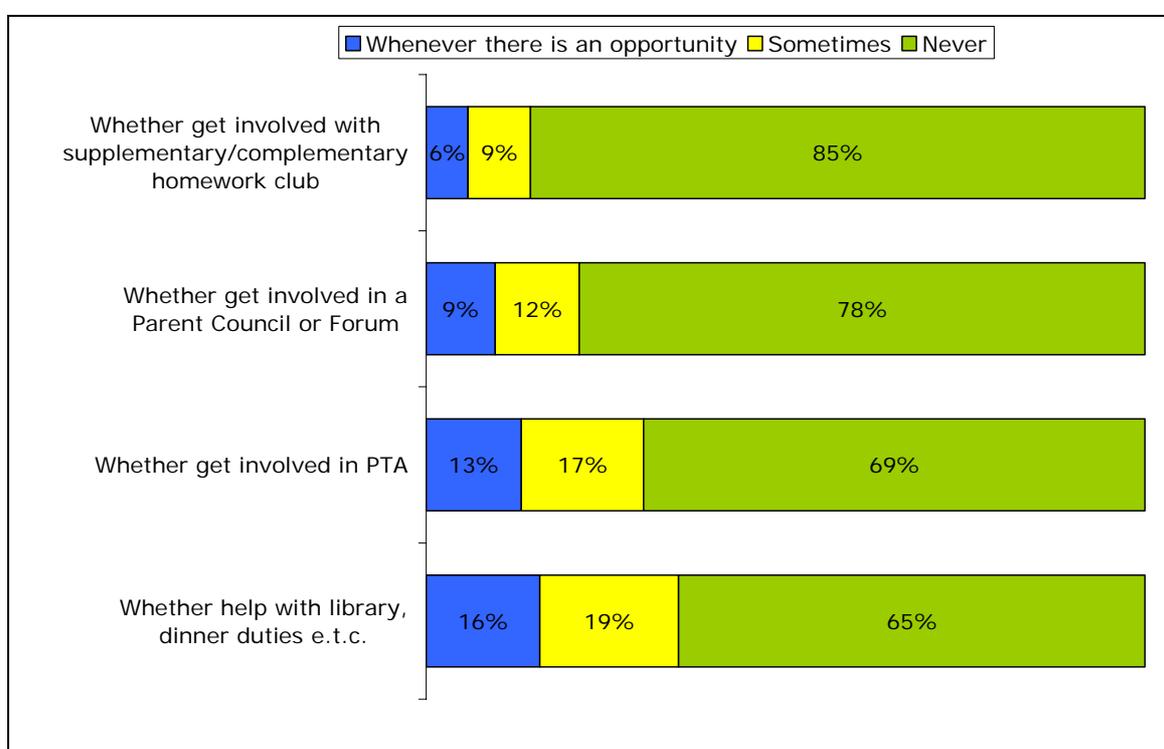
Base: All respondents (5032)

6.2 Level of involvement with the school

Respondents were asked how often they got involved with various aspects of their child’s school: supplementary or complementary homework clubs, Parent councils, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the school library or dinner duties (responses are summarised in Chart 6.2).

Respondents were most likely to be involved with helping in the library or dinner duties “whenever there is an opportunity” (16%). Thirteen percent of respondents said they were involved with the PTA whenever there is an opportunity, while one in ten (9%) said this about involvement with a Parent Council or Forum.

Chart 6.2: Frequency that parents get involved with other activities



Base: All respondents in questionnaire A (4056)

As can be seen from Table 6.2, female parents were more likely than male parents to get involved in activities at their child’s school, particularly in the case of helping in the library or on dinner duties; involvement was highest among women not working full-time.

With all of the activities, parents were more likely to be involved if their child was in a primary rather than secondary school, and as expected this particularly applied to helping in class or at school.

Respondents who finished education at 16 or younger were less likely than those who continued with education to help out in class, help out in the PTA or in a Parent Council or Forum; the difference was most pronounced in relation to the PTA.

Respondents from Asian or Asian British or Black or Black British backgrounds were more likely than White respondents to be involved in all of the activities, and involvement was also higher in the London region than elsewhere.

Non-resident parents were less likely to take part in the various activities, with the exception of homework clubs (where there was no difference). Lone parents were less likely to be involved in the PTA, but otherwise had a similar level of involvement to those in two-parent households.

Table 6.2: Parents who were involved with other activities at child's school (whenever there is an opportunity or sometimes) by subgroups

		Involved with homework club	Involved with Parent Council	Involved with PTA	Involved with library, dinner duties etc.
All		14	21	30	35
Respondent gender	Male	15	18	25	26
	Female	14	23	34	42
Ethnic Background	White	12	19	29	33
	Black or Black British	30	36	43	42
	Asian or Asian British	30	32	41	45
	Mixed	14	28	42	61
	Other	28	41	37	42
Terminal education age	16 or under	13	15	20	28
	17-20	16	25	35	41
	21+	15	27	42	39
Child's school year	Years 1-2	18	27	38	45
	Years 3-6	16	24	33	45
	Years 7-9	11	17	26	27
	Years 10-12	12	16	22	18
Social grade	AB	12	24	37	36
	C1	16	23	32	37
	C2	12	17	22	31
	DE	19	20	28	35

Base: All respondents in questionnaire A (4056)

Overall around half of parents (53%) said that they took part in at least one of these four activities. Summarising the sub-group differences, involvement was higher amongst women and parents of children at primary school. It was also higher amongst parents from non-white ethnic backgrounds. In these respects, patterns of involvement were the same as for helping with homework. However, participation in school activities was also higher amongst parents who left full-time education at an older age, something that did not apply to help with homework or other help with children.

The items covered in this year's questionnaire differ from previous surveys, and this makes it difficult to make direct comparisons. However, it is clear that the level of involvement is similar to that in previous years, with very similar figures for involvement in the PTA and helping out in class or in school.

6.2.1 Impact of actual involvement with the school on perceived desire to get more involved

In Section 3.4 we examined the extent to which parents agreed that they would like to be more involved in their child's school life. There were some differences apparent when looking at the level of desire for greater involvement analysed by the activities in which parents say they are sometimes or often involved. Table 6.3 shows that parents who get involved in a homework club were more likely to feel that they would like to be more involved in their child's school life than those who never get involved

Further, parents who get involved with a parent forum or council whenever there is an opportunity were more likely than those who never get involved to feel they would like to be more involved in their child's school life.

However, the findings for desired greater involvement did not vary by how often parents said they were involved in a PTA or helped with dinner duties, in the library, etc.

Table 6.3: Whether parents would like to be more involved in child’s school life by involvement in other activities

Would like to be more involved?	Involvement with homework club			Involvement in a parent forum or council		
	Whenever there is an opportunity	Sometimes	Never	Whenever there is an opportunity	Sometimes	Never
Agree	73	75	64	71	66	65
Disagree	24	22	32	25	31	31

Base: All respondents in questionnaire A (4056)

It is therefore interesting to note that parents who get involved in certain school activities (particularly homework clubs or parent councils) were most likely to want to get *more* involved in their child’s education. This suggests that involvement breeds a desire to get more involved, although to some extent this contradicts some of the findings summarised earlier in Section 3.4 (notably that those who had *less* ‘perceived’ involvement were *most* likely to desire more). It may therefore be the case that, whilst some parents *say* they would like to get more involved in their child’s school life, they are less willing or able to do so when presented with actual opportunities.

6.3 Whether parents have enough opportunities for involvement

Respondents who were allocated to questionnaire B were asked whether they agreed that they had enough opportunities for involvement in how their child’s school is run. The majority of respondents (58%) agreed, although 28% said there were not enough opportunities.

Parents of children in years 1 and 2 were more likely than average to agree that they had enough opportunities for involvement in how their child’s school is run (66%). Lone parents were less likely than average to agree (50%). There were no subgroup differences by parents’ gender or ethnic background. Table 6.4 displays the results in full.

Table 6.4: Whether parents have enough opportunities to have a say in how child's school is run by subgroups

		% who strongly agree/agree
All		58
Child's school year	Years 1-2	66
	Years 3-6	57
	Years 7-9	53
	Years 10-12	58
Social grade	AB	57
	C1	55
	C2	64
	DE	58
Lone parents		50

Base: All respondents in questionnaire B (976)

Parents whose child has been identified with SEN were also less likely than other parents to feel that they had the opportunities to have a say in how their child's school is run (43% disagreed that they had enough opportunities). Although base sizes are small, this appears to be driven by parents of children who had SEN identified but were not stated. This is in line with the finding discussed in the next chapter, in which these same parents were more negative towards communication and consultation.

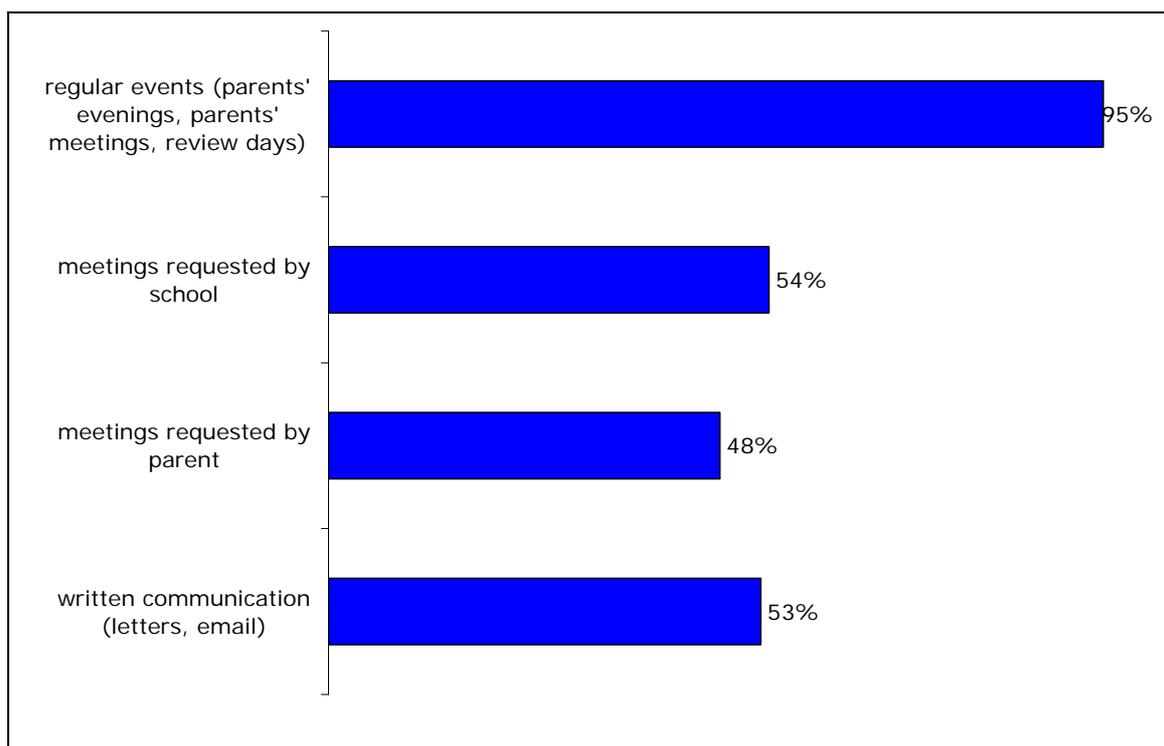
7 Communication with school

This chapter examines parents' experiences of communicating with schools, specifically their views on the effectiveness of current communication between schools and parents, the methods currently used and their preferences for communication. Effective communication with parents was a focus of the 2005 DfES White Paper "Higher Standards, Better Schools for All, More Choice for Parents and Pupils", and the more recent Every Parent Matters publication stressed the need to use technology to make communication quicker and easier ¹².

7.1 Methods of communication

Most parents said that they had attended events such as Parents' evenings, Parents' Meetings or Review Days (95%), while other methods of communication about their child's progress in class (as shown in Chart 7.1) had been used by around half of parents in each case.

Chart 7.1: Ways of communicating about child's progress in class



Base: All respondents (5032)

¹² 2007, *Every Parent Matters*, Department for Education and Skills

Women were more likely than men to have used all of the various methods, and usage of communication methods was generally lower amongst parents who were less involved in their child's school life and, in particular, amongst non-resident parents. However, there were no differences by the parent's work status on any of the items.

Regular events such as parents' evenings were only slightly less likely to be attended by those whose first language is not English (92%), lone parents (92%) and those in social grade E (91%).

However, the other methods of communication showed a different pattern. These were all more likely to be used where the child had Special Educational Needs, as shown in Table 7.1. Parents from non-white ethnic groups were also more likely to communicate in these ways: for meetings arranged by the school, this applied to all non-White groups and also to parents whose first language is not English, while those from Black or Black British backgrounds were more likely than other respondents to have been to meetings arranged by the parent (These differences hold true irrespective of respondents' terminal education age). The pattern for letters or emails was less conclusive.

In addition:

- Meetings arranged by the school were more likely to have been attended by parents in lower social grades and by lone parents.
- Attendance at meetings arranged by the parent was also higher in the lower social grades (especially social grade E), as well as by parents of boys and of children in school years 3-6.
- Communication by letter or email was more common for children at secondary schools, and within secondary schools it was more common in the higher social grades. Again it was also more common among parents of boys. This form of communication was a little lower amongst households without any internet access (46%), although it is not clear that the lack of internet access actually prevented written communication.

Table 7.1: Use of communication methods by subgroups

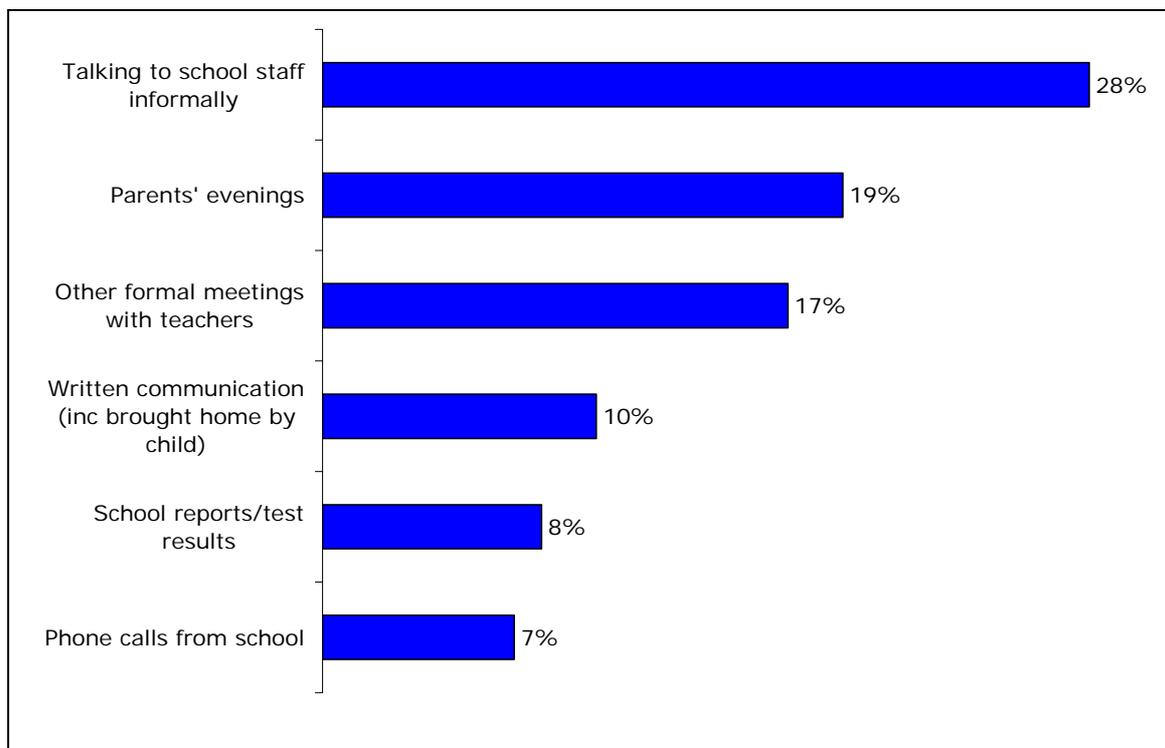
		%	%	%
		Meetings requested by the school	Meetings requested by the parent	Written communication (eg letters, email)
All		54	48	53
Ethnic Background	White	51	47	52
	Black or Black British	74	67	61
	Asian or Asian British	69	50	53
	other	61	46	63
Child has SEN	Statement	80	67	69
	SEN identified but no Statement	72	68	61

Base: All respondents (5032)

7.2 Most useful methods of communication

Parents were most likely to think that informal discussions with school staff were the most useful way of finding out about how their child is getting on at school. Chart 7.2 shows the findings in more detail.

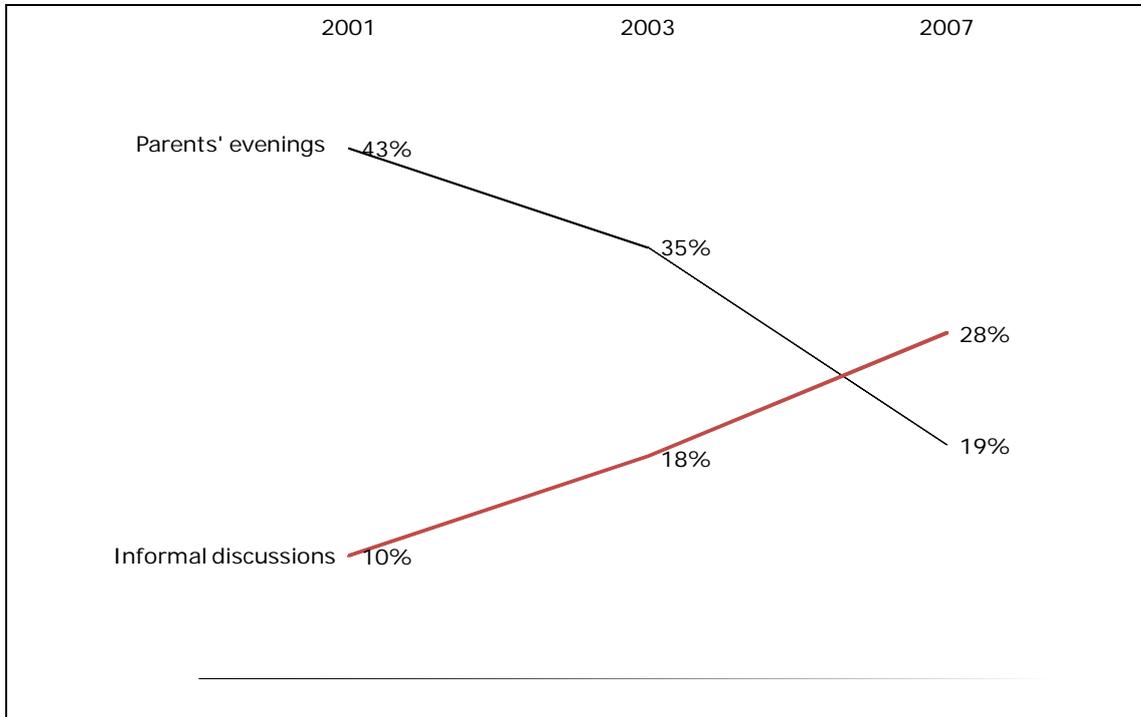
Chart 7.2: Most useful way of finding out about child's progress in school



Base: All respondents answering questionnaire A (4056)

Although the question wording has changed slightly from previous years, it is clear that there has been a shift in perceived importance towards informal discussions and away from parents' evenings. In 2001 and 2004, parents' evenings were ranked highest and well above informal discussions, as shown in Chart 7.3.

Chart 7.3: Usefulness of parents' evenings and informal discussions - trend data



Base: All respondents

There were differences in the preferences of different parents:

- Parents of children in primary schools were most likely to find informal meetings the most useful way of finding out about how their child is getting on at school (38% compared with 16% in secondary schools); parents of children in secondary school were more likely than those in primary schools to find written communication the most helpful (13% written communication, 11% school reports/test results and 4% email).
- Female parents, especially those not in work, were most likely to find informal discussions the most useful.
- Face-to-face meetings (other than parents' evenings) were most popular amongst parents of children with SEN than other parents
- More generally, the proportion who found face-to-face meetings the most useful way of finding out about how their child is getting on at school increased along with the level of involvement in school activities, and this applied particularly to informal discussions. Other methods (written and telephone) could therefore be targeted for communicating with parents who are currently less involved.
- There was a difference by social grade: those in higher social grades were more likely to find parents' evenings the most useful method, as well as

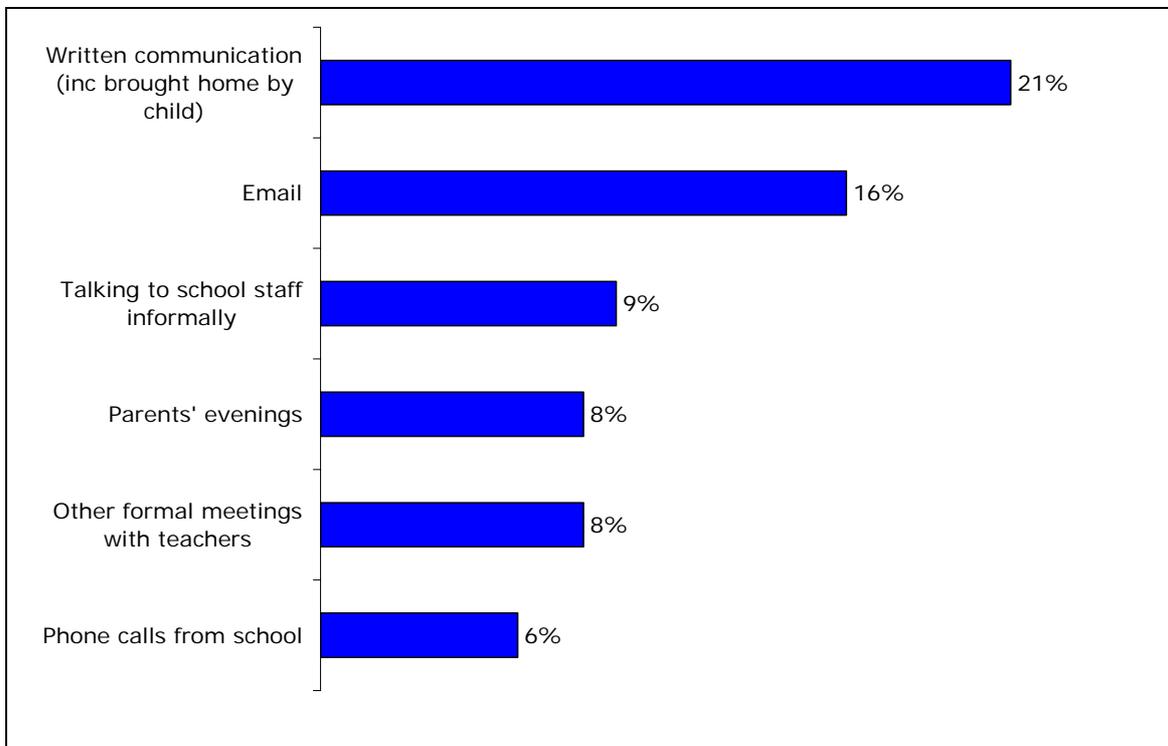
school reports, test results and email. Those in lower social grades preferred informal discussions and telephone contact.

- Parents whose main language is not English were more likely than other parents to say formal meetings with teachers were the most useful (23%).

7.3 Which methods should schools use more?

Parents felt that schools could communicate more in writing or by e-mail, as shown in Chart 7.4. Only 2% of parents said that they currently found email the most useful way of finding out about their child's progress, so this represents an opportunity for schools to expand this method of communication.

Chart 7.4: Communication methods that schools should use more



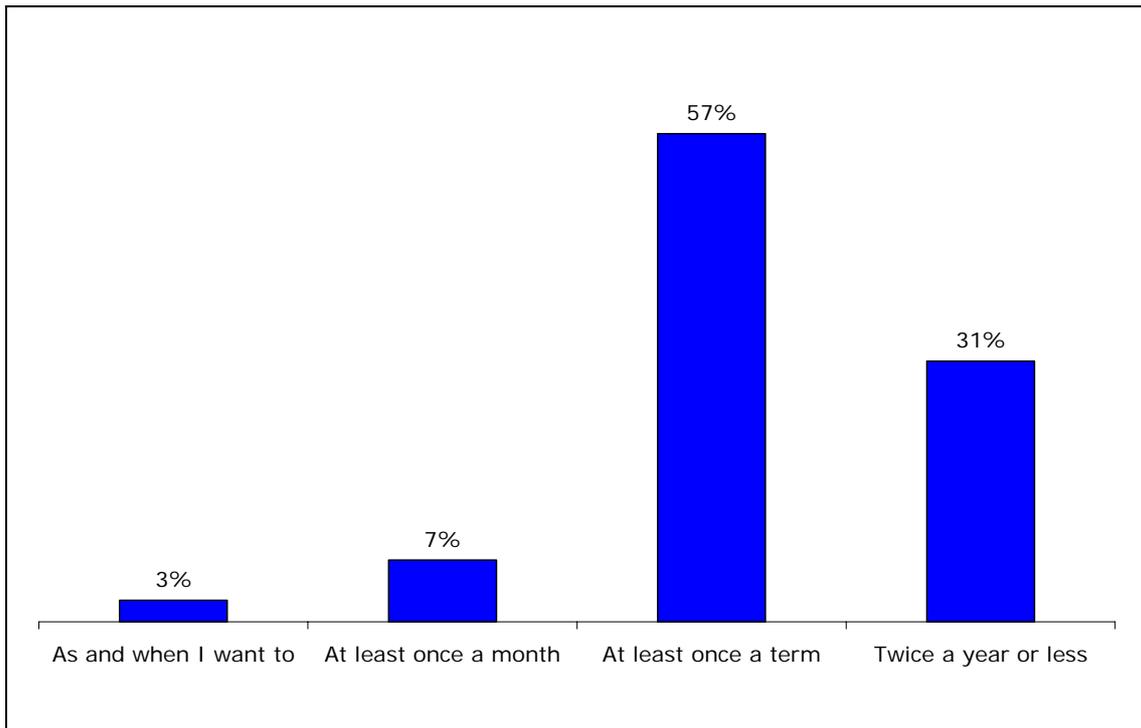
Base: All respondents answering questionnaire A (4056)

Parents whose main language is not English were most likely to want more communication in writing (36%), while email was not surprisingly mentioned more frequently by those with internet access - and as result, by those in higher social grades. In addition, email was mentioned more frequently by male parents (20%) and non-resident parents (25%), as well as by those in full-time work (21%) - all groups who are currently less involved in their child's school life. E-mail could therefore be an effective way of targeting parents who are currently less involved.

7.4 Frequency parents receive and would like to receive reports

Over half of respondents (57%) would like to receive information on their child's progress at least once a term while 31% would like to receive information twice a year or less (see Chart 7.5). Seven percent would like to see how their child is doing at least once a month while a small minority (3%) would like this information as and when they want it.

Chart 7.5: How often parents would ideally like to see how their child is doing



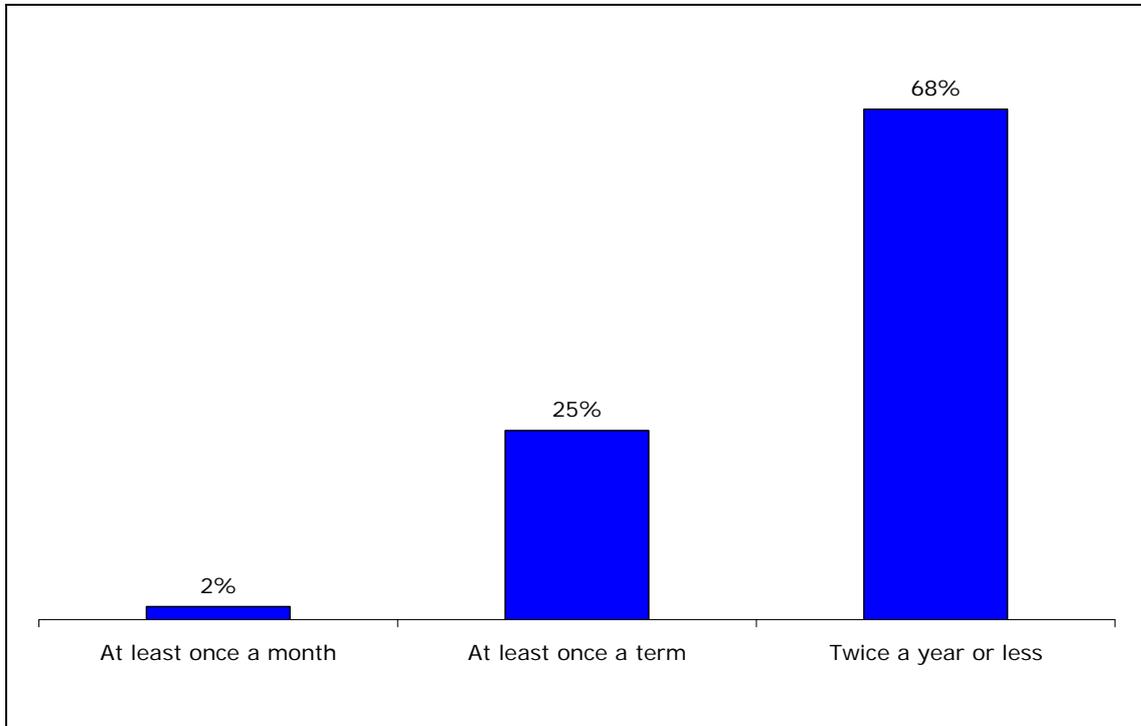
Base: All respondents (5032)

Subgroup differences between those wanting to see how well their child is doing at least once a term include:

- Male respondents were more likely than female respondents (60% compared with 55%).
- Parents in full-time employment (61%) were more likely than respondents not in full-time (54%).
- Respondents who left education at 17 or later were more likely compared with those that left education at 16 or earlier (60% versus 54% respectively).
- Respondents in social grades ABC1 (60%) were more likely than respondents in C2DE (53%).

In practice, the data show that parents receive reports less often than they would ideally desire. Chart 7.6 shows that over two-thirds of respondents (68%) receive these reports twice a year or less; a quarter (25%) receive a report at least once a term. Just 2% receive them at least once a month.

Chart 7.6: How often parents receive formal reports



Base: All respondents (5032)

Parents of children in years 10-12 were more likely than other parents to receive reports at least once a term (34% compared with 22% for years 1-2, 20% for years 3-6 and 30% for years 7-9).

Amongst parents whose child had been identified with SEN, those who had received a statement were more likely to receive a report at least once a month (32%) compared with those that had not (24%)

7.5 Whether parents find real-time reporting appealing

Finding a way for parents to be kept informed with up to date information about their child's progress is identified in the recent Children's Plan ¹³. As such, all parents were asked how appealing it would be if their child's school was able to

¹³ 2007, *The Children's Plan: Building brighter futures*, Department for Children, Schools and Families

provide a secure website with up-to-date information on how well their child was progressing. Four-fifths of parents (80%) indicated that this would be appealing.

Parents working full-time were slightly more likely than those not working full-time to find the idea of a secure website appealing (83% compared with 79%).

Parents were asked why they found the idea of a secure website appealing or not appealing (responses are summarised in Chart 7.7). The most popular benefit given by parents was that a secure website would enable the parent to see how their child was progressing (35%), illustrated by one verbatim response below:

'Because she's in her final year so I'd like to know that she's got all her coursework and homework in and her attendance, behaviour, punctuality was as I'd expect'

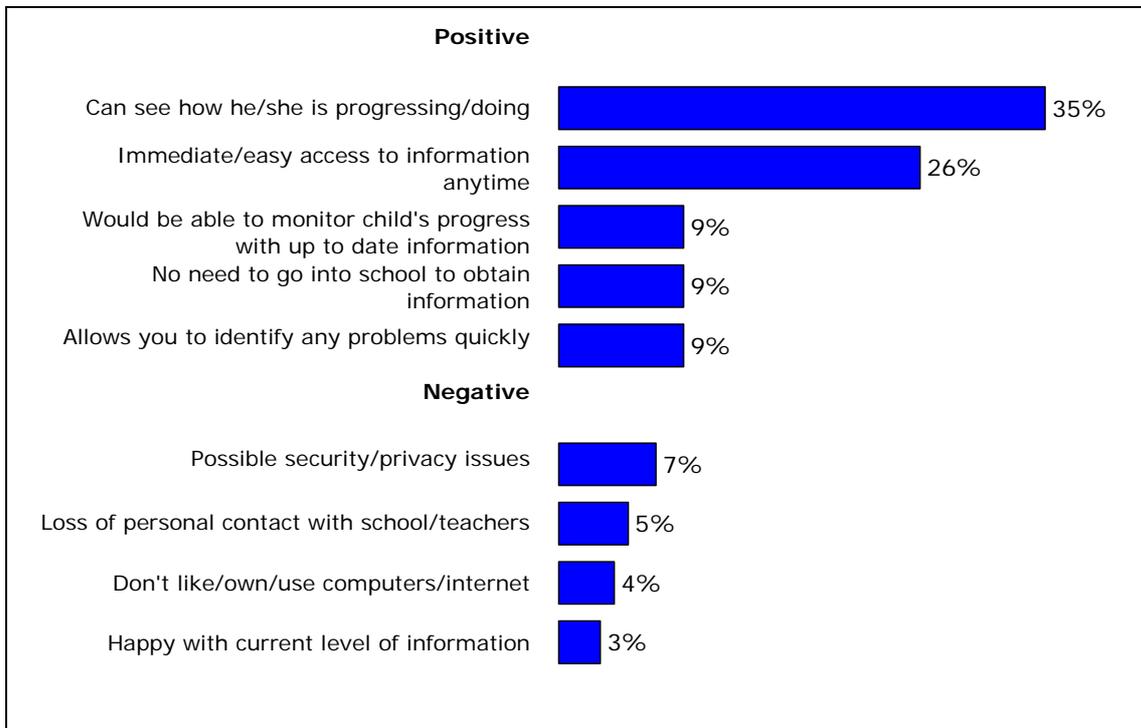
A quarter of parents answering this question gave the convenience of a website as being the reason why it was appealing, again demonstrated by a respondent's verbatim response:

'It's easier to do things in your own time rather than relying on the school'

A smaller proportion of respondents gave negative reasons for why they found a website unappealing. The most common negative reason was that a website would not be secure (7%) while 5% of parents said they would lose personal contact with teachers or the school. A typical negative verbatim response was:

'[it] Doesn't matter how secure a website is, someone would find a way'

Chart 7.7: Reasons why a secure website would be appealing or not appealing



Base: All respondents answering questionnaire B (976)

7.6 Confidence in talking to teachers

Two in three parents (65%) said that they feel very confident in talking to teachers at their child's school, while most of the remainder described themselves as fairly confident (31%).

As shown in Table 7.2, men were more likely than women to say they were very confident in talking to teachers (and the proportion fell to 59% amongst women who were not working), and confidence also increased with age and amongst higher social grades. Lone parents were less likely to say they were very confident than other parents.

A similar pattern was identified earlier in the report in relation to confidence in helping with homework, with men and those in higher social grades more confident and lone parents less confident.

Table 7.2: Confidence in talking to teachers by subgroups

		% very confident
All		65
Respondent gender	Male	70
	Female	62
Respondent age	Less than 35	60
	35-44	65
	45-54	69
	55+	72
Social grade	A	75
	B	71
	C1	61
	C2	60
	D	59
	E	58
Lone parent household		60

Base: All respondents (5032)

It is worth noting that the respondents who felt less confident talking to teachers were also those who were most likely to value informal discussions with staff (17% who were not at all confident compared with 9% who were very confident). This suggests that informal discussions could be even more effective for these parents if a greater rapport could be established with school staff.

These findings were very similar to those observed in the 2004 survey.

7.7 Attitudes to communication with school

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements relating to communication between parents and the school. In general, parents were very positive towards their relationship with the school and the information provided.

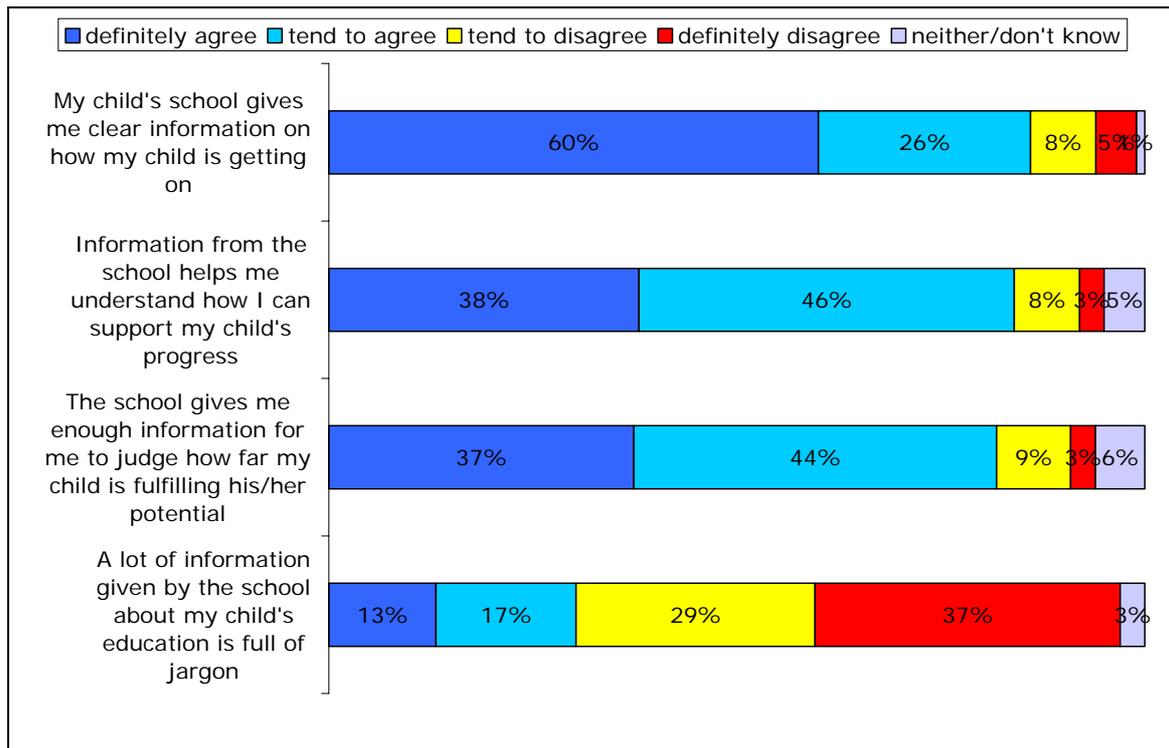
Chart 7.8 shows attitudes towards information given by the school about children. More than four in five respondents agreed that the school gave them clear information on how their child was getting on, gave them information that helped them understand how they could support their child's progress, and gave them enough information so that they could judge how far their child is fulfilling his/her potential. On the first of these items (the clarity of information), 60% said they *definitely* agreed. Similarly, the majority of respondents disagreed that school information was 'full of jargon', although 30% did agree with this statement.

The main sub-group differences were:

- Views were more positive amongst parents of younger children (the exception being information to judge how far children are fulfilling their potential, where there was no difference).
- On the first two statements (clarity of information and helping to understand how parents can support their child's progress), views were *more* positive amongst parents whose first language is not English and those in lower social grades. However, these groups were also more negative in relation to school information containing jargon. It might be concluded that using jargon, while undesirable, does not have a large impact on the overall impression of information.
- Parents of children with a Statement of SEN were more positive in relation to information that can help them support their child's progress and information that can allow them to judge how far their child is fulfilling his/her potential. They were also more likely to say that they knew who to contact at the school (covered in the section on involvement and contact below). However, those with a child with SEN (statemented or otherwise) were more negative in relation to jargon in school information. More generally, there was a tendency across the various statements in this section of the questionnaire for views to be less positive amongst parents of children who had been identified as having SEN but had not been statemented.

On these and all of the other statements in this section, parents who felt less involved in their child’s school life tended to be less positive, and this was also the case specifically for non-resident parents. However, closer examination does not indicate any particular types of involvement that lead to more positive attitudes (ie views were consistently most positive among parents taking part in different school activities and/or helping their child with homework).

Chart 7.8: Attitudes to communication with school: information



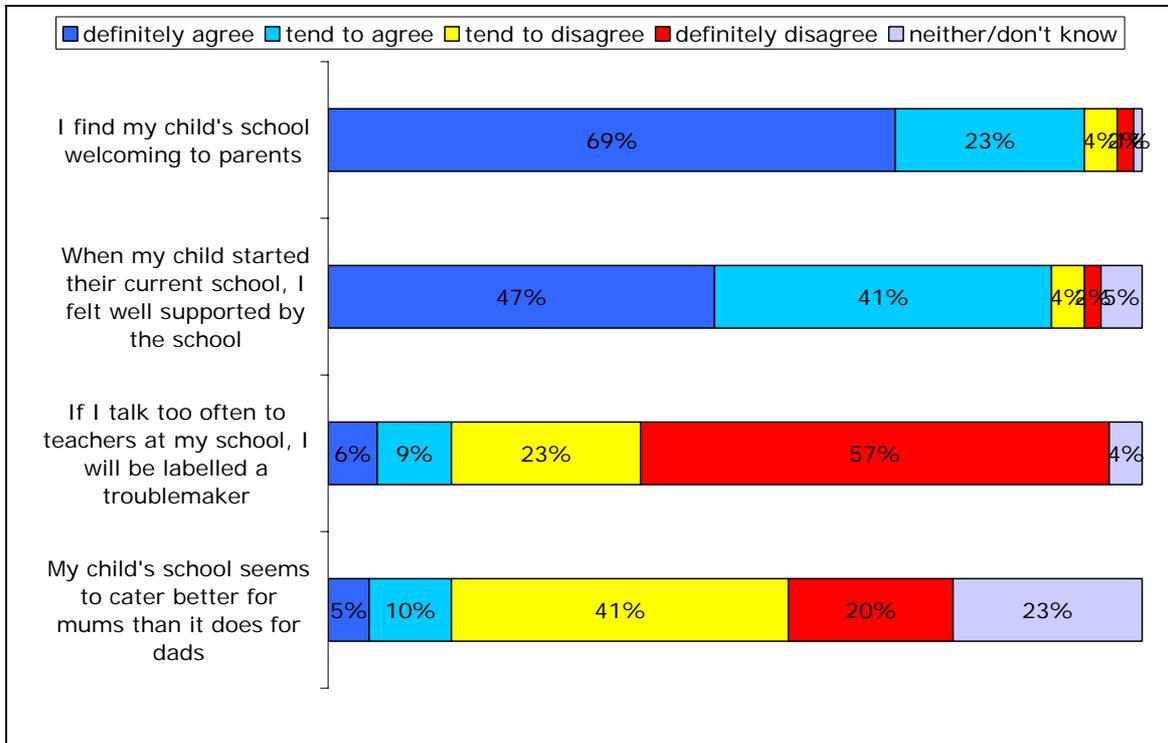
Base: All respondents (5032), except “my child’s school gives me clear information on how my child is getting on”: all respondents answering questionnaire A (4056)

The attitude statements in Chart 7.9 relate to the relationship between school and parent, and the level of support provided. More than two in three respondents (69%) definitely agreed that the school is welcoming to parents, and respondents were also positive towards the support given when their child started at the school. Respondents also disagreed that talking too often to teachers would label them a troublemaker, and that the school catered better for mums than dads.

Views were again more positive amongst parents of younger children, particularly in relation to the school being welcoming to parents. Parents who were not working were also more positive towards the school’s welcoming attitude. However, while non-working parents were also more positive towards the school making it easy for parents to be involved (see statement on involvement and contact below), there was generally little or no difference according to parents’ work status in the various attitudes statements in this chapter.

Men were more likely than women to agree that the school catered better for mums than dads (23% compared with 10%), although the majority of men still disagreed with this statement.

Chart 7.9: Attitudes to communication with school: relationship and support



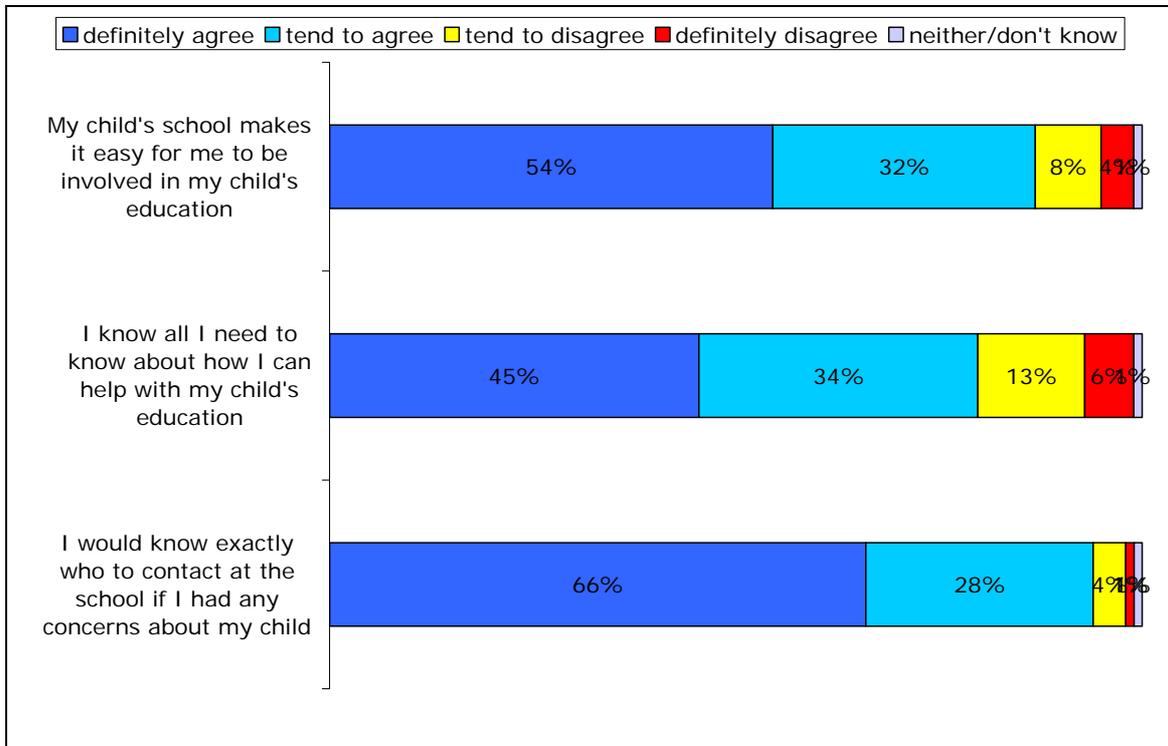
Base: All respondents (5032), except "when my child started their current school, I felt well supported by the school" and "my child's school seems to cater better for mums than it does for dads": all respondents answering questionnaire B (976)

Chart 7.10 includes attitudes relating to involvement and contact with the school. Once again, views were very positive, in particular on knowing exactly who to contact if parents had concerns.

Views were again more positive amongst parents of younger children, and women were more positive on these issues than men.

On the first two statements, views were more positive in the lower social grades and amongst those whose first language is not English, but the opposite was true of knowing who to contact at the school. This suggests that these groups are generally content with their level of involvement with the school but may have less direct contact with staff.

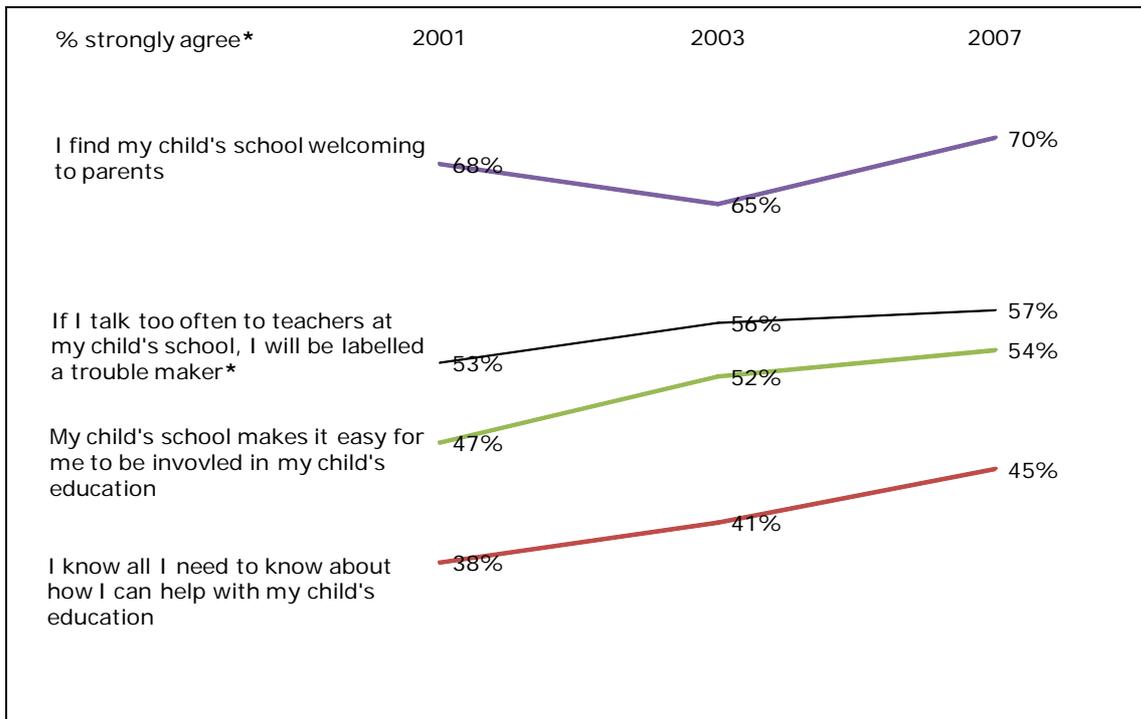
Chart 7.10: Attitudes to communication with school: involvement and contact



Base: All respondents (5032)

Where comparisons are possible with previous years of the survey, views are slightly more positive than in previous years. In addition to the statements shown in Chart 7.11, two other statements were included in 2001 but not 2004. Views were slightly more positive in 2007 towards the clarity of information provided by schools than they were in 2001 (60% definitely agreed compared with 56%), and were slightly less positive in terms of school information being full of jargon (30% agreed compared with 27% in 2001).

Chart 7.11: Attitudes to communication with school, trend data (positive responses)



Base: All respondents from 2 parent households (2007 = 4277, 2004 = 2021, 2001 = 1513)

* this statement shows % who strongly disagree

7.8 Importance of communication

Around three in four parents (72%) said that it was extremely important that they get in touch with the school when they had a specific request about how their child is getting on. This was higher than average amongst parents of children with a Statement of SEN (85%), and was also higher among women than men (79% compared with 64%). It was lower amongst non-resident parents (61%).

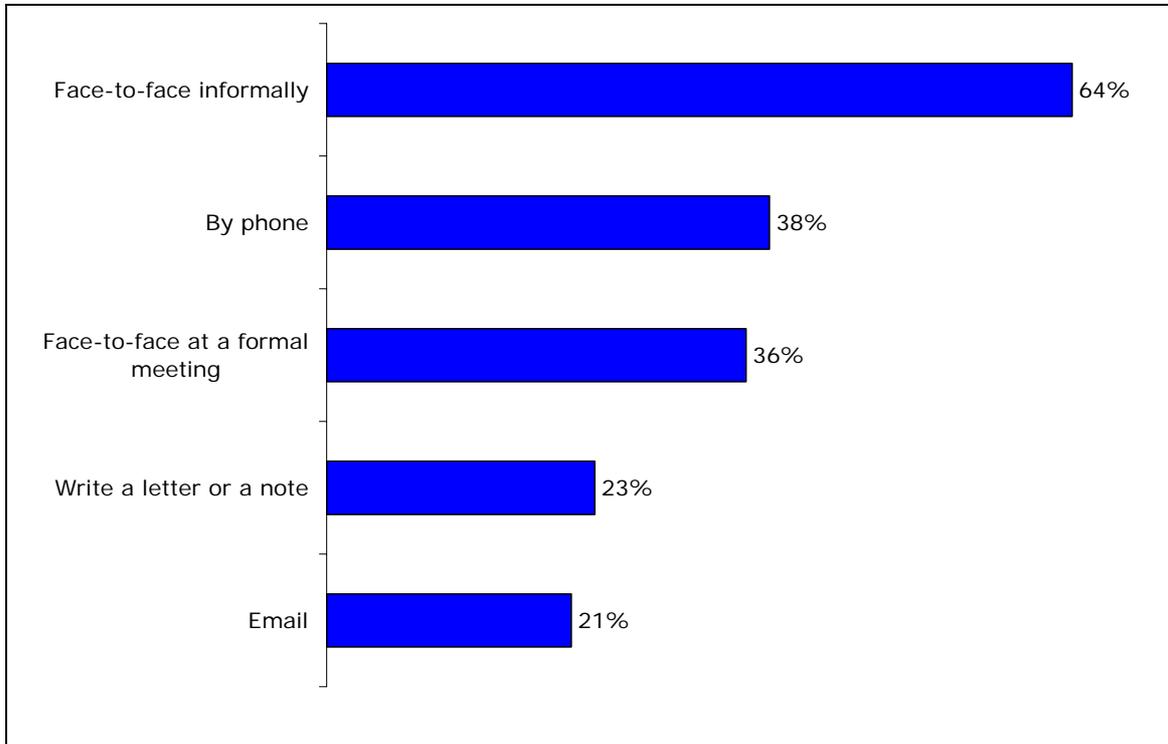
7.9 Communication about the school

When asked who they would contact at the school if they wanted to have a say or change something about how the school was being run, most parents said they would contact the Head teacher (70%), while 18% said they would contact other teachers and 10% Governors.

Parents of children at primary schools were more likely than those with children at secondary schools to say they would contact the Head teacher (75% compared with 63%), while male parents were more likely to say they would contact teachers and women more likely to say they would contact Governors.

Chart 7.12 shows the method of communication parents would prefer if they were to make this type of contact. The most common method chosen was an informal face-to-face discussion, re-enforcing the importance of this type of communication mentioned earlier in the report.

Chart 7.12: Preferred method of communication



Base: All respondents answering questionnaire B (976)

A face-to-face informal discussion was mentioned most frequently by parents of children at primary schools, while parents of secondary school children were more likely than those at primary schools to mention telephone contact and email; details are shown in Table 7.3.

Those who left full-time education at an earlier age were also more likely to favour informal face-to-face discussion, while a preference for email was stronger among those who left full-time education later.

Formal meetings were more likely than average to be mentioned by parents whose first language was not English, while lone parents were more likely than other respondents to favour the telephone.

Table 7.3: Preferred method of contact

	Parents of primary school children	Parents of secondary school children
	%	%
Face-to-face informally	70	55
Face-to-face at a formal meeting	37	34
By phone	31	47
Write a letter or note	21	25
Email	18	24

Base: All respondents answering questionnaire B (976)

7.10 Being informed about choosing a school

Three in four parents (77%) agreed that they were well informed about their options when choosing a school for their child, and 42% agreed strongly. One in eight (13%) disagreed. Findings were very consistent across the various sub-groups, except that older parents were more likely to agree strongly that they were very well informed (ranging from 39% of those aged under 35 to 49% of parents aged 55 or over). Parents without home access to the internet felt no less informed than those that did have home access.

Previous research found that the sources of information used by parents when choosing a secondary school are linked to socio-economic group, and that many parents from disadvantaged backgrounds consult no formal sources at all¹⁴. However, this survey found no coherent pattern by social grade in terms of whether parents felt well informed about their choice of school.

¹⁴ 2001, *Parents' Experiences of the Process of Choosing a Secondary School*, Office for National Statistics and Sheffield Hallam University, Department for Education and Skills

7.11 School Profiles

7.11.1 Levels and sources of awareness

School Profiles were introduced as part of The Education Act 2005. The school profile is a mechanism for maintained schools to report annually to parents about many different facets of the school, including the school's progress, priorities and performance. School profiles are prepared on a standard template which includes performance statistics and a summary of the latest Ofsted report, provided by the DCSF and narrative sections under standard headings, written by the school.

All respondents in the survey were asked whether they were aware of School Profiles and three in ten (29%) respondents reported that they were.

Looking at the main subgroups, the following types of parents were more likely to have heard of School Profiles (see Table 7.4 for full details):

- those with children in school years 10 and 11;
- those whose terminal education age was 21 or over;
- those in social class A and B.

Further, as might be expected, parents who said they were very or fairly involved in their child's school life were more likely to have heard of School Profiles than those who said they were not very or not at all involved.

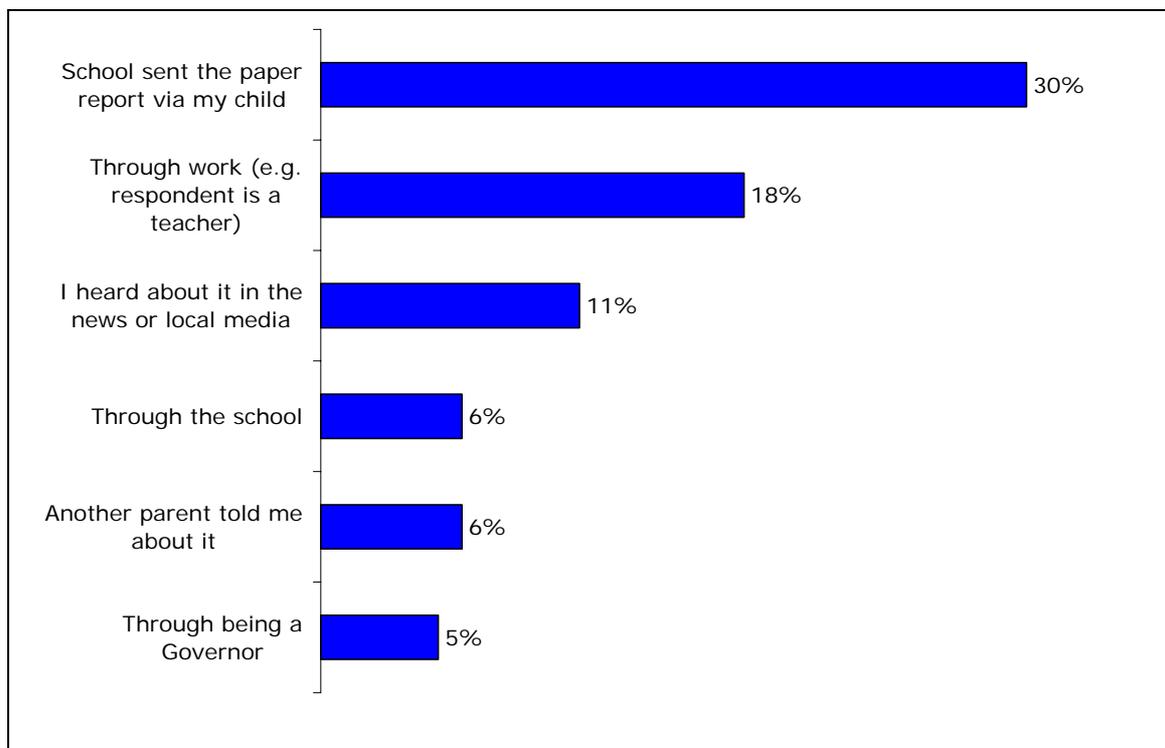
Table 7.4: Awareness of School Profiles by subgroups

		% who have heard of School Profiles
All		29
Child's school year	Years 1-2	29
	Years 3-6	28
	Years 7-9	27
	Years 10-12	33
Terminal education age	16 or under	28
	17-20	28
	21 or over	32
Social grade	AB	32
	C1	29
	C2	27
	DE	28
Involvement in child's education	Very/fairly involved	29
	Not very/not at all involved	23

Base: All respondents (5032)

Respondents who said they had heard of a School Profile were then asked how they had found out about it (responses are summarised in Chart 7.13). The most common way of finding out about School Profiles was when the school had sent the report via their child (30% said this). Around one-fifth (18%) of respondents said they heard about School Profiles via their work (for example, if they were a teacher), and a further 5% said it was through being a Governor. The news or local media had informed one in nine (11%) respondents about School profiles.

Chart 7.13: How parents found out about School Profiles



Base: All respondents who had heard of a School Profile (1466)

7.11.2 Whether read School Profile

One half (50%) of those respondents who had heard of School Profiles said they had read a School Profile.

Females were more likely than males to have read a School Profile (54% versus 44%), which may be a reflection of the finding that female parents were more likely to say they were very involved in their child's school life.

Further, respondents from the higher social grades - AB (52%) and C1 (51%) - were more likely than respondents in social grade DE (44%) to have read a School Profile.

Around a third (35%) of respondents who had read any said they had read just one School Profile, while around three in ten (28%) had read two School Profiles. Of those who indicated that they had read at least one School Profile around half (47%) had read nearly all of it, a quarter (26%) had read most of it, while one in six (17%) had read about half and one in ten (10%) had read only a little. Respondents who were 17 or older when they left education were more likely than those who had left at the age of 16 or younger to have read all or nearly all of a School Profile (51% versus 42%).

7.11.3 Advantages and potential improvements

All respondents who had read at least part of a School Profile were asked what they thought was good about it (the most commonly mentioned responses are detailed in Chart 7.14).¹⁵ Having something that gave parents information on a school's academic results and performance was what parents thought was best about School Profiles (mentioned by 41%), as illustrated by some of the verbatim responses which respondents provided:

'they give you an insight on how the school's performing.'

'tell you how the school is doing and the results that they get.'

One in three (31%) respondents felt that the School Profile was good because it provided information about a school and its facilities and policies, as shown by the examples of further verbatim responses:

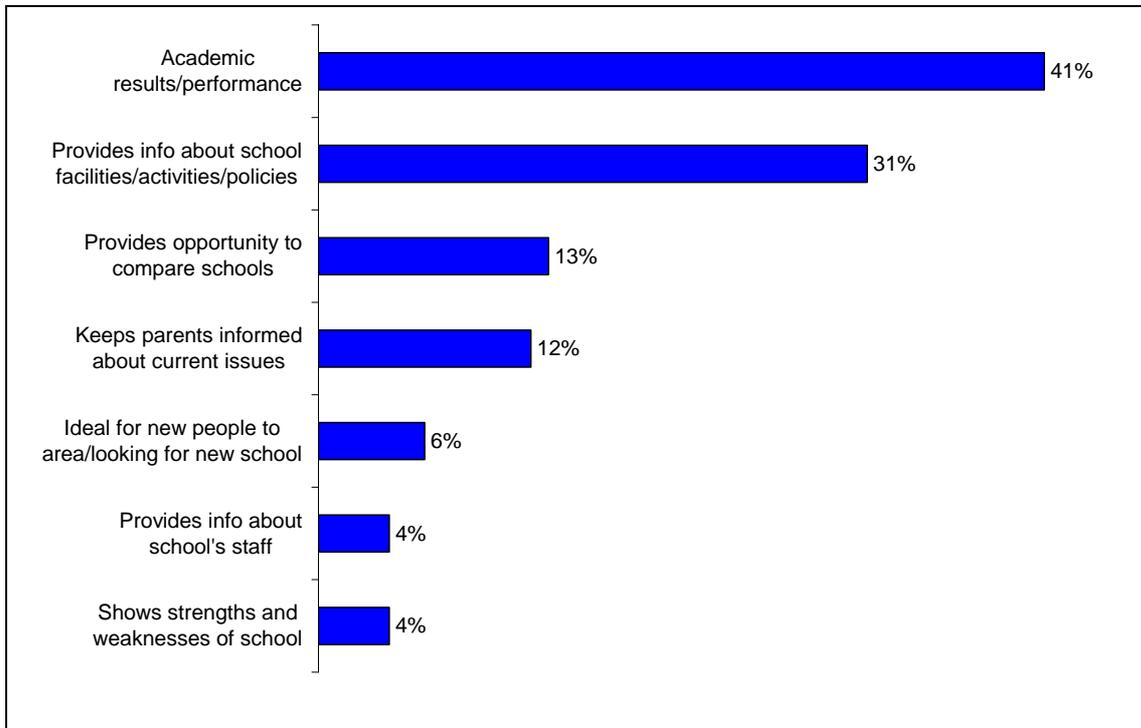
'It gives a clear perspective of the school's ethos rather than data on exam reports.'

'tell you about the school in terms of facilities and the running of the school and the important things for the children.'

One in eight respondents (13%) felt that School Profiles provided them the opportunity to compare different schools, and a similar proportion (12%) said that they kept them informed about current issues at the school.

¹⁵ Respondents were asked to list anything they thought was good about school profiles (i.e. responses were not prompted).

Chart 7.14: What is good about School Profiles



Base: All respondents who have read a School Profile (730)

Respondents were also asked how they thought School Profiles could be improved (Chart 7.15 displays the most commonly mentioned suggestions).¹⁶ Encouragingly, the most common response to the question was actually that it did not need improving (15% said this). One verbatim response that exemplifies this is:

'I think they are as good as they can get as it is down to the parent whether they want to sit and read it. The information is there if you want to read it.'

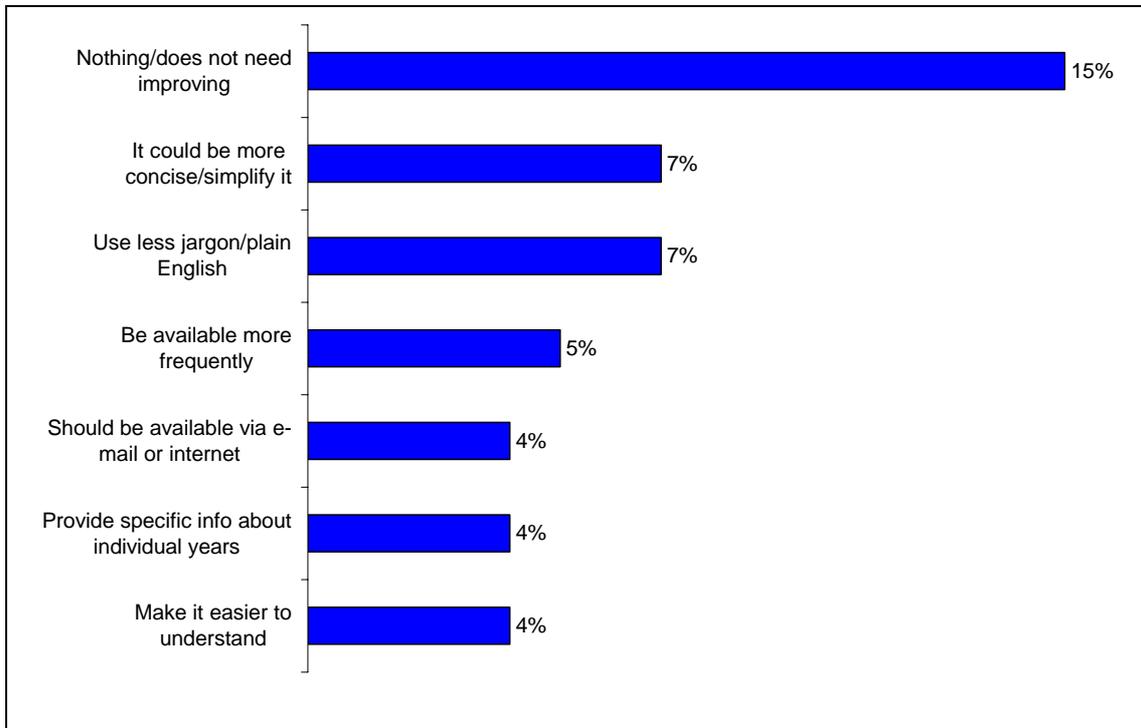
The next most commonly suggested improvements were related to its style: 7% of respondents said that it should be more concise and the same proportion said that it should use less jargon. Examples of respondent's verbatim answers included:

'Probably shorter. Punchier. More to the point.'

'There is a lot of jargon in them and I'm fairly intelligent and I find them hard to read.'

¹⁶ Respondents were asked to list anything they thought could be improved (i.e. responses were not prompted).

Chart 7.15: How School Profile could be improved



Base: All respondents who have read a School Profile (730)

Respondents who had read a School Profile and who were allocated to questionnaire A were asked how helpful they had found the School Profile. The majority of respondents were positive towards School Profiles: 87% found it helpful, including three in ten (31%) who said they found it very helpful.

As shown in Table 7.5, parents of primary school children were more positive towards School Profiles than those with secondary school children. Further, parents who considered themselves very or fairly involved in their child's school life were more positive towards School Profiles than parents who were not very involved.

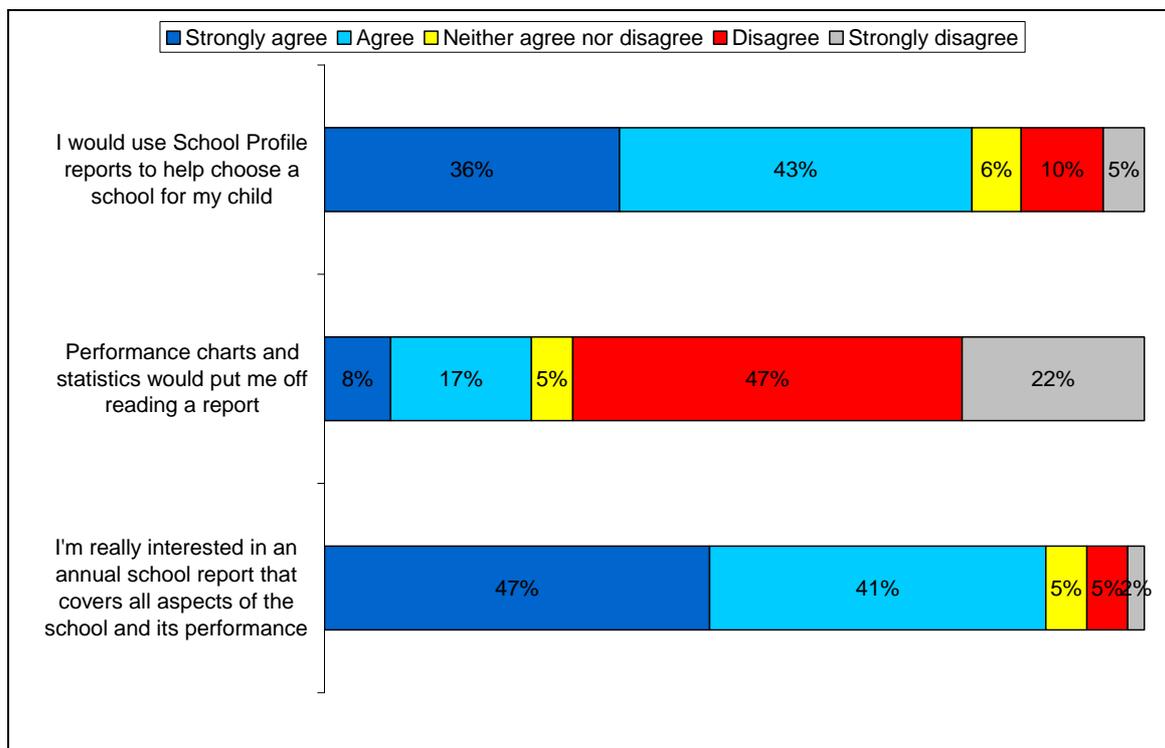
Table 7.5: How helpful School Profiles were by subgroups

		% who find it helpful
All		87
Child's school year	Years 1-2	90
	Years 3-6	93
	Years 7-9	78
	Years 10-12	83
Involvement in child's school life	Very/fairly involved	88
	Not very/not at all involved	71

Base: All respondents who were allocated to questionnaire A and have read a School Profile (599)

Questionnaire B respondents who had not heard of School Profiles were read a brief description of what they entail and were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements (responses are summarised in Chart 7.16).

Chart 7.16: Respondents' views on School Profiles



Base: All respondents who were allocated to questionnaire B and had not heard of School profiles (263)

The majority of respondents agreed that they would use a School Profile to help choose the right school for their child. Respondents who left education at 16 or younger were more likely than those who stayed in education until they were 20 or over to say they would use School Profiles to help choose their child's school (85% versus 73%).

Most respondents (69%) disagreed that performance charts and statistics would put them off reading a School Profile, although quarter of respondents (24%), felt that they would. Respondents from social grade ABC1 (75%) were more likely than those from C2DE (60%) to disagree that performance charts and statistics would put them off reading a School Profile.

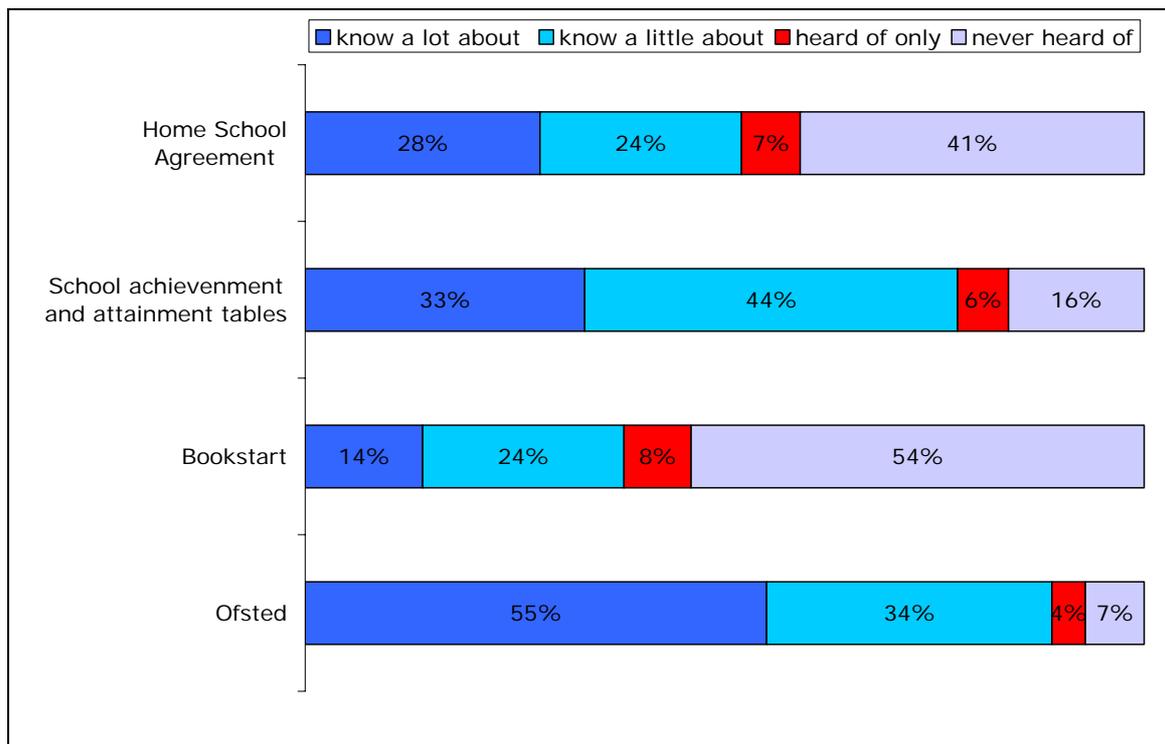
The vast majority of respondents (88%) agreed that they were really interested in an annual report that covered all aspects of the school and its performance. Only 7% respondents indicated that they would not be interested in a report of this nature. No significant subgroup differences were apparent for this statement.

8 Awareness of initiatives

This chapter looks at parents' awareness of initiatives and practices.

Chart 8.1 shows parents' levels of awareness of four items: Home School Agreements, School achievement and attainment tables, Bookstart and Ofsted. As the chart shows, most parents know at least a little about School achievement and attainment tables and Ofsted, while levels of knowledge about Home School Agreements and Bookstart are more mixed.

Chart 8.1: Awareness of initiatives and Practices



Base: All respondents answering questionnaire B (976)

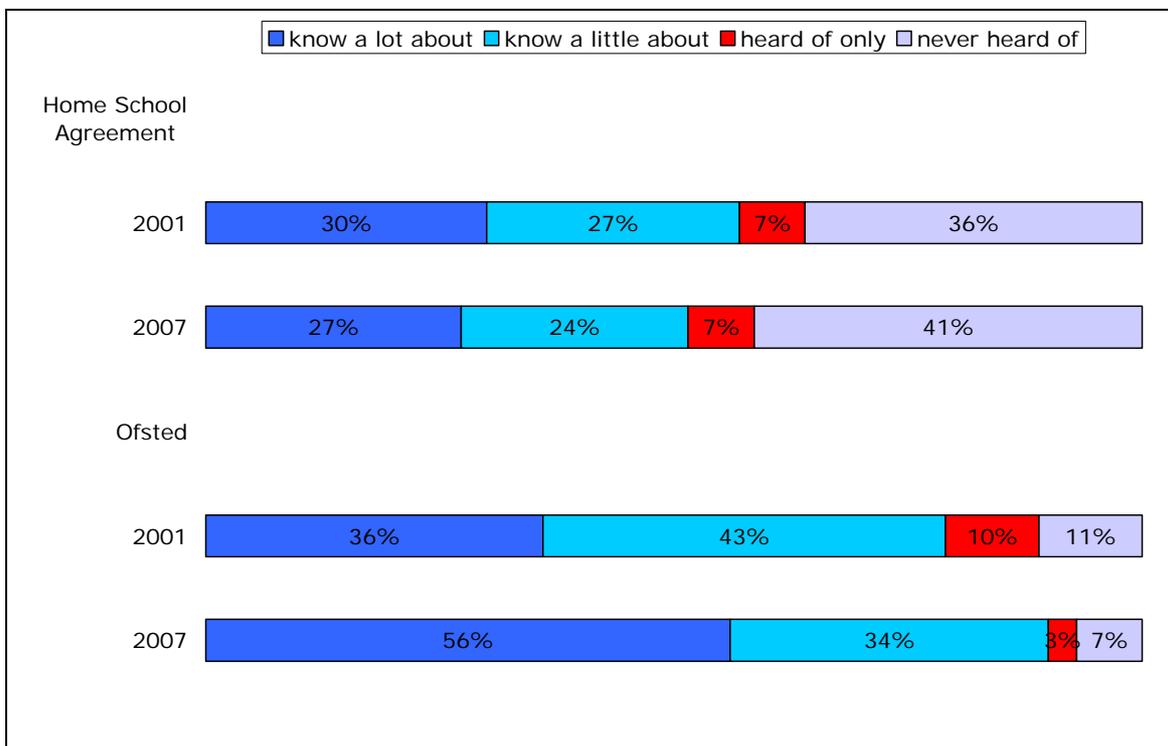
Sub-group variations were consistent for three of the items: Home School Agreements, School achievement and attainment tables, and Ofsted. In each case, knowledge was higher among:

- Women, and in particular women working full-time. The difference was most pronounced in relation to Home School Agreements
- Older parents and parents of older children.
- Parents in higher social grades and who left full-time education at an older age
- Households where English is not the main language, particularly in relation to Home School Agreements.

There was a different pattern in relation to Bookstart, where awareness was higher amongst parents of younger children, reflecting the focus of the initiative. Awareness was again higher amongst women than men, and by parents who help their child with their homework all or most of the time (19% compared with 6% who help occasionally or never).

Two of these items were included in the 2001 questionnaire. Awareness of Ofsted has increased since 2001, but awareness of Home School Agreements has fallen slightly (details are shown in Chart 8.2). A study in 2003 found that only a third of schools recognise the value of Home-School Agreements ¹⁷, and the comparison between 2001 and 2007 data for this survey suggests that little has changed since that time. The Government is considering the current home-school agreements guidance in the wider context of the Children's Plan commitments around schools' relationships with parents, and current work on the parents' charter commitment.

Chart 8.2: Awareness of initiatives and practices - trend data



Base: 2001 - All respondents in two parent households (1513), 2007 – all respondent answering questionnaire B (847)

Respondents who had heard of Home School Agreements were asked if they had actually signed one for their child (findings presented here are based on all respondents).

¹⁷ Evaluation of Home School Agreements, School of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. Coldwell M et al, DfES Research Report 455 (2003)

Overall, 39% of parents said that they had signed a Home School Agreement. This was higher amongst parents of secondary school children, and women were far more likely than men to recall signing a Home School Agreement. In addition, those in higher social grades and who left full-time education at an older age were more likely to say they had signed a Home School Agreement, while parents whose main language is not English were much less likely to recall doing so. Details are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Whether signed a Home School Agreement by subgroups

		% yes
All		39
Child's school year	Years 1-2	22
	Years 3-6	33
	Years 7-9	53
	Years 10-12	54
Respondent gender	Male	26
	Female	49
Terminal education age	16 or under	33
	17-20	46
	21 or over	43
Social grade	A	45
	B	50
	C1	39
	C2	39
	D	36
	E	16
Main language	English	42
	Not English	9

Base: All respondents answering questionnaire B (976)

9 Special Educational Needs

This report has illustrated various sub-group differences including the impact that gender, ethnicity, marital status and social class all have on measures of parental involvement and communication. Some of the strongest impacts and most consistent differences have, however, been found in respect of parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

To set this in context, the SEN Code of Practice (2001)¹⁸ acknowledges the pressure that parents of pupils with SEN can come under. It recognises that parents need support to gain confidence in making their thoughts known to staff and it emphasises the importance of parental involvement in their children's education. Among its many themes, the Code of Practice aims to promote a climate of co-operation and participation between parents and school, enabling pupils with SEN to achieve their potential.

More specifically, the Code of Practice re-enforces the role that 'partnership' with parents plays in promoting an ethos of co-operation:

"Partnership with parents plays a key role in promoting a culture of co-operation between parents, schools, LEAs and others. This is important in enabling children and young people with SEN to achieve their potential" (SEN Code of Practice: section 2.1, p16).

The Code of Practice sets out a number of recommendations around the delivery of information, advice and support to parents. The growth of parent partnership services and other advice centres for parents aims to provide support and advice about SEN, providing information about the options available to parents so that parents can make appropriate, informed decisions.

In January 2007, some 1.56 million school age pupils had been identified by their school or local authority as having SEN (19% of the school population) and 3% of the school population had statements¹⁹. In the survey, over one in 10 (12%) parents had children with SEN and 6% had children with statements of SEN²⁰. The key findings from these groups are summarised below.

¹⁸ Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice: 2001 (DfES /581 / 2001)

¹⁹ DCSF School Census January 2007

²⁰ Survey measures of SEN always tend to underestimate the true population figure to some extent as parents are not always aware that their child has a SEN (particularly if they are not statemented).

Parents of children with statements of SEN were more likely to feel very involved in their child's education (63% compared with 48% of parents of children who do not have statements of SEN). Parents of children with SEN were also more likely to want to increase their involvement in their child's school life (71% of parents of children with SEN compared with 65% of parents of children who do not have SEN).

As shown in chapter 3, those who had less involvement with their child's school life, were more likely to say they wanted to do more. The same is true amongst parents of children with SEN: 81% of those who felt not very or not all involved wanted to do more. However, even amongst those who already felt very or fairly involved, 70% still wanted to do more. The data therefore show a clear desire for parents of children with SEN to be involved in their children's schooling.

Parents of children with SEN were also more likely to have children attending supplementary homework clubs (23% compared with 19% of parents of children who do not have SEN) and were more likely to say it was extremely important that their child actually attended (52% compared with 32% of parents of children who do not have SEN). They also thought it was extremely important to get in touch with their school when they had a specific request about how their child was getting on (amongst parents of children with a statement of SEN, 85% thought it was extremely important compared with 72% amongst parents of children without a statement of SEN).

Although many parents of children with SEN sought increased involvement, they were less likely than other parents to feel they had opportunities to have a say in how their school is run (43% disagreed they had enough opportunities compared with 26% of parents whose child did not have SEN). The data also suggests that this particularly appears to be the case for parents of children with SEN but who did not have statements.

That parents of pupils with SEN perceive themselves to have greater involvement than average is borne out by the level of communication they have with schools. They were more likely to have attended meetings requested by the school or by themselves and to have received written communication. There was, however, a preference for face-to-face modes of communication.

As well as holding a desire to have increased involvement, parents of children with SEN also had a desire for clear information. The data show that parents of children with a statement of SEN were more positive in relation to information that can help them support their child's progress. However, parents of children with SEN (statemented or otherwise) were more negative in relation to jargon in school information. The survey data also show that parents of children with SEN were also more likely to have a longstanding illness or disability of their own (17% compared with 10% of parents of children who do not have SEN).

The SEN Code of Practice states that information should be accessible for parents with learning difficulties and should be parent-friendly. The SEN Code also offers guidelines on effective communication strategies. These include drawing on parental knowledge, focusing on children's strengths, recognising emotions, aiding understanding and recognising different perspectives and backgrounds. The Code also recognises the role that parents need to play in the process:

"Parents also have a responsibility to communicate effectively with professionals to support their children's education. In working with schools they should communicate regularly with their child's school and alert them to any concerns [and]...fulfil their obligations under home school agreements.." (SEN Code of Practice: section 2.11, p18).

In summary, the survey has shown that many parents of children with SEN want to be actively involved in their child's school life and they want clear information. The findings suggest that parents of children with SEN who do not have statements may need more or different types of consultation on their child's progress. The diversity of special needs (particularly in relation to statements) may mean that parents will want appropriate advice and guidance that suits *their* individual needs.

10 Comparisons over time

10.1 Comparing trend data

Throughout this report, we have made comparisons between the 2007 survey and previous surveys in 2004 and 2001. Despite small changes in research methodology during this period, it is possible to draw some conclusions based on these comparisons.

In the tables below, we have summarised some of the key measures of parental involvement and have highlighted whether the survey findings in 2007 were consistent or had changed since 2004 and 2001.

10.2 Areas of Consistency

There are some topics within the survey where results have remained quite consistent through time. The Table below outlines these.²¹

	2001	2004	2007
Attitudes to parental responsibility			
It is extremely important that child attends school regularly and on time	96%	96%	96%
Happy to take child out of school during term time	49%	46%	48%
Involvement with school			
It is extremely important to support child's school policy on behaviour	-	81%	80%
It is extremely important to attend parents' evenings	-	74%	76%

²¹ It should be noted that differences in the figures across the different surveys shown in this table are *not* statistically significant.

10.3 Changes over time

The Table below details areas in which respondents' attitudes or reported behaviours have changed since 2004 and/or 2001.

	2001	2004	2007	↑ or ↓
Overall involvement with child's school				
Feel very involved in child's school life	29%	38%	51%	↑
Attitudes to parental responsibility				
A child's education is wholly or mainly the responsibility of the parent	20%	19%	28%	↑
Involvement with child's education				
Always feel confident helping children with homework	41%	35%	33%	↓
Involvement with child's education				
Help children with homework (every/most times or occasionally)	88%	85%	89%	↑
Participation in other activities to aid child's learning				
Doing school projects together	-	79%	83%	↑
Making things	-	74%	81%	↑
Reading with child	-	70%	79%	↑
Playing sport	-	71%	80%	↑
Cooking	-	67%	73%	↑
Drawing or painting	-	61%	64%	↑
Communication with school				
Found informal discussions most useful way of finding out about child's progress in school ²²	10%	18%	28%	↑
Attitudes to communication with schools				
I find my child's school welcoming to parents (agree strongly)	68%	65%	70%	↑
If I talk to teachers at my child's school, I will be labelled a trouble maker (<i>strongly disagree</i>)	53%	56%	57%	↑

²² There are some slight differences in the wording of this question in the 2007 and earlier surveys

My child's school makes it easy for me to be involved in my child's education (agree strongly)	47%	52%	54%	↑
I know all I need to know about how I can help with my child's education (agree strongly)	38%	41%	45%	↑
A lot of information given by the school is full of jargon (agree strongly)	27%	-	30%	(↑)
My child's school gives me clear information about how my child is getting on (agree strongly)	56%	-	60%	↑
Awareness of terms				
Awareness of Ofsted (know a lot / a little about it)	79%	-	90%	↑
Awareness home/school agreements (know a lot / a little about it)	57%	-	51%	↓

The above shows that there are some core areas where views have remained static over the past six years. However, the trend data indicate various changes and the tables above present some positive messages as far as parental involvement is concerned. There appears to be an increased perception of involvement amongst parents and this increase is partly borne out in the increased levels of involvement in activities which aid children's learning (e.g. reading, playing sport, cooking). There was also an increase in the proportion who felt a child's education is wholly or mainly the parent's responsibility.

Generally speaking, parents were also more positive about the ways in which schools communicate with them. They also valued informal discussions with schools more than they had done in 2004 and 2001. The findings suggest that parents value increased 'dialogue' with schools and informal discussions are part of the increased ways in which parents look to communicate with teachers.

One area where the survey findings indicate less positive results was in relation to 'confidence'. Fewer parents felt confident helping their children with homework (although the main decrease took place between 2001 and 2004). Finally, although parents were positive about communication issues, an increased proportion felt that school information contained too much 'jargon'.

11 Implications for Policy and Further Research

This report has highlighted a number of findings which have important policy implications, for example, in providing evidence about what types of communication and involvement parents value most. There are also various considerations for further research and these have also been summarised below:

- The survey confirms that many parents experience multiple disadvantage (eg. internet access is lower amongst disadvantaged groups, parents of SEN pupils are more likely to have a health problem or disability, lone parents tended to leave school earlier and be in lower social grades). As a result, it is important to understand the full range of issues faced by parents when trying to communicate better and encourage participation.
- Parents feel increasingly involved in their child's school life, reflecting an increase in parental participation in activities with children. While involvement with homework and school-based activities show little change, parents are now more likely to take part in wider activities, such as reading, cooking, making things and playing sport. Parents today are also more likely to see education as their own responsibility rather than the school's, and this could heighten their sense of involvement.
- The desire to get more involved tends to be stronger amongst disadvantaged groups, e.g. those in lower social grades, ethnic minorities, respondents with a long-term illness or disability. Further work may be needed to understand how to get these parents more involved and understand their barriers to involvement. For instance, the survey (and previous surveys in 2004 and 2001) have shown that work commitments are a significant barrier for some parents. Other research (e.g. Welsh et al, 2004²³) has shown that parents may lack the skill and confidence to be involved with their children's learning.
- Despite positive changes on a number of issues, the proportion that would be happy to take their children out of school remains similar to previous years, and responses are not affected by the level of parental involvement. This suggests that this may not be seen as an important issue by parents, and that there is scope for further information to communicate the negative consequences to parents).

²³ Welsh, E, Buchanan, A, Flouri, E and Lewis J (2004): *Involved fathering and child well being. Father's involvement with secondary school age children*. London: National Children's Bureau for JRF.

- Informal discussions are now seen as the most useful method of communication with schools, particularly by those who are more involved. This is therefore a good way of developing relationships further with parents who are already more involved.
- Methods other than face-to-face contact were more popular with parents who are currently less involved, so these methods could be focused on these parents. Specifically, email was more popular with men (including non-resident parents) and those in full-time work, while lone parents favoured the telephone as a mode of contact.
- Communication with schools is viewed positively, and parents feel well informed. One group that was more negative was parents of children who had been identified as having SEN but who had not been statemented. It is possible that these parents need more consultation on their child's progress.

Technical Appendix

Questionnaire A: Parents Involvement in Children's Education

A. Introduction and screener

Q1. Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is ... calling on behalf of BMRB. We are conducting a survey for the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) about parents and education.

Yes - continue

Make an appointment

Refused

IF NECESSARY ADD:

The results will help the Department to consider how best it can support the services it provides to parents in the future.

Your answers will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

If you would like more information, I have a letter from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) that I could send you which explains the research we are doing. Would you like to receive a copy of the letter?

Yes, send letter

No, do not send letter - respondent hesitant

No, okay to conduct interview

IF NO, DO NOT SEND LETTER - RESPONDENT HESITANT

I also have the freephone number of the Market Research Society. They will be able to confirm that we are an independent research organisation and that all your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence. I can also give you the telephone number of my supervisor who will be able to provide you with more information about the survey.

Would you like either of these numbers?

Yes

No, okay to conduct interview

IF YES

The MRS number is 0500 39 69 99, although please be aware that they will not be able to provide you with any specific information about this survey.

My supervisor's number is X X X

Q2. Can I just check: are you a parent or carer of any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school*? **IF NECESSARY:** This would include any children not living with you in this household, but who you've had contact with at least once in the last month.

IF NECESSARY ADD:

A state school is any school that you do not have to pay for your child to attend.

Yes

No

IF NO

Q3. Are there any parents or carers of any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school* living in this household?

IF NECESSARY ADD:

A state school is any school that you do not have to pay for your child to attend.

IF NO OR REFUSED: THANK YOU AND CLOSE

Yes

No

IF YES

Q4. And can you tell me how many parents and carers (of any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school*) are currently living in this household? Please include yourself.

Enter figure

If more than one, randomly select respondent and ask to speak to them.

IF ONE

Q5. Is that you?

Record name

B. Child selection

Q6. How many children aged between 5 and 16 *attending state school* do you have? Please don't include any children in reception classes.

Please do include any children not living with you in this household, but who you've had contact with at least once in the last month.

Numeric answer

0 - thank you and close

Q7. And thinking only about your children at state school, how old are those aged between 5 and 16? [IF ONLY ONE CHLD ATTENDING STATE SCHOOL: How old is your child?]

RECORD AGES OF ALL RELEVANT CHILDREN. NUMBER OF RESPONSES SHOULD BE SAME AS NUMBER OF CHILDREN GIVEN EARLIER.

Numeric answers between 5 and 16

FOR EACH CHILD, ASK

Q8. And does he / she live with you in this household or in another household?

Yes

No

IF ANOTHER HOUSEHOLD

Q9. And have you had contact at least once in the last month?

IF ABSENT PARENT ONLY AND NO CONTACT WITH ANY CHILDREN IN LAST MONTH - THANK YOU AND CLOSE.

RANDOMLY SELECT AGE FROM ELIGIBLE CHILDREN. IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD OF THAT AGE, CHOOSE CHILD WHOSE FIRST NAME COMES FIRST ALPHABETICALLY.

RECORD NAME OR INTIAL AND USE AS TEXTFILL THROUGHOUT QUESTIONNAIRE (REASSURE RESPONDENT THAT NAME IS TAKEN ONLY TO MAKE THE REST OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE EASIER TO ADMINISTER)

IF NOT ABSENT PARENT ONLY

Q10. And which of these phrases best describes the child's household?

READ OUT

A two parent household

A household with one parent and one partner

A single parent household

A household with two guardians and neither are the child's parents

A household with only one guardian, who is not the child's parent

ASK ALL

Q11. How involved do you personally feel in <child's> school life? (*Read out*)

Very involved

Fairly involved

Not very involved

Not at all involved

Don't know

IF TWO PARENT HOUSEHOLD OR ONE PARENT AND ONE PARTNER OR TWO
GUARDIANS WHO ARE NOT THE CHILDS PARENTS AT Q9

Q12. And overall, would you say that you or your partner is more involved in
<child's>'s school life?

DO NOT READ OUT.

PROBE - AND IS THAT MUCH MORE, OR A LITTLE MORE?

I am much more involved

I am a little more involved

*Equally involved (**Do not read out**)*

My partner is a little more involved

My partner is much more involved

C. Childs details

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire about <child>'s education. Thinking about <child> ,

Q13. What School Year is <child> in? *(Use age to take a best guess if unsure)*

Reception(Age 4 or 5)

Year 1 (Age 5 or 6)

Year 2 (Age 6 or 7)

Year 3 (Age 7 or 8)

Year 4 (Age 8 or 9)

Year 5 (Age 9 or 10)

Year 6 (Age 10 or 11)

Year 7 (Age 11 or 12)

Year 8 (Age 12 or 13)

Year 9 (Age 13 or 14)

Year 10 (Age 14 or 15)

Year 11 (Age 15 or 16)

Year 12 (Age 16 o 17)

Don't Know

ASK IF CHILD AGED 11-12 AND DON'T KNOW SCHOOL YEAR.

Q14. Is <child> at primary or secondary school?

Secondary

Middle School

Primary

ASK ALL

Q15. And is <child> a boy or a girl? *(Ask only if not obvious or already mentioned)*

Male

Female

D. Attitudes Towards Education

First of all, I am going to read out a series of statements about parents and education. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one. *Read Out (Random Start Order)*

Definitely agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Definitely disagree

Don't know (Do not read out)

Q16. I find my child's school welcoming to parents

Q17. My child's school makes it easy for me to be involved in my child's education

Q18. I know all I need to about how I can help with my child's education

Q19. If I talk too often to teachers at my child's school, I will be labelled a trouble maker

Q20. My child's school gives me clear information on how my child is getting on

Q21. I would like to be more involved in my child's school life.

Q22. A lot of information given by the school about <child>'s education is full of jargon

Q23. Can I just check with you, does <child> ever go to a supplementary or complementary school or homework club? If you're not sure what these things are, just tell me.

Child goes to supplementary/complementary school/homework club

Doesn't go to supp/comp school

DK/not sure

I am now going to read out a list of responsibilities some parents have told us about. For each one, please could you tell me how important it is using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means it is not at all important and 5 means it is extremely important. *Read out. Randomise start order*

1 Not at all important

2

3

4

5 Extremely important

Don't Know

- Q24. Making sure your child attends school regularly and on time
- Q25. Helping your child with homework
- Q26. Attending parents evenings, tutor days and other parent-teacher contact
- Q27. Getting in touch with the school when you have a specific request about how <child> is getting on
- Q28. Supporting schools' policies on children's behaviour in school

IF 'CHILD GOES TO SUPPLEMENTARY/COMPLEMENTARY SCHOOL/HOMEWORK CLUB' AT Q23

- Q29. Making sure your child attends a supplementary, complementary school or homework club
- Q30. Sometimes parents take their child out of school during term time, for example, to go on a family holiday or extended family break. Would you be happy to do this yourself?

Yes

No

Depends on circumstances (Do not read out)

Don't Know

- Q31. Thinking in general about children and education, would you say that a child's education is: *Read out. Reverse order in alternate interviews.*

Wholly the parent's responsibility

Mainly the parent's responsibility

Mainly the school's responsibility

Wholly the school's responsibility

Both equally (Do not read out)

Don't Know (Do not read out)

E. Level Of Involvement

ASK ALL

Q32. How often do you help <child> with their homework, if at all? *if never, probe: Is that because <child> never gets homework or they get it but you don't help? (Read out)*

Every time

Most times

Occasionally

Never - child never gets homework

Never - child does get homework but parent doesn't help

Never - don't know if child gets homework

Don't Know

(do not read out) Depends what it is

(do not read out) When the child asks for help

Q33. How confident do you (IF 'NEVER': WOULD YOU) feel helping <child> with their homework? *Read out and code most appropriate answer*

Always confident

Confident most of the time

Confident some of the time

Never confident

(do not read out) Depends what it is

Don't Know

ASK IF SOME OF THE TIME / NEVER CONFIDENT (CODES 3 OR 4 AT Q33):

Q34. You said you are not always confident helping <child> with their homework. Can you tell me why that is? *do not prompt. Multicode.*

Different teaching methods these days

Don't understand the work my child does

Wasn't taught certain subjects at school

I might confuse my child / do it wrong

Language difficulties / issues

I have difficulty with reading or writing

I have difficulty with numeracy / number skills

Child is confident enough, doesn't need my help

School doesn't give any guidance or advice on homework

Other

Don't Know

Thinking of your involvement with <child>'s school, which of the following activities do you do (apart from paid work)? Is that whenever there is an opportunity, sometimes or never? *Read Out Each Activity*

Whenever there is an opportunity

Sometimes

Never

Don't Know

Q35. Help out in class or in school for example help with the library, dinner duties, school trips and so on

Q36. Get involved in a supplementary or complementary school or homework club

Q37. Get involved in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Q38. Get involved in a Parent Council or Parent Forum

I would now like to ask you about the sorts of things you personally do to help <child> with his/her learning. For each item I read out, please tell me if you do this with <child>.

Yes

No

Don't know

Q39. Reading with <child>

Q40. Playing sport

Q41. Doing school projects together

Q42. Drawing or painting

Q43. Making things

Q44. Cooking

Q45. Apart from the things I've just mentioned, do you do anything else with <child> to help him / her with his / her learning? *If Yes: What else do you do? Do not read out. Code as many as apply.*

Arrange or pay for tuition in particular subjects (eg English, maths, languages, music)

Buy books

Buy educational computer software

Discuss news / current events together

Do homework with him / her

Do outdoor activities / field trips together

Give encouragement

Play games

Set additional homework or tests

Supervise child's access to internet

Take him / her to participate in sporting activities/classes e.g. swimming, football, gymnastics, ballet, judo etc

Take to museums / art galleries

Other

No, don't do anything else to help with learning

Don't Know

Refused

Q46. Is there anything that stops you getting more involved with <child>'s school life? *Do not prompt. If says 'lack of time', code it but explicitly ask 'what else, apart from lack of time?' Probe: in what way?*

Work commitments

Specific mention of shift work

Not sure what the school wants me to do

Language difficulties

Transport problems (availability / cost etc)

Confidence / don't feel qualified / don't have any skills they need

Child does not want me to

Child does not tell me what is happening at school

Demands / needs of other children / Childcare difficulties

Partner / other parent or carer takes the responsibility

Lack of time

No specific barriers

Don't live with child

Other (specify)

F. Communication With School

Next I would like you to think about communication with <child>'s school.

Can you tell me whether you personally have talked about how your child is doing in class

with <child>'s teachers.... *Read out*

Q47. At regular events such as Parents' evenings, Parents Meetings or Review Days arranged by the school

Q48. At other meetings requested by the school

Q49. At meetings requested by the parent

Q50. Through written communication like letters or email

Yes

No

Q51. We find that some parents are more confident than others when talking with teachers. How confident do you personally feel when talking to teachers at <child>'s school? *Read Out*

Very confident

Fairly confident

Not very confident

Not at all confident

(do not read out) Depends on teacher

(do not read out) Depends on subject

(do not read out) I don't talk to teachers

Don't Know

Q52. Thinking of ALL the different ways in which you could get information, which is the most useful way for you to find out about how <CHILD> is getting on at school? *Code one only. Do not read out precodes.*

Parents' evenings

Talking to school staff informally, such as in the playground

Other formal meetings with teachers

School reports / Test results

Notes or letters from school that child brings home or other written communication

Child tells me or I asks child

The school website

Emails

Text messages

Phone calls from the school

Partner / wife / husband tells me

Don't know

Other (specify)

Q53. And which ways of communicating information do you feel should be used more by <child's> school? *Code as many as apply. Do not read out precodes.*

Parents' evenings

Talking to school staff informally, such as in the playground

Other formal meetings with teachers

School reports / Test results

Notes or letters from school that child brings home or other written communication

Child tells me or I asks child

The school website

Emails

Text messages

Phone calls from the school

Partner / wife / husband tells me

Don't know

Other (specify)

Q54. In the future, all schools will publish something called a School Profile. It's a new annual report about how well schools perform and other school information. Have you heard of it before now?

Yes

No

IF YES AT Q54 CONTINUE. OTHERS GO TO Q62

Q55. How did you find out about the School Profile? *Do not read out. Code as many as apply.*

School sent the paper report via my child

I came across it online when looking at schools websites

Through a web search engine (Google, Ask, Yahoo etc)

Another parent told me about it

I heard about it in the news or local media

Through work (e.g. respondent is a teacher)

Other (specify)

Don't remember

Q56. Have you actually read any School Profiles?

Yes

No

IF YES AT Q56 . OTHER GO TO Q62

Q57. How many? *If necessary - just an approximate figure is fine*

Enter figure

Q58. And thinking back to when you read the report/these reports, would you say you (if more than one: generally)...

read only a little

read about half

read most of it

read nearly all or all of it

IF HAVE READ ANY AMOUNT CONTINUE, OTHER GO TO Q62

Q59. As a reminder, the purpose of School Profiles is to provide parents with information about a school and how it is performing. So thinking now about School Profiles and their purpose, can you tell me, firstly, what you think are good about School Profiles?

(Open ended)

Q60. And, secondly, how would you like to see School Profile publications improved?

(Open ended)

Q61. And overall, how helpful would you say School Profile reports are to you?
(Read out)

Very helpful

Quite helpful

Not very helpful

Not at all helpful

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *(Read out)*

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Did not choose the school (Q66 only)

Q62. The school gives me enough information for me to judge how far <child> is fulfilling his / her potential

Q63. Information from the school helps me understand how I can support <child>'s progress

Q64. I would know exactly who to contact at the school if I had any concerns about <child>

Q65. If the school told me <child> was not making good progress, I'm very confident that my involvement could help.

Q66. When I was choosing a school for <child>, I felt well informed about my options

RANDOMISE ORDER

Q67. <Child> tends to do well in subjects involving reading and writing

Q68. <Child> tends to do well in number based subjects

Q69. To let you know how <child> is doing, schools write formal reports at certain points in the year. How often does <child> get these from school? *Do not read out*

Daily

Weekly

More often than weekly, but less than monthly

Monthly

Every half term (6 times a year)

4 or 5 times a year

Every term (3 times a year)

Twice a year

Once a year

Less often

Never

Don't know

Q70. And how often would you ideally like to be able to see how well <child> is doing at school? *Do not read out*

As and when I want to

Daily

Weekly

More often than weekly, but less than monthly

Monthly

Every half term (6 times a year)

4 or 5 times a year

Every term (3 times a year)

Twice a year

Once a year

Less often

Never

Don't know

Q71. And in addition to any reports that <child> currently gets, if <child>'s school was able to provide a secure website where you could see how well <child> was doing with the most up to date information, how appealing would this be to you? *Read out*

Very appealing

Quite appealing

Not very appealing

Not at all appealing

Don't know (Do not read out)

G. Demographics

Thank you. Now I need to ask you a few more questions about yourself to make sure we get a good spread of opinions.

Q72. What was your age last birthday? *enter age*

Q73. Are you ... (*read out list*)

Married / Living as married

In a Civil Partnership

Single / Engaged

Widowed

Separated

Divorced

Refused

Q74. At what age did you personally finish your full time education?

14 or under

15

16

17

18

19

20

21 - 23

24 or more

Still studying

Refused

Q75. Which of these best describes your employment at the moment, if any?
(*read out*)

Working in a paid job more than 29 hours a week

Working in a paid job between 8 and 29 hours a week

Working in a paid job less than 8 hours a week

Self employed

Not in paid employment / looking after house or home

Full time student at school

Full time student at university / college

Unemployed

Retired from paid employment

Don't Know

Q76. Do you have access to the Internet at all? *interviewer: if yes probe for where access, home, work, school / college or elsewhere*

Home access to internet
Access to internet at work
Access to internet at school/college
Access to internet elsewhere
No access to internet
Don't Know

Q77. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?

INTERVIEWER, IF YES: To what religious faith would you say you belong?

No / None
Christian (Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominations)
Buddhist
Hindu
Jewish
Islam / Muslim
Sikh
Other
Refused

Q78. Next, please choose one answer from this list to indicate your cultural background? *read out*

White
Mixed
Asian or Asian British
Black or Black British
Chinese
Some other background
Don't Know
Refused

IF WHITE

probe for specific background: white

White British
White Irish
Traveller of Irish heritage
Gypsy / Roma
Any other white background
Don't Know

IF MIXED ETHNIC GROUP

probe for specific background: mixed

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background

Don't Know

IF ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH

probe for specific background: Asian

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background

Don't Know

IF BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH

probe for specific background: black

Black Caribbean

Black African

Any other black background

Don't Know

Q79. Is English the first or main language of your household?

Yes

No

IF YES

Q80. Is English the only language or are other languages spoken?

yes, English only

yes, English is first language but other languages also spoken

no, another language is household's first language

household is bi-lingual

don't know

refused

ASK ALL

Q81. Do you provide any care, help or support for anyone because of illness, disability, old age or infirmity of any kind? [qdisot] This does not include caring as part of a paid job.

Yes

No

Don't know

Refused

Q82. Do you have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity? by 'longstanding' I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of at least 12 months or that it likely to affect you over a period of at least 12 months?

Yes

No

Don't know

Refused

Q83. And does <child> have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity? (if necessary: by 'longstanding' I mean anything that has troubled <child> over a period of at least 12 months or that it likely to affect <child> over a period of at least 12 months?)

Yes

No

Don't know

Refused

ASK ALL

Q84. Has <child> been identified as having special educational needs?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Refused

ASK IF YES AT Q84

Q85. Does <child> have a Statement of Special Educational Needs?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Refused

Q86. What type of school does <child> attend?

Mainstream school

Special school

Don't Know

Refused

Q87. Could you tell me how many fixed telephone lines are available for incoming telephone calls to your household? (PLEASE ONLY INCLUDE THOSE WITH DIFFERENT NUMBERS AND DO NOT INCLUDE MOBILE PHONES.)

1..10

DK

REF

ASK ALL

Q88. Social Grade

Establish who in the household is the chief income earner and code social grade for the chief income earner.

A

B

C1

C2

D

E

Refused

Q89. Please can you give me your full postcode?

Enter

Q90. Would you be willing for the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), or someone working on behalf of the Department, to contact you again in the future as a follow-up to this survey?

Yes

No

THANK AND CLOSE

INTERVIEWER: RECORD WHETHER SUPPORTED TRANSLATION USED

Questionnaire B: Parents Involvement in Children's Education

A. Introduction and screener

Q1. Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is ... calling on behalf of BMRB. We are conducting a survey for the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) about parents and education.

Yes - continue

Make an appointment

Refused

If necessary add:

The results will help the Department to consider how best it can support the services it provides to parents in the future.

Your answers will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

If you would like more information, I have a letter from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) that I could send you which explains the research we are doing. Would you like to receive a copy of the letter?

Yes, send letter

No, do not send letter - respondent hesitant

No, okay to conduct interview

IF NO, DO NOT SEND LETTER - RESPONDENT HESITANT

I also have the freephone number of the Market Research Society. They will be able to confirm that we are an independent research organisation and that all your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence. I can also give you the telephone number of my supervisor who will be able to provide you with more information about the survey.

Would you like either of these numbers?

Yes

No, okay to conduct interview

IF YES

The MRS number is 0500 39 69 99, although please be aware that they will not be able to provide you with any specific information about this survey.

My supervisor's number is X X X

Q2. Can I just check: are you a parent or carer of any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school?* *IF NECESSARY:* This would include any children not living with you in this household, but who you've had contact with at least once in the last month.

If necessary add:

A state school is any school that you do not have to pay for your child to attend.

Yes

No

IF NO

Q3. Are there any parents or carers of any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school* living in this household?

If necessary add:

A state school is any school that you do not have to pay for your child to attend.

IF NO OR REFUSED: THANK YOU AND CLOSE

Yes

No

IF YES

Q4. And can you tell me how many parents and carers (of any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school*) are currently living in this household? Please include yourself.

Enter figure

If more than one, randomly select respondent and ask to speak to them.

IF ONE

Q5. Is that you?

Record name

B. Child selection

Q6. How many children aged between 5 and 16 *attending state school* do you have? Please don't include any children in reception classes.

Please do include any children not living with you in this household, but who you've had contact with at least once in the last month.

Numeric answer

0 - thank you and close

Q7. And thinking only about your children at state school, how old are those aged between 5 and 16? [IF ONLY ONE CHLD ATTENDING STATE SCHOOL: How old is your child?]

RECORD AGES OF ALL RELEVANT CHILDREN. NUMBER OF RESPONSES SHOULD BE SAME AS NUMBER OF CHILDREN GIVEN EARLIER.

Numeric answers between 5 and 16

FOR EACH CHILD ASK

Q8. And does he / she live with you in this household or in another household?

Yes

No

IF ANOTHER HOUSEHOLD

Q9. And have you had contact at least once in the last month?

IF ABSENT PARENT ONLY AND NO CONTACT WITH ANY CHILDREN IN LAST MONTH
- THANK YOU AND CLOSE.

RANDOMLY SELECT AGE FROM ELIGIBLE CHILDREN. IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD OF THAT AGE, CHOOSE CHILD WHOSE FIRST NAME COMES FIRST ALPHABETICALLY.

RECORD NAME OR INTIAL AND USE AS TEXTFILL THROUGHOUT QUESTIONNAIRE (REASSURE RESPONDENT THAT NAME IS TAKEN ONLY TO MAKE THE REST OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE EASIER TO ADMINISTER)

IF NOT ABSENT PARENT ONLY

Q10. And which of these phrases best describes the child's household?

READ OUT

A two parent household

A household with one parent and one partner

A single parent household

A household with two guardians and neither are the child's parents

A household with only one guardian, who is not the child's parent

ASK ALL

Q11. How involved do you personally feel in <child's> school life? (*Read out*)

Very involved

Fairly involved

Not very involved

Not at all involved

Don't know

IF TWO PARENT HOUSEHOLD OR ONE PARENT AND ONE PARTNER OR TWO
GUARDIANS WHO ARE NOT THE CHILDS PARENTS AT Q9

Q12. And overall, would you say that you or your partner is more involved in
<child's>'s school life?

DO NOT READ OUT.

PROBE - AND IS THAT MUCH MORE, OR A LITTLE MORE?

I am much more involved

I am a little more involved

Equally involved (DO NOT READ OUT)

My partner is a little more involved

My partner is much more involved

C. Childs details

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire about <child>'s education. Thinking about <child> ,

Q13. What School Year is <child> in? *(Use age to take a best guess if unsure)*

Reception(Age 4 or 5)

Year 1 (Age 5 or 6)

Year 2 (Age 6 or 7)

Year 3 (Age 7 or 8)

Year 4 (Age 8 or 9)

Year 5 (Age 9 or 10)

Year 6 (Age 10 or 11)

Year 7 (Age 11 or 12)

Year 8 (Age 12 or 13)

Year 9 (Age 13 or 14)

Year 10 (Age 14 or 15)

Year 11 (Age 15 or 16)

Year 12 (Age 16 or 17)

Don't Know

ASK IF CHILD AGED 11-12 AND DON'T KNOW SCHOOL YEAR:

Q14. Is <child> at primary or secondary school?

Secondary

Middle School

Primary

ASK ALL

Q15. And is <child> a boy or a girl? *(Ask only if not obvious or already mentioned)*

Male

Female

D. Attitudes Towards Education

Q16. First of all, I am going to read out a series of statements about parents and education. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one. *Read Out (Random Start Order)*

Definitely agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Definitely disagree

Don't know (Do not read out)

Q17. I find my child's school welcoming to parents

Q18. My child's school makes it easy for me to be involved in my child's education

Q19. I know all I need to about how I can help with my child's education

Q20. If I talk too often to teachers at my child's school, I will be labelled a trouble maker

Q21. A lot of information given by the school about <child>'s education is full of jargon

I am now going to read out a list of responsibilities some parents have told us about. For each one, please could you tell me how important it is using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means it is not at all important and 5 means it is extremely important. *Read out. Randomise start order*

1 Not at all important

2

3

4

5 Extremely important

Don't Know

Q22. Making sure your child attends school regularly and on time

Q23. Helping your child with homework

Q24. Attending parents evenings, tutor days and other parent-teacher contact

Q25. Supporting schools' policies on children's behaviour in school

Q26. Thinking in general about children and education, would you say that a child's education is ... *Read out. Reverse order in alternate interviews.*

Wholly the parent's responsibility

Mainly the parent's responsibility

Mainly the school's responsibility

Wholly the school's responsibility

Both equally (Do not read out)

Don't Know (Do not read out)

E. Level Of Involvement

ASK ALL

Q27. How often do you help <child> with their homework, if at all? *if never, probe: Is that because <child> never gets homework or they get it but you don't help? (Read out)*

Every time

Most times

Occasionally

Never - child never gets homework

Never - child does get homework but parent doesn't help

Never - don't know if child gets homework

Don't Know

(do not read out) Depends what it is

(do not read out) When the child asks for help

Q28. How confident do you (IF 'NEVER': WOULD YOU) feel helping <child> with their homework? *Read out and code most appropriate answer*

Always confident

Confident most of the time

Confident some of the time

Never confident

(do not read out) Depends what it is

Don't Know

F. Communication With School

Next I would like you to think about communication with <child>'s school.

Can you tell me whether you personally have talked about how your child is doing in class with <child>'s teachers.... *Read out*

Q29. At regular events such as Parents' evenings, Parents Meetings or Review Days arranged by the school

Q30. At other meetings requested by the school

Q31. At meetings requested by the parent

Q32. Through written communication like letters or email

Yes

No

Q33. We find that some parents are more confident than others when talking with teachers. How confident do you personally feel when talking to teachers at <child>'s school? *Read Out*

Very confident

Fairly confident

Not very confident

Not at all confident

(do not read out) Depends on teacher

(do not read out) Depends on subject

(do not read out) I don't talk to teachers

Don't Know

Q34. In the future, all schools will publish something called a School Profile. It's a new annual report about how well schools perform and other school information. Have you heard of it before now?

Yes

No

IF YES AT Q34CONTINUE. OTHERS GO TO Q41

Q35. How did you find out about the School Profile? *Do not read out. Code as many as apply.*

School sent the paper report via my child
I came across it online when looking at schools websites
Through a web search engine (Google, Ask, Yahoo etc)
Another parent told me about it
I heard about it in the news or local media
Through work (e.g. respondent is a teacher)
Other (specify)
Don't remember

Q36. Have you actually read any School Profiles?

Yes
No

IF YES AT Q36. OTHERS GO TO Q41

Q37. How many? *If necessary* - just an approximate figure is fine

Enter figure

Q38. And thinking back to when you read the report/these reports, would you say you (if more than one: generally)... *(Read out)*

read only a little
read about half
read most of it
read nearly all or all of it

IF HAVE READ ANY AMOUNT CONTINUE, OTHER GO TO Q41

Q39. As a reminder, the purpose of School Profiles is to provide parents with information about a school and how it is performing. So thinking now about School Profiles and their purpose, can you tell me, firstly, what you think are good about School Profiles?

(Open ended)

Q40. And, secondly, how would you like to see School Profile publications improved?

(Open ended)

GO TO Q44

School Profiles contain information and charts describing how well a school performs in tests, how it compares to other schools locally and nationally, which subjects it specialises in and how it is planning to improve. They follow a standard format to make them easier to read and compare.

I'm going to read out some statements about these reports, and just based on your first impressions and this description, could you tell me please how far you agree or disagree with these. *RANDOMISE ORDER.*

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q41. I would use School Profile reports to help choose a school for <child>

Q42. Performance charts and statistics would put me off reading a report

Q43. I'm really interested in an annual school report that covers all aspects of the school and it's performance

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *(Read out)*

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Did not choose the school (Q49 only)

Q44. The school gives me enough information for me to judge how far <child> is fulfilling his / her potential

Q45. Information from the school helps me understand how I can support <child>'s progress

Q46. I would know exactly who to contact at the school if I had any concerns about <child>

Q47. If the school told me <child> was not making good progress, I'm very confident that my involvement could help.

Q48. I have enough opportunities to have a say in how <child>'s school is run

Q49. When I was choosing a school for <child>, I felt well informed about my options

Q50. When <child> started their current school, I felt well supported by the school

Q51. <child>'s school seems to cater better for mums than it does for dads

RANDOMISE ORDER

Q52. <Child> tends to do well in subjects involving reading and writing

Q53. <Child> tends to do well in number based subjects

Q54. If you wanted to have a say or change something about how <child>'s school was being run, who would you contact to do this? (*Multicode, do not prompt*)

Governors

Teachers generally

Headteacher or headteacher's office

School Council / Parent Council

Other parents / friends

Local Authority / Local Education Authority (LA, LEA)

Department for Education and Skills / DfES

MP / local councillor

My child

Local media

My partner

Other (specify)

Don't know / not sure

Q55. And ideally, how would like to be able contact them? (*Read out*)

Face to face informally

Face to face at a formal meeting

Phone them

Write a letter or note

Email

Text message

I am now going to read out a number of terms used about schools and education. For each one, could you tell me if you have heard of the term and how much you know about it. *Record what respondent thinks of their knowledge level, even if you think you know he/she is wrong! (Read out)*

Heard of the term and know a lot about what it means

Heard of the term and know a little about what it means

Heard of the term but don't know what it means

Never heard of the term

LIST RANDOMISED APART FROM FIRST TERM WHICH ALWAYS COMES FIRST.

Q56. Home School Agreement

Q57. School achievement and attainment tables

Q58. Bookstart

Q59. Ofsted

IF HAVE HEARD OF HOME SCHOOL AGREEMENT

Q60. You mentioned you had heard of the Home School Agreement. Have you actually signed one of these for <child>?

Yes

No

Don't know / Not sure

Q61. To let you know how <child> is doing, schools write formal reports at certain points in the year. How often does <child> get these from school? *Do not read out*

Daily

Weekly

More often than weekly, but less than monthly

Monthly

Every half term (6 times a year)

4 or 5 times a year

Every term (3 times a year)

Twice a year

Once a year

Less often

Never

Don't know

Q62. And how often would you ideally like to be able to see how well <child> is doing at school? *Do not read out*

As and when I want to

Daily

Weekly

More often than weekly, but less than monthly

Monthly

Every half term (6 times a year)

4 or 5 times a year

Every term (3 times a year)

Twice a year

Once a year

Less often

Never

Don't know

Q63. And in addition to any reports that <child> currently gets, if <child>'s school was able to provide a secure website where you could see how well <child> was doing with the most up to date information, how appealing would this be to you? *Read out*

Very appealing

Quite appealing

A little appealing

Not very appealing

Not at all appealing

Don't know (Do not read out)

Q64. And why do you say that?

(Open ended)

G. Demographics

Thank you. Now I need to ask you a few more questions about yourself to make sure we get a good spread of opinions.

Q65. What was your age last birthday? *enter age*

Q66. Are you ... (*read out list*)

Married/Living as married

In a Civil Partnership

Single/Engaged

Widowed

Separated

Divorced

Refused

Q67. At what age did you personally finish your full time education?

14 or under

15

16

17

18

19

20

21 - 23

24 or more

Still studying

Refused

Q68. Which of these best describes your employment at the moment, if any?
(*read out*)

Working in a paid job more than 29 hours a week

Working in a paid job between 8 and 29 hours a week

Working in a paid job less than 8 hours a week

Self employed

Not in paid employment / looking after house or home

Full time student at school

Full time student at university / college

Unemployed

Retired from paid employment

Don't Know

Q69. Do you have access to the Internet at all? *interviewer: if yes probe for where access, home, work, school/college or elsewhere*

Home access to internet
Access to internet at work
Access to internet at school/college
Access to internet elsewhere
No access to internet
Don't Know

Q70. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?

INTERVIEWER, IF YES: To what religious faith would you say you belong?

No / None
Christian (Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominations)
Buddhist
Hindu
Jewish
Islam / Muslim
Sikh
Other
Refused

Q71. Next, please choose one answer from this list to indicate your cultural background? *read out*

White
Mixed
Asian or Asian British
Black or Black British
Chinese
Some other background
Don't Know
Refused

IF WHITE

probe for specific background: white

White British
White Irish
Traveller of Irish heritage
Gypsy/Roma
Any other white background
Don't Know

IF MIXED ETHNIC GROUP

probe for specific background: mixed

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background

Don't Know

IF ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH

probe for specific background: Asian

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background

Don't Know

IF BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH

probe for specific background: black

Black Caribbean

Black African

Any other black background

Don't Know

Q72. Is English the first or main language of your household?

Yes

No

IF YES

Q73. Is English the only language or are other languages spoken?

yes, English only

yes, English is first language but other languages also spoken

no, another language is household's first language

household is bi-lingual

don't know

refused

ASK ALL

Q74. Do you provide any care, help or support for anyone because of illness, disability, old age or infirmity of any kind? [qdisot] This does not include caring as part of a paid job.

Yes

No

Don't know

Refused

Q75. Do you have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity? by 'longstanding' I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of at least 12 months or that it likely to affect you over a period of at least 12 months?

Yes

No

Don't know

Refused

Q76. And does <child> have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity? (if necessary: by 'longstanding' I mean anything that has troubled <child> over a period of at least 12 months or that it likely to affect <child> over a period of at least 12 months?)

Yes

No

Don't know

Refused

ASK ALL

Q77. Has <child> been identified as having special educational needs?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Refused

ASK IF YES AT Q84

Q78. Does <child> have a Statement of Special Educational Needs?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Refused

Q79. What type of school does <child> attend?

Mainstream school

Special school

Don't Know

Refused

Q80. Could you tell me how many fixed telephone lines are available for incoming telephone calls to your household? (PLEASE ONLY INCLUDE THOSE WITH DIFFERENT NUMBERS AND DO NOT INCLUDE MOBILE PHONES.)

1..10

Don't Know

Refused

ASK ALL

Q81. Social Grade

Establish who in household is the chief income earner and code social grade for the chief income earner.

A

B

C1

C2

D

E

Refused

Q82. Please can you give me your full postcode?

Enter

Q83. Would you be willing for the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), or someone working on behalf of the Department, to contact you again in the future as a follow-up to this survey?

Yes

No

THANK AND CLOSE

INTERVIEWER: RECORD WHETHER SUPPORTED TRANSLATION USED

Fieldwork procedures

Briefing of interviewers

All interviewers were briefed personally by the BMRB research team. They were given detailed information on the background and objectives of the survey. The interviewers were also given instructions on how to introduce the survey.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out by between 6th August and 23rd October 2007. Eligible households were selected by screening a random sample of telephone numbers. A total of 5,032 interviews were conducted (4,056 using questionnaire A and 976 using questionnaire B). Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes on average and were conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) out of BMRB's telephone centres in Ealing and Hull.

Supervision and quality control

For all telephone surveys, BMRB's standard quality control procedures are those stipulated by IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). As an IQCS member company, our quality control standards meet or exceed those required and our records are available for annual inspection. Our quality control procedures are summarised as follows:

- each interviewer is monitored at least every fourth shift;
- at least 7% of interviews are monitored;
- monitoring records are completed for each interviewer; these are discussed with the interviewer and signed;
- no interviews are carried out without a supervisor present;
- an interviewer performance review is held each month;
- all interviewers are personally briefed on each project.

Fieldwork figures

	N	Total issued sample	Out of scope	Screening	Eligibility	Valid sample
Total issued sample	643717	100%				
Sample still to try - no final outcome yet	48950	8%				
- <i>Appointment</i>	222	0%				
- <i>Call back</i>	1682	0%				
- <i>Engaged</i>	6548	1%				
- <i>Answering machine</i>	11080	2%				
- <i>New tel number</i>	49	0%				
- <i>Stopped interview</i>	281	0%				
- <i>No answer</i>	29088	6%				
Sample covered	594767	92%	100%			
Invalid sample data - deadwood						
Invalid sample data - deadwood	518485		87%			
Invalid tel number	449983		76%			
Business number	52518		9%			
Number unobtainable	15984		3%			
In scope of screening						
In scope of screening	76282		13%	100%		
Not screened	27366			36%		
- <i>Soft refusal eligibility unknown</i>	11280			15%		
- <i>Hard refusal eligibility unknown</i>	13575			18%		
- <i>Unavailable during fieldwork</i>	440			1%		
- <i>Abandoned interview</i>	542			1%		
- <i>Respondent incapable of interview</i>	1529			2%		
Screened	48916			64%	100%	
Eligibility						
Eligibility						
Ineligible	41919				86%	
Eligible	6997				14%	100%
Valid sample						
Valid sample						
Refusal	1825					26%
Respondent incapable of interview (selected resp)	39					1%
Unavailable During Fieldwork (selected resp)	54					1%
Interview	5054					72%

Note that 22 partial interviews were removed from the final data in the post-fieldwork editing stage, so the final total number of achieved interviews was 5,032.

Analysis

Logistic regression

The logistic regression results show the explanatory power of different factors, whilst controlling for all other factors, on whether parents were likely to perceive themselves as 'very involved' in their child's education. The table below show the odds ratios relating to different factors associated with a parent's involvement.

Odds Ratios

The odds ratios are calculated by taking the ratio of the odds of one group being involved compared to the odds of the reference group²⁴ being involved. An odds ratio greater than one implies an increased likelihood of involvement, whereas an odds ratio of less than one implies a decreased likelihood of involvement. For example, the odds ratios in the table below show that parents who help in class or at school whenever the opportunity were 77% more likely to perceive themselves as involved, than those who never helped.

Significance

Whether or not variables were included in the earlier models was based upon the statistical significance of their bivariate relationship with involvement. However, the final model shown here only includes variables that were also found to improve the prediction of involvement in the multivariate analysis, all others were removed if not statistically significant. Variables that are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (i.e. less than '0.05' statistical significance) are indicated by an asterisk in the tables²⁵.

²⁴ The reference group is indicated in each table by the characteristic with an odds ratio of (1.0).

²⁵ This means that there is less than a five percent chance that the variable of interest actually had no effect on involvement.

Odds Ratios indicating how much more or less likely a parent is say they are <i>very involved</i> in a child's education compared to the reference categories of influential variables.						
Variable	Categories	Sig.		Odds Ratio	Likelihood of saying they are very involved in child's education compared to reference category	
					More likely	Less Likely
Help with homework						
	None*	..		(1.00)		
	Sometimes	0.22		1.28		
	Most times/every time	0.02	**	1.64	64%	
Help in class or in school						
	Never*	..		(1.00)		
	Sometimes	0.03	**	1.22	22%	
	Whenever opportunity	0.00	**	1.77	77%	
Involved in PTA						
	Never*	..		(1.00)		
	Sometimes	0.02	**	1.26	26%	
	Whenever opportunity	0.00	**	1.90	90%	
	Never*	..		(1.00)		
Involved in Parent Council Forum						
	Never*	..		(1.00)		
	Sometimes	0.04	**	1.28	28%	
	Whenever opportunity	0.00	**	1.53	53%	
Playing Sport						
	Yes	0.03	**	1.20	20%	
	No*	..		(1.00)		
Doing Projects together						
	Yes	0.00		1.53	53%	
	No*	..	**	(1.00)		
Number of other activities parent helps with to help learning						
	None*	..		(1.00)		
	1 activity	0.90		1.02		
	2 or more activities	0.11		1.23		
Whether personally talked about how child is doing with child's teachers: At regular events such as Parents' evenings, Parents Meetings or Review Days arranged by the school						
	Yes	0.00	**	1.96	96%	
	No*	..		(1.00)		
Whether personally talked about how child is doing with child's teachers: At meetings requested by the parent						
	Yes	0.00	**	1.28	28%	
	No*	..		(1.00)		
Employment Status						
	<29 hrs in Paid employment	0.00	**	1.29	29%	
	30+ hrs Paid employment*	..		(1.00)		
	Self employed	0.11		0.81		

	Looking after home, unemployed or retired	0.43		1.08		
	Studying	0.58		0.87		
Household Type						
	Single parent Household	0.01	**	0.81		19%
	Two parent Household	..		(1.00)		
Age of parent						
	<25	0.19		1.63		
	25 – 34	0.51		1.07		
	35 - 44*	..		(1.00)		
	45 – 54	0.65		1.04		
	55+	0.12		1.38		
Ethnicity						
	White*	..		(1.00)		
	Mixed	0.86		0.94		
	Asian	0.63		1.08		
	Black	0.00	**	2.35	135%	
	Other	0.58		1.16		
Child has long standing illness, disability or infirmity						
	Yes	0.28		1.14		
	No*	..		(1.00)		
School Year						
	Don't Know	0.09		0.49		
	1	0.05	**	0.64		36%
	2	0.12		0.70		
	3	0.01	**	0.55		45%
	4	0.01	**	0.57		43%
	5	0.02	**	0.59		41%
	6	0.19		0.74		
	7	0.06		0.65		
	8	0.02	**	0.59		41%
	9	0.04	**	0.63		37%
	10	0.10		0.70		
	11	0.99		1.00		
	12*	..		(1.00)		
Statement of Educational needs						
	Yes	0.00	**	1.91	91%	
	No*	..		(1.00)		

* - reference category

** - significant at 95%

The right hand columns in the table indicate how much more or less likely a parent is to be very involved when compared against the reference category. This percentage is derived from the odds ratio, by calculating $(\text{odds ratio} - 1) \times 100$. A negative value indicates that the parent is less likely to be very involved, and a positive value indicates that they are more likely to be very involved.

The table shows that the age of the parent is not significant when it comes to how involved they are, and parents of children with long standing illness, disability or infirmity were no more or less likely to say they are very involved.

The table further shows that parents who never help with homework were 39% less likely than those who help every time to be very involved in their education. Even when controlling for school year, this factor influences the likelihood.

When controlling for age and working status, single parent households were 19% less likely than 2 parent households to say they are very involved in their children's education.

The school year of the child also plays a part in how involved a parent feels. Compared to those with children in year 12, those in years 1, 3-5, 8 and 9 were significantly less likely to be very involved in the child's education. This suggests that parents of children in years of transition between primary and secondary school, and those doing GCSEs or A-levels were more likely to be very involved in their child's education.

Cluster analysis

In addition to the logistic regression, cluster analysis based on parents' attitudes was also carried out. However, as most parents were generally positive on most of the attitudinal measures, there was not enough differentiation to be able to produce distinct clusters; the models attempted were therefore not statistically significant.

Other analysis variables

The following analysis variables were also considered, but did not reveal any significant differences:

- Region - there were some differences between London and elsewhere (noted in the report), but otherwise there was very little variation or consistency.
- Urban / rural - no obvious patterns emerged.
- IMD / education deprivation index - there were only a few differences, which were closely linked to differences by social grade.

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