

January 2022

School readiness: qualitative and quantitative research with teaching professionals

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Kindred²

Methodology and objectives



Quantitative

An online survey of **971 primary school teachers in the UK**, including 229 Head Teachers /Deputy Head Teachers.

The sample was sourced from a combination of the YouGov panel (n=511) and an open survey link distributed by Kindred² (n=460).

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all primary school teachers in the UK.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st November and 12th December 2021.

Wherever comparisons are drawn with YouGov's 2020 survey of 528 primary school teachers on behalf of Kindred², statistical significance testing is carried out against the comparable and representative YouGov panel portion of the 2021 survey sample (n=511).

Key objectives

- To source robust evidence of the proportion of children that are considered 'school ready'* by relevant teaching staff (compared to 2020 YouGov data)
- To source evidence in order to generate media coverage on a) the growing need for improved support in the early years, b) the costs to schools of not providing this support and c) the impact of COVID on 2021 cohort.

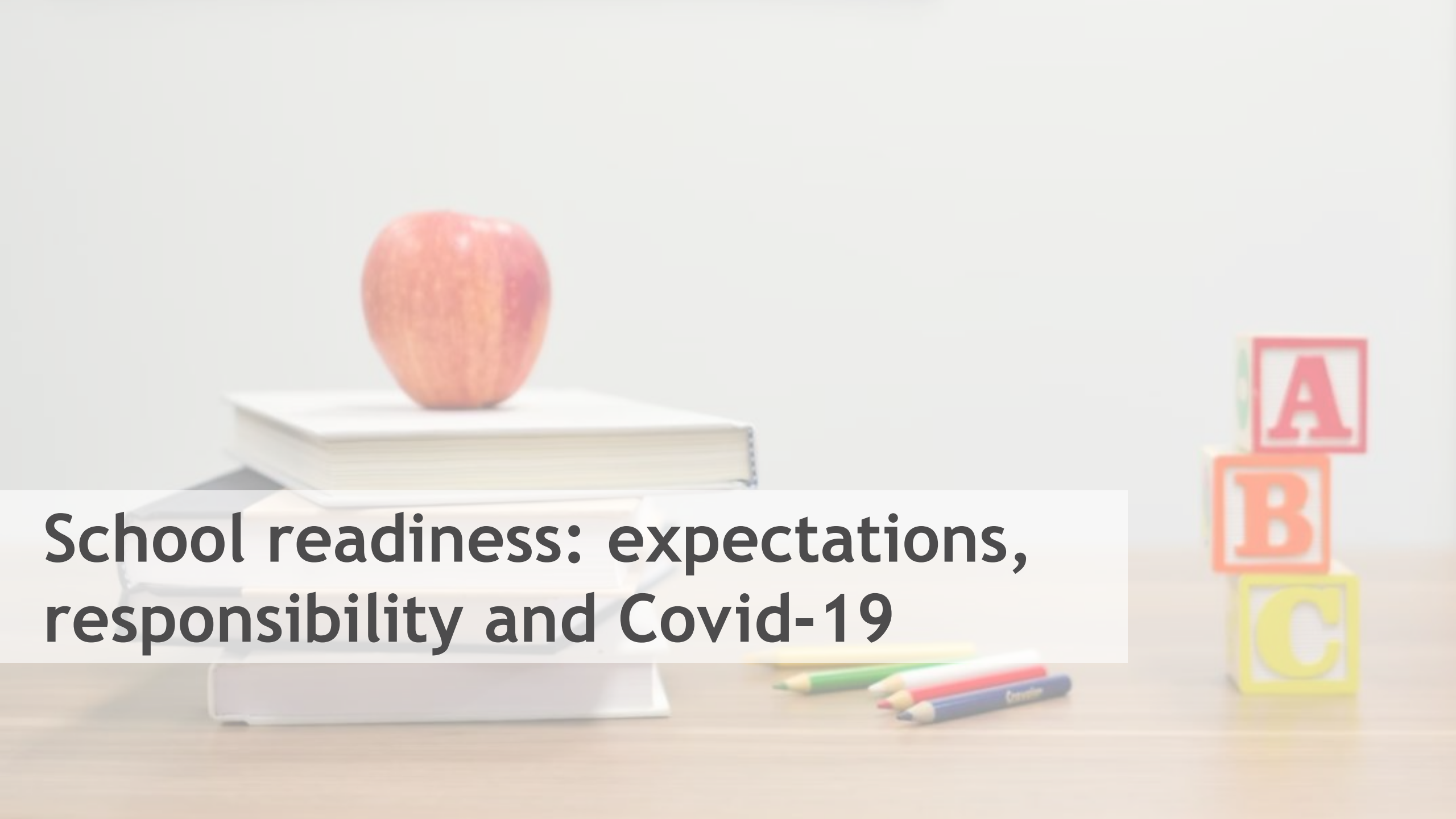
Qualitative

4x text-based focus groups with KS1 leaders and teachers (90 mins)

15x video depths with Heads and Deputy Heads (45 mins)

Recruited from YouGov's Panel. Fieldwork during November and December 2022.

*By 'school ready' we mean children being developmentally ready to access the learning and development opportunities available to them in the Reception year, where this is not due to a previously identified SEND. It refers to the full range of developmental measures, not simply a narrow measure of 'academic' attainment. We are focused on entry to Reception rather than Year 1 because we know many parents consider the start of 'school' to be the beginning of reception.



**School readiness: expectations,
responsibility and Covid-19**



Schools expect reception intakes to have a basic foundation of social, physical emotional and academic skills



DRESSING AND TOILETING

There is an expectation for children to be able to toilet and dress themselves when they enter reception - limited ability for children to do this can take up valuable staff time.

“We have an expectation that children come in to school toilet trained, but we are seeing more and more pupils each year who are not.”

Teacher, East Midlands



PLAYING AND TURN-TAKING

Schools expect children to have the social skills necessary to play and share with other children - this allows them to better develop their social skills when they join reception.

“[We expect some] social awareness and skills like sharing etc.”

SLT, North West



BASIC WRITTEN AND VERBAL SKILLS

The ability to communicate in small sentences, recognise primary colours, count to 10, hold a pen / book and write one's name are key skills desired.

“[I would expect them] to articulate basic needs and to know their name. Writing some letters and numbers a huge advantage.”

Headteacher, West Midlands



FOLLOWING SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS

Being able to follow and act on simple instructions is hoped for - some children have only followed instructions from their parents so can struggle to follow teacher instructions.

“[We would expect them to] stop and listen and act on simple instructions.”

Headteacher, East



CONCENTRATION SKILLS

Schools hope that reception children have some basic concentration skills - e.g., being able to focus for short periods of time. Teachers note that children being read to can help to improve their capacity to concentrate.

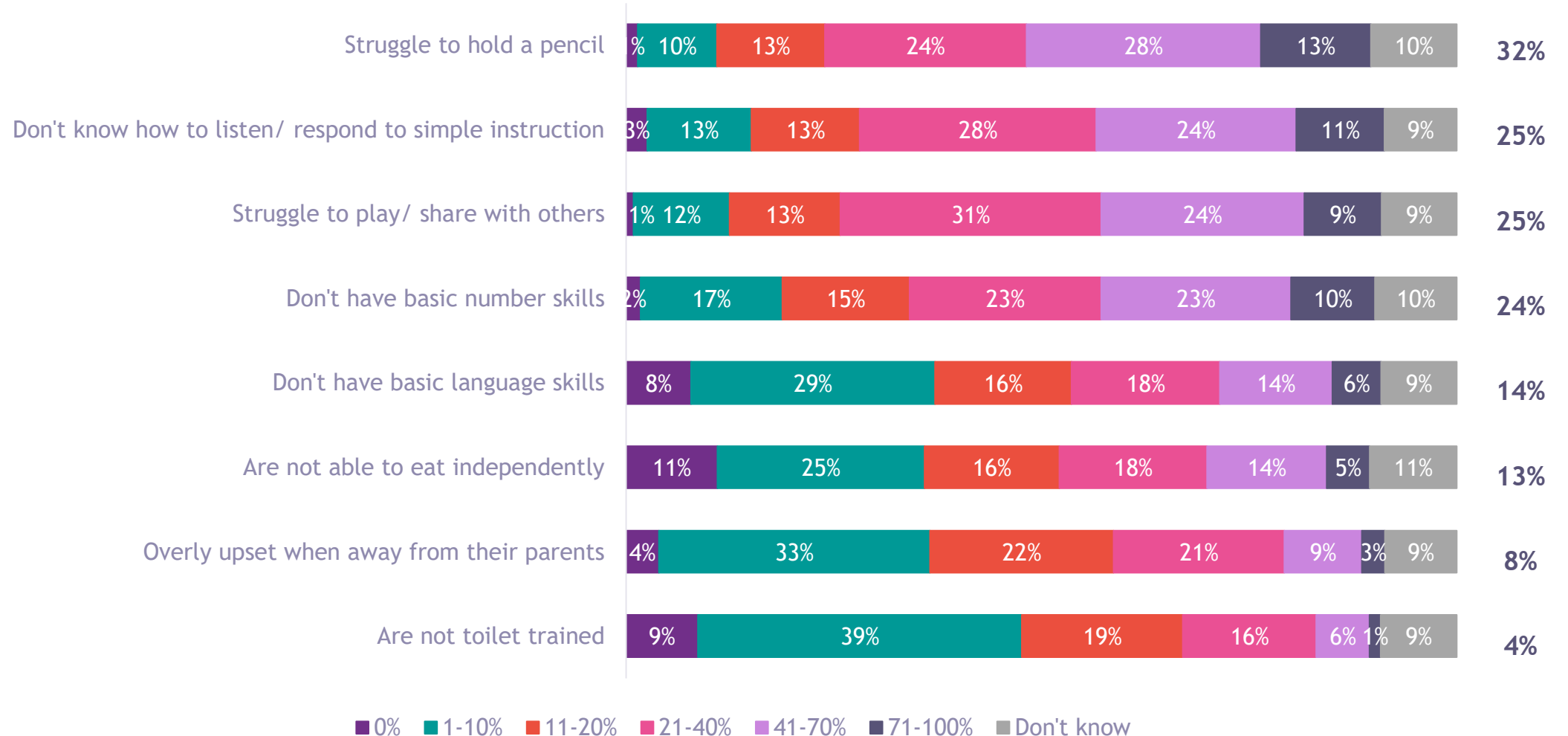
“We're hoping they would have experience with nursery rhymes and early literacy and have the ability to sit down and concentrate for 10-15 minutes.”

Deputy Headteacher, Scotland

One in four teaching professionals indicate that more than half of the children starting in Reception at their school in 2021 could not follow simple instructions and struggled to play/share with others



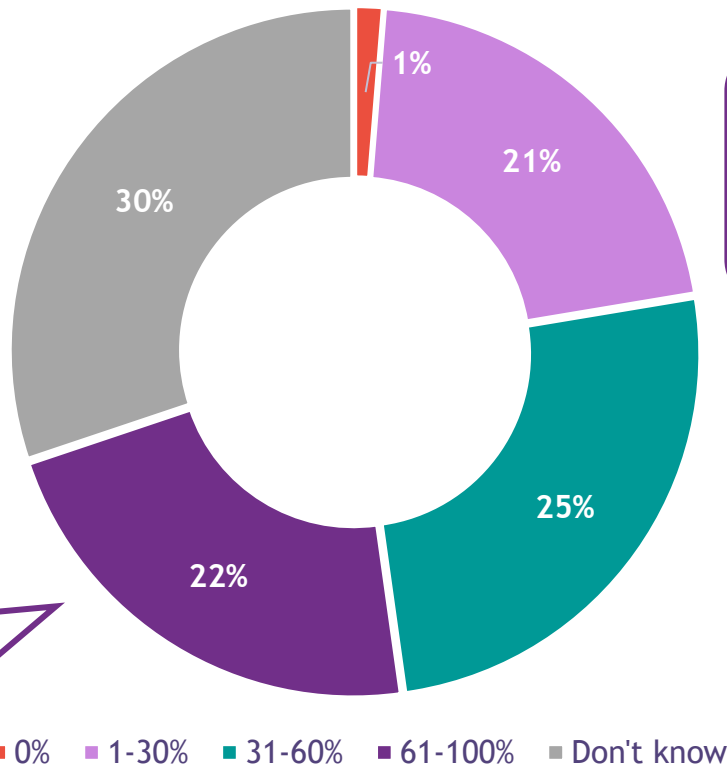
More than half of children





On average, teachers report that 50% of their students arrived at school to start Reception this year being 'school ready'. This average is slightly higher in the south of England than in the north of England.

Perception of the percentage of children to start in Reception year who were 'school ready' in 2021

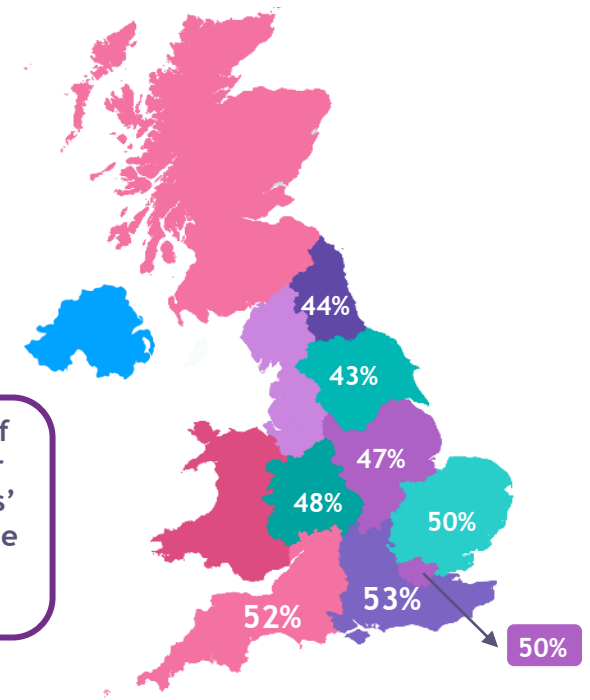


A third (34%) of head teachers believe that 61-100% of children were school ready in 2021, higher than those in any other role

Average proportion of children who were 'school ready' at the start of Reception in 2021: **50%**

Average percentage of students who are 'school ready' UK Regions/ Nations

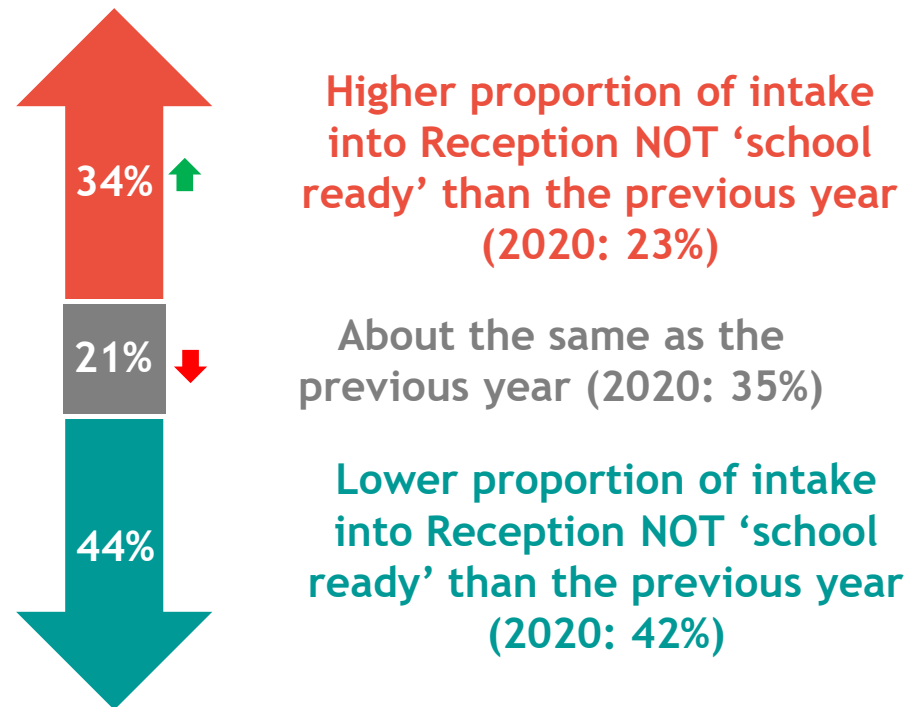
Teachers in the south of England report a higher rate of 'school readiness' than those in some of the regions in the north of the country



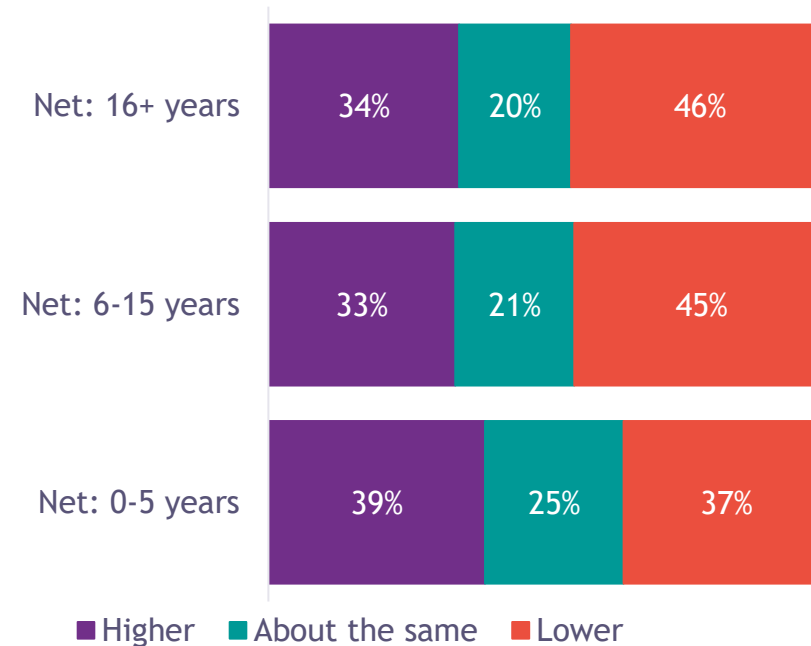


A third of teachers report that a higher proportion of children who arrived in Reception this year were not 'school ready' than in the year before. This was reported by a slightly lower proportion of teachers in 2020

Level of readiness compared to previous years students



Level of student readiness compared to 2020 among teachers length of service



A significantly lower proportion of newer teachers report that there is a lower level of 'school readiness' than in 2020; compared to more tenured teachers

Statistically significant difference in comparison with 2020 ↑ ↓



Due to COVID, in the 2021 intake many teachers feel they have seen an increase in the number of children arriving unprepared for school in comparison to previous years

Reasons for more children arriving unprepared for school:

Reduced support for parents

Teachers note that support mechanisms such as Children Centers and toddler groups have become much more difficult to access over the last year. This has meant that parents' knowledge of what school readiness means is much lower, which negatively impacts the school readiness of their children.

Lack of child experiences

Lockdowns have meant that many children have had much less social interaction than they would have. This has meant that children struggle to socialise with peers - e.g., inability to take turns/share and problems with communicating. A lack of life experiences (e.g., visit a farm / zoo, park) can affect their language and comprehension.

Impact of nursery attendance

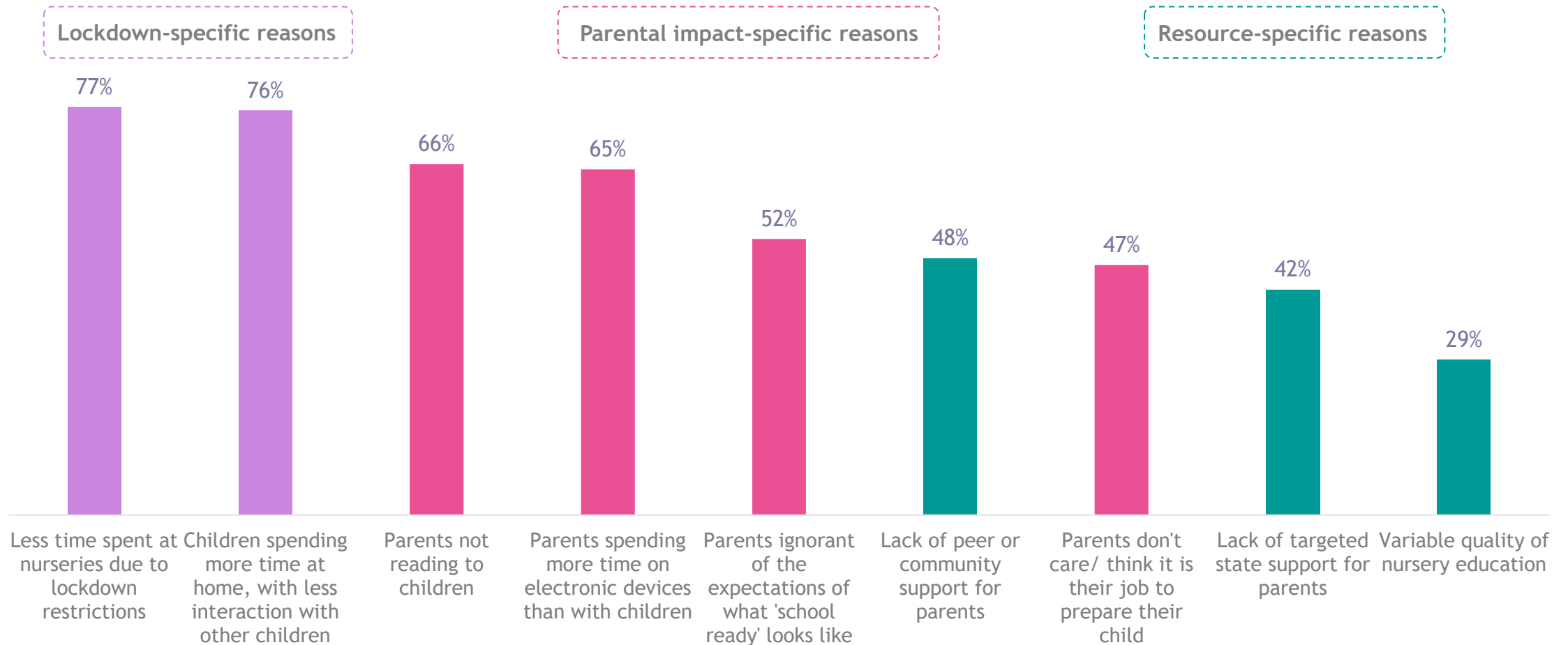
Nursery access / provision has been impacted by COVID, meaning that more children enter reception with limited experience of early learning. This can have a massive impact on a child's basic verbal and written skills, as well as their ability to follow basic instructions and concentrate.

"We're seeing impacts on speech and language and social skills. Some of them are covid babies so they've not known anything else - we're seeing some delayed speech and language as well as less developed social skills like playing with others. I think there's less language development because they've been stuck at home."

Deputy Headteacher, Scotland



Teachers perceive lockdown to be a key reason for a higher proportion of new primary school students not being school-ready. However, the parental role is also still seen to be a key factor





Lack of social interaction, limited support for parents and reduced nursery attendance are the key COVID-influenced drivers of decreasing school readiness

Teacher, East Midlands

“[Reduced school readiness has been caused by] lack of socialisation, perhaps due to parents’ reluctance to socialise but also due to the lack of opportunities they have had compared to the years before Covid.”



Teacher, Northwest

“Children haven’t interacted with other children in a lot of cases, they are very adult dependent, which we expected. We expected they would find it difficult to share, especially those without siblings.”



Headteacher, East

“We need more family centres in the community without stigmatising those who need it. Support services for parents seem so much harder to reach now, and many parent don’t like to show they’re struggling.”



Deputy Headteacher, East

“Children joining reception this year may have had a quarter of their lives with no contact with other children - this means they have no opportunities to practice age-appropriate skills.”



SLT, London

“[Expectations for school readiness have changed] to a degree, as many may have not been able to attend a nursery setting due to fear / living with vulnerable family members.”



Teacher, West Midlands

“[School readiness has got] worse because a lot of kids just haven’t been attending nursery, especially in the early days of lockdown, and parents didn’t see socialising as important.”





COVID aside, limited school readiness is generally fuelled by home challenges, lack of parental support and parental assumptions that certain skills will be taught in school

Lack of support to parents

Teachers note that reduced funding to child centres such as Sure Start have meant that many have reduced service or have permanently closed. This has meant that parents are finding it increasingly hard to get support, and parental understanding of school readiness is decreasing.

Home challenges

Challenges include lack of time to spend with children (i.e., due to work) which limits reading/storytelling; too much screen time; poor parental education / vocabulary which can hinder children's speech skills; lack of childhood experiences (often caused by poverty / financial instability); not speaking English at home.



Parental assumptions

Assumptions can include teaching of basic skills such as toileting and dressing; the teaching of reading and writing is the school's responsibility; the provision of social skills (which therefore limits pre-school social interactions). These issues are much more prominent with children who have not attended a nursery.



Teachers feel that parents are ultimately responsible for getting their children school ready, however; they empathise with the challenges that they may be facing

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The support available to parents is limited, some of it is costly so some parents are priced out of it; also, the times of many groups do not suit working parents.

Teacher, East Midlands

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[Some parents have] chaotic lifestyles due to economic pressures with working long hours, nights, being away from home. Single parent families also struggle with similar issues.

Headteacher, East

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They assume we will teach them to read, we will teach them to toilet if they aren't already, we will teach them their numbers, how to eat, their manners.

Teacher, West Midlands

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There aren't many parental support groups running in our community. Surestart was great as it was very inclusive.

Teacher, Northeast

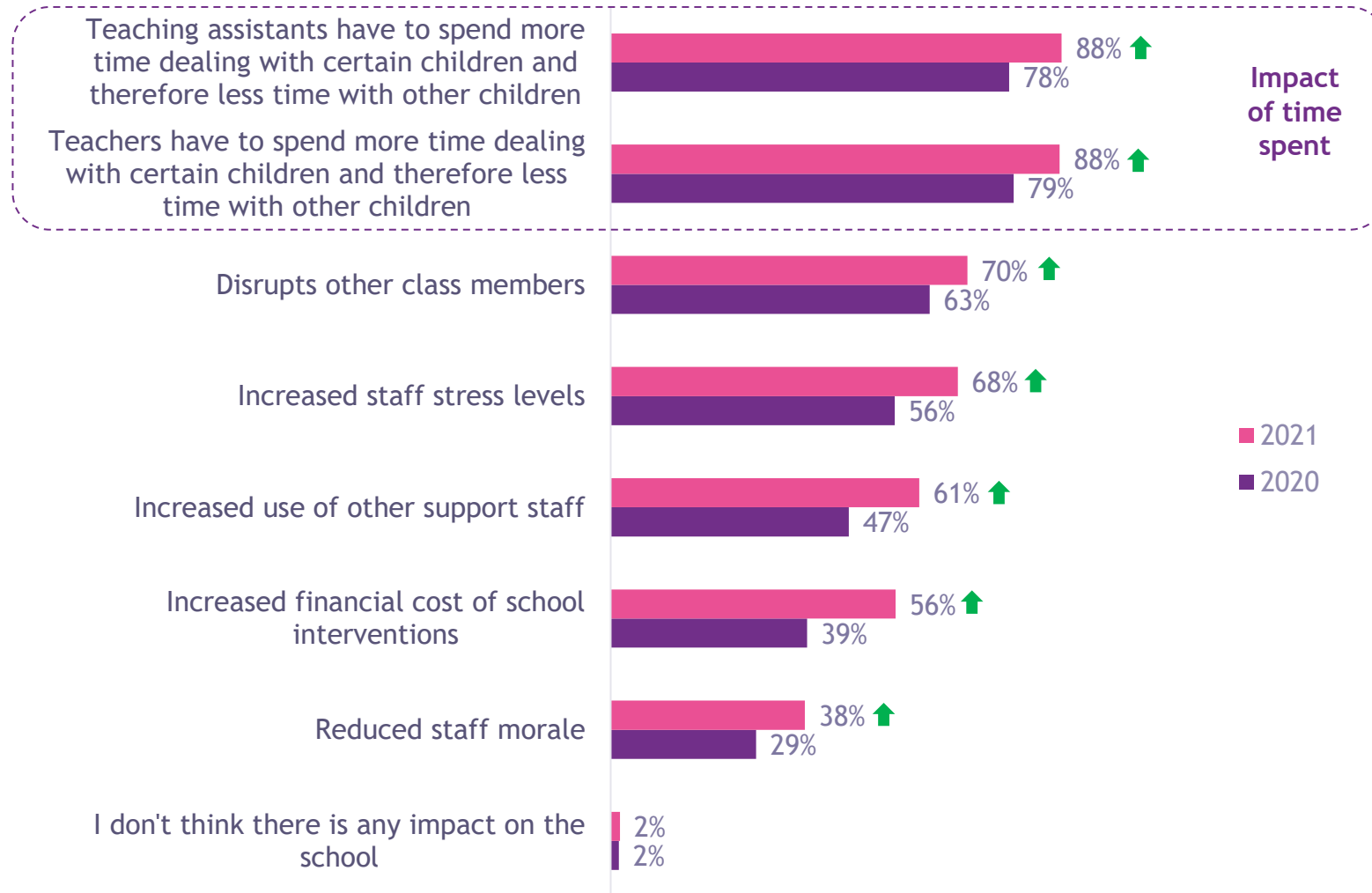
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Impacts of school readiness



The most cited impact upon a school of having one or more children who are not 'school ready' is teachers and teaching assistants needing to spend more time with certain children



K5 Which of the following, if any, are impacts upon a school having one or more children who are not 'school ready'?

Base: All 2020 (n=528); All 2021 (n=971)

K8 And thinking about the additional time spent supporting children who are not 'school ready' in their Reception year, what would you estimate the financial cost to your school is of that time which could be used elsewhere?

Base: All excl. those who selected 'Don't know' 2021 (n=267)

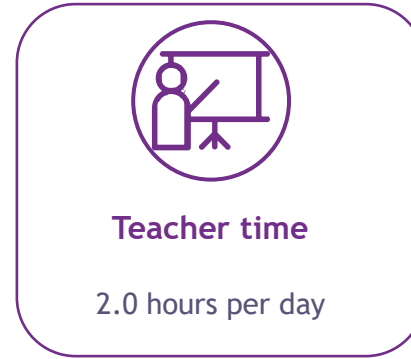
Statistically significant difference in comparison with 2020



Average estimated number of hours of staff time lost due to children in a Reception class starting school not ready/able to learn

Teaching professionals indicate that time is lost by students not being 'school ready'. The Leadership team's time is perceived to be the least affected by students not being ready to learn, however this still amounts to an estimated average of seven hours of lost time per week.

Teaching assistants are believed to be losing the most time due to students not being 'school ready', with an estimated average of 15 hours per week.





Limited school readiness has a significant impact on staff resources and can reduce the time available for teachers to facilitate learning for all

Impact to teacher / TA duties

- Limited school readiness can mean that additional Teaching Assistants are often required in Reception. This takes them away from the other Key Stages, which can negatively impact the learning of the older age groups.
- Time required for toileting/dressing; dealing with bad behaviour; teaching children how to play/share and hold a pencil reduces teachers' ability to execute lesson plans. This can lead to pupils and classes falling behind within the curriculum.
- Additional staff time/resources required to deal with limited school readiness can have a negative effect on staff morale and job satisfaction - many teachers highlight the significant additional stress and worry that limited school readiness can cause.

Time required for catch-up support

- A lot of teacher/TA time can be taken up by the provision of catch-up support to those who are less school ready - additional staff time is required in order to 'reduce the gap' as much as possible before the child moves into Year 1.
- Catch-up support is often provided on a 1-to-1 basis or in small groups, meaning that a lot of teacher time is taken up, especially if there are many children who need support. Some mention that this can take time away from SEN children.
- Catch-up support is required for a range of things: social skills (playing, turn-taking, understanding others' emotions); academic ability (reading, writing, speech); physical ability (practicing motor skills - e.g., holding a pencil, putting on shoes).



Teachers feel the stress and pressure associated with providing extra support, especially for basic skills like behaviour and toileting

“The TAs especially have their time taken dealing with tantrums and changing clothes when a toileting accident has happened. Teacher time is taken with tantrums and behaviour/emotional issues.”

SLT, Yorkshire

“We have had to increase staffing in reception by taking away adults from other classes, as we have no additional funding. This definitely has a knock on effect for the other classes left without the support they should have, meaning children in those classes cannot be boosted or have extra interventions to close gaps.”

Teacher, North West

“More time is spent on dealing with toileting, basic skills such as dressing/undressing, more staff needed to support with eating lunches.”

Teacher, Yorkshire

“We identify children for intervention - the main one we tend to do is a group called LAS which is language-based. It's about turn-taking, play, understanding other children's emotions and interactions.”

Headteacher, London

“I think the biggest issue here, in terms of time, is that there is only a limited amount of adult - child time in the class, and when some children need a lot of adult time, then inevitably other children get less of this. Something has to give. And I think the pressure staff are under inevitably affects them - can they really be as uber engaging, patient, kind etc. when they feel constantly torn and under pressure?!”

Teacher, South West

“[There is] additional stress. Not only are pupils 'catching up' with some form of education, staff are also supporting 'catch up' on basic developmental skills.”

Teacher, North West

“It takes time away from other children. Not just within the class time but outside of this time too, preparing extra resources and seeking further support from other professionals and reading ideas and strategies that have worked for others.”

Teacher, Wales

“I spend most of my lunchtime sorting out behaviour issues so that I rarely get enough time to prepare resources as I would like. I have a lot of communication with parents about behavioural issues too.”

Teacher, West Midlands



Teachers stress that limited school readiness can lead to children feeling frustrated, exhausted and develop low self-esteem

Impacts to the student

- Limited school readiness can lead to frustration and poor behaviour. Teachers note that this can negatively influence the child's view of school, which can stay with them as they progress through the years.
- Children can lack of confidence when not school ready, especially when they compare themselves to others. This can cause anxiety and limit the child's capacity to form lasting friendships.
- Some children are unable to manage their emotions and struggle to communicate, which can further limit their progress. On top of this, children can become exhausted with the additional support they require.
- Some teachers feel the student is not always negatively impacted as additional measures put in place can be effective.

"[They can have a] lack of confidence. They get switched off for school and feel forced to do things. If they're developmentally not ready and feel they're being forced to do it, it gives them a very negative view on school, and I feel like it may follow them through school. They're missing out on what they should be doing - they should be playing and being curious but they're not ready for that."

Deputy Headteacher, Scotland

"They completely lose confidence in their own ability, and they feel like they will never be able to do it."

Teacher, East

"There's automatically a pressure on the child to be able to do all these things and some children cannot cope with all the interventions that are needed. They end up exhausted. Seen quite a few falling asleep at the end of the day in assembly time."

SLT, East

"Some are possibly obvious - they're in a bubble and don't necessarily notice what is going on around them. There are some who are aware of it, and it plays on them, makes them feel downhearted - they see others who can make friends easily and are sharing. There is some jealousy - they might think: 'why can't I join in with this nursery rhyme?'"

Deputy Headteacher, East



The limited school readiness of some students has an impact on the whole classroom, and those who are less school ready can struggle to catch up

Impacts to other classmates

- Additional time required to support those who are not school ready can mean that other classmates are not getting as much attention as they would. This can mean that they learn at a slower rate as they are not being challenged as much as they could be.
- Witnessing poor behaviour from those who are less school ready can be worrying for other classmates. It can also distract students from their own learning. Teachers note that they spend a lot of time dealing with parental concern over the behaviour of classmates who are less school ready.
- The lack of attention and supervision of some children (caused by teacher time required to address limited school readiness) can cause some children's behaviour to deteriorate, which has a negative impact on their progress.

Impacts beyond reception years

- Students who are less school ready often find it hard to catch up - the early years are important for the social, emotional, physical and academic development of children, therefore limited learning in Reception can hinder future progression.
- There are students who catch up, nonetheless; significant support is required, especially in the first 1-2 years. Without the necessary support, students can maintain a low trajectory of learning and never bridge the gap.
- Teachers feel parents play a massive role in this respect - if parents are supportive in their child's learning, they are much more likely to catch up.
- Beyond school, it is felt that those who don't catch up enter society disengaged, which can reduce career aspirations and the desire for further education

"The others can miss out as a lot of valuable teacher or teaching assistant time is taken up by those who aren't ready. We are unable to really stretch those with the ability to be independent as we are spending our time supporting the others."

Teacher, East Midlands

"Bridging the gap is very, very hard and those that start behind really struggle to catch up and if they have a poor reception year this impacts their behaviour throughout school. It means that Year 1 have to blend EYFS/KS1 education which is challenging."

SLT, North West

"[Classmates are] not getting as much time and attention from the teacher needed to challenge them and move them on. They are going make the required amount of progress, but at a limited rate."

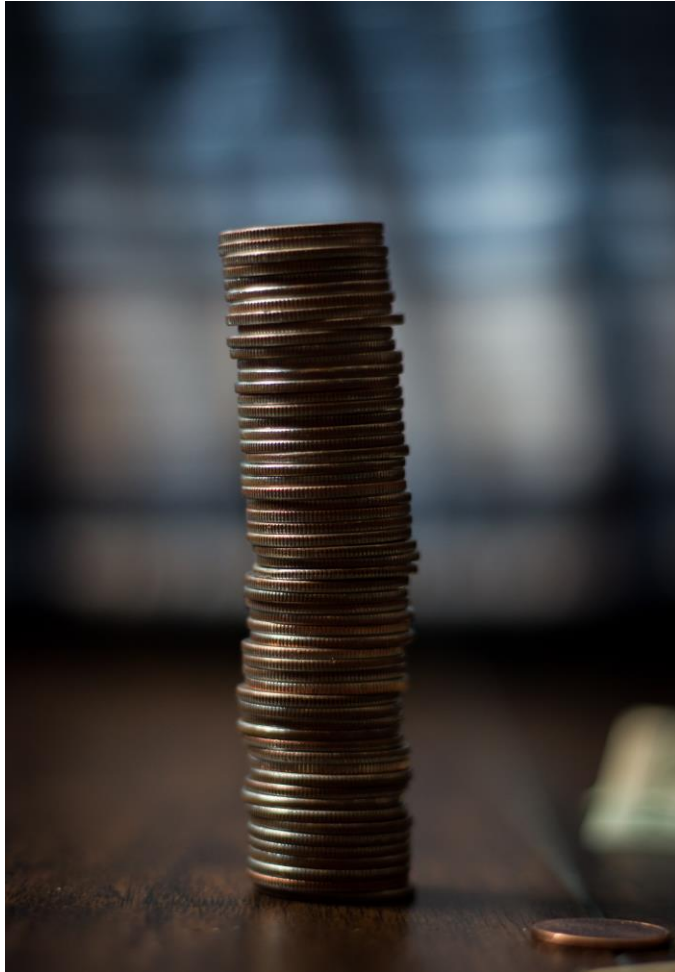
Headteacher, East

"The aim is always to plug the gaps, to close the gaps, but if a child is so low to begin with, they can't even start accessing the curriculum, so that gap can widen even further."

Teacher, North West



The necessity for additional staff and interventions can have a significant financial impact on a school



- The main financial impact of limited school readiness is the requirement for additional Teaching Assistant support. Over the past year, many teachers have mentioned the necessity to hire an extra one or two Teaching Assistants for the 2021 Reception cohort, which cost between £17k-22k each per year.
- Children with limited school readiness require interventions. While some are covered by Teaching Assistants, external support is often needed. Schools pay for phonics and numeracy support, as well as speech and language specialists - usually once or twice a week which can be expensive.
- Limited school readiness has meant that some schools have had to invest money into additional resources such as books for storytelling. One school re-developed their outside area to help their 2021 Reception intake develop their gross motor skills.

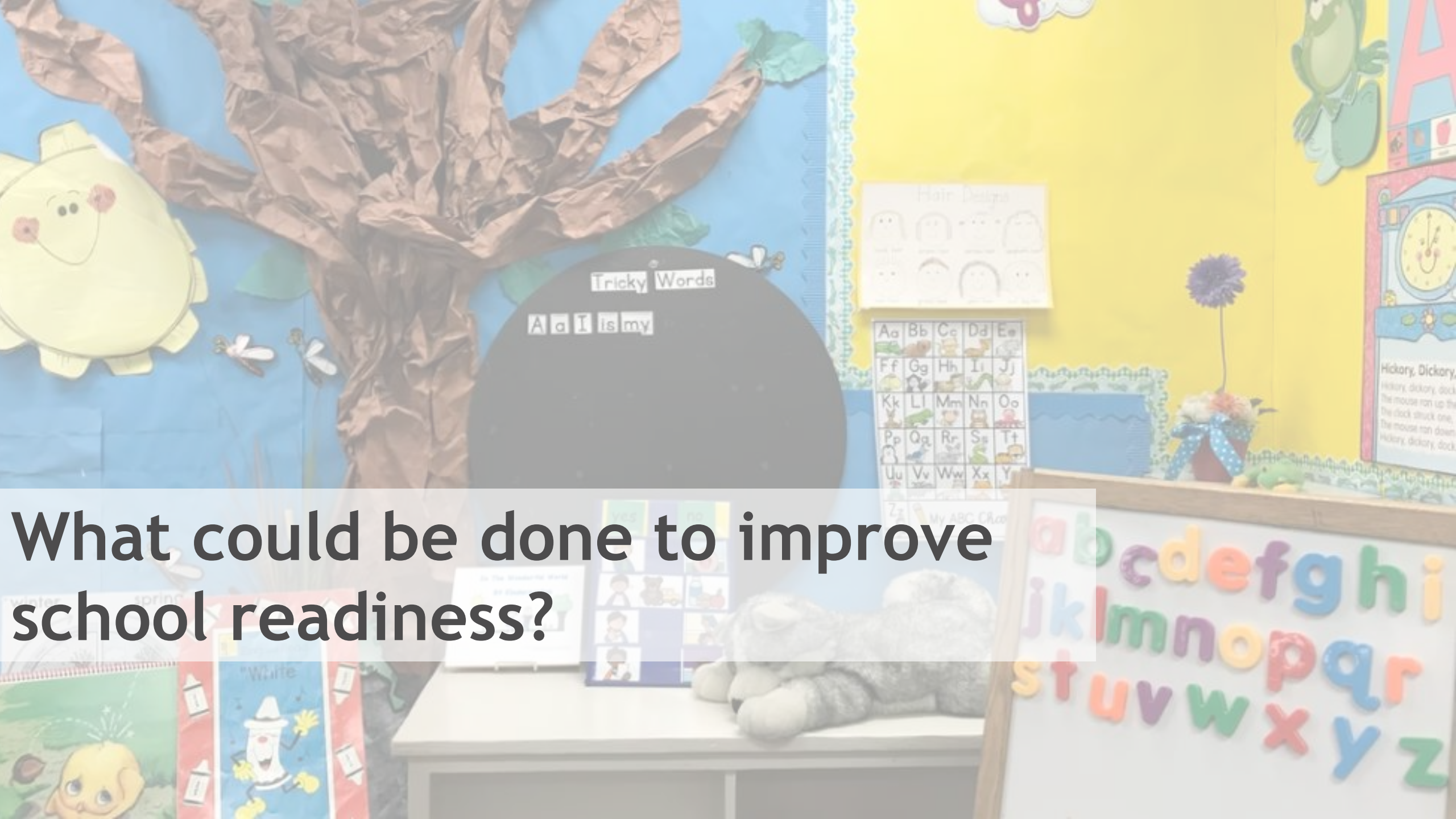
“We’ve had to move an adult to reception, which is around £18,000 a year. We’ve also re-developed outside for around £40,000 - to help them develop gross motor skills by climbing, going over and under things. We’ve had to buy more books for story time which was £1,000. We’ve had to re-look at how we do things.”

Headteacher, North West

“Interventions and increased teacher resources [have financial implications]. Needs are consistent over the years, but I would say maybe it’s cost us one additional adult in reception this year - around £20,000 a year. [We also] spend some pupil premium money on external intervention providers.”

Headteacher, London

What could be done to improve school readiness?





The majority of teachers would give the Government a D grade or under for its leadership and communication around the importance of the early years to children's future life chances

A*	0%
A	1%
B	5%
C	15%
D	23%
E	13%
U	31%

Head teachers are the most likely (12%) to give the Government a B grade or higher.

Teachers with five or fewer years of service are less likely to assign the Government a U grade (20%) in comparison with those who have been working for 6-15 years (36%) or 16+ years (30%).



Increasing overall awareness of what school readiness means and providing additional support to parents and schools are the most called for government interventions

National initiative

Teachers feel a government national initiative on what school readiness means would be beneficial in improving school readiness.

This would: help to educate parents on the importance of the early years for childrens development; what school readiness means; provide them with schools' expectations. Some mentioned a checklist format would be accessible and easy-to-use for the majority of parents.

Additional school funding

Additional funding that is provided solely for dealing with limited school readiness would be extremely beneficial for schools.

Funding for additional Teaching Assistants and external intervention suppliers would provide Reception children with more support, as well as freeing up resources for the later Key Stages.

Access to child centres / nursery

Teachers note that, over time, they have seen more and more child centres close and (especially during Covid-19) have seen less nursery attendance. This has led to slowly decreasing levels of school readiness.

Increased access to child centres and nursery would: flag any potential school readiness issues in advance of Reception; provide parents with practical help and support on how to get their children school ready through workshops; provide an informal space for parents to share ideas.

Additional targeted support

Targeting additional support to those who need it most (e.g., parents with low income / poor educational experiences) would mean a greater number of children arrive with more of an equal starting point.

Examples of additional support are the provision of extra resources and more regular health visitor monitoring.





Sufficient financial support and support mechanisms are required to improve awareness and understanding of school readiness

“

First, we need to make sure school budgets can sustain additional adults in school. New funding didn't include reception... Schools need to have a least a speech and language therapist that can work with children weekly. We shouldn't need to apply for funding.

”

Headteacher, North West

“

Improving support or info to parents - I feel since Sure Start centres closed, the opportunity to engage with parents prior to Reception has greatly reduced. This has meant that only those parents who seek out the information themselves really know how to support their children prior to beginning school.

”

SLT, North East

“

The government need to put the word out there about what school readiness actually means and why a lack of it will have a MASSIVE impact on their child's future life.

”

SLT, Yorkshire



Better school readiness / an equal starting point of all pupils would allow schools to distribute resources more fairly and look into new learning initiatives



More even distribution of TAs

Students arriving with better school readiness would mean that the additional Teaching Assistants that have been moved to Reception can be distributed elsewhere.

This would allow all year groups to have a similar level of support, improving the overall learning environment of a school.



More time available to teachers

By spending less time dealing with children who are less school ready, teachers will have more time to plan lessons and implement them as they have intended to (without disruption).

Teachers would also have more time to spend with each child, ensuring they are engaged and challenged enough to keep progressing.

Better school readiness would reduce teachers' workload and therefore stress levels. Overall staff wellbeing would improve.



More resources for other initiatives

By requiring fewer Teaching Assistants and less interventions from external providers, schools would have more resources that they could invest into other initiatives.

Some examples include using additional money/resources to improve numeracy and literacy across year groups, as well as focusing more resources on Key Stage 2 SATs to ensure all children are fully prepared (as they have become more difficult in recent years).



Teachers feel that better school readiness would free up resources that could help to raise attainment across the year groups



Deputy Headteacher, Scotland

We would be putting resources in place to raise attainment for all. It would make those early years much easier - kids will progress better and there could be a more positive atmosphere, a stronger feeling of togetherness. It would free up a lot of money to do different things.



Headteacher, London

Interventions are in every year group, but mainly because of the issues associated with lack of school readiness. I would still put more money in the early years as they are the most important years of development.



Deputy Headteacher, Scotland

If there was equity in school readiness, then staffing would be able to be distributed more evenly across the school - it would improve overall literacy and numeracy. It would also benefit teachers by giving them more time to plan and prepare lessons.



Teachers recommend that Kindred² focus their efforts on increasing parental awareness of school readiness and lobbying for increased early year funding

Raise awareness amongst young parents of what school readiness means

“Help parents to know what being ready for school looks like. They don't know the details. They don't remember or understand the expectations of a school day. Please work with all relevant professionals to support parents in knowing what school readiness looks like.”

Teacher, East Midlands

“My key message is that the more we can do in pre-school, the better the outcomes will be. We need to find parents and support them - this is invaluable. We need to find the under the radar parents, not the ones who are keen.”

Headteacher, London

“Children are not coming to school ready and therefore more needs to be put in place to support parents to get their children school ready. Schools also need extra support with the children as resources are so stretched that they are struggling to meet all the needs of the children.”

Teacher, Wales

“To improve school readiness, we must support and fund early interventions whilst utilising a multi agency approach.”

SLT, South West

Lobby for increased funding for early interventions



Key takeaways

- There is a sense among teaching professionals that there has been an increase this year in the proportion of children arriving unprepared for primary school in comparison with previous years. Some of the more commonly reported behaviours of children starting Reception are not being able to follow simple instructions, not having basic number skills, struggling to hold a pencil, and struggling to play/share with others.
- Teachers place a lot of value in nursery education and other early childhood interactions. Reduced access to these as a result of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions is seen to be an important reason for more students not being ready for Reception. However, teachers also acknowledge other important factors causing children to not be ‘school ready’, including parents’ lack of attention and a lack of peer/community support for parents.
- Teachers perceive the impacts of children not being ‘school ready’ to be wide-ranging. It is perceived to impact students’ ongoing education and negatively affect staff morale/stress levels, as well as to have financial consequences.
- Another important consequence of new Reception students not being ‘school ready’ is seen to be the impacts on teachers’ time, as well as on that of other school staff.
- Schools appear to have a very clear sense of what makes a child ready for school, but it could be the case that this is not widely understood by parents. Increased efforts from schools and the Government to communicate the importance and practicalities of school-readiness to parents could be an effective strategy.

Appendix: Case studies



Case study: Female, Headteacher



Views towards school readiness

- Her school has seen a big increase in the number of children arriving unprepared for school in comparison to previous years, due to COVID. Around 75% of the 2021 Reception intake were not school ready.
- Expectations for school readiness are: children being toilet trained, being exposed to a language rich environment, having had experiences beyond their home, having some basic motor skills and coordination.
- She believes it is ultimately the parents responsibility to get their children school ready, yet sympathises with the challenges that some parents face, especially during COVID.



Impact of school readiness

- Limited school readiness has a large impact on teacher and TA duties (children needing extra academic support as well as social support – e.g. being taught how to interact, play and share) – each reception class has required an additional TA to be hired, which cost the school ~£18,000 a year each.
- She notes that children in her school that are less school ready can become very frustrated, which further hinders their learning and limits their ability to form relationships with their peers. In addition to this, other classmates are held back as they are receiving less attention. This culminates to whole classes being behind, and not all children are able to catch up.
- Due to limited school readiness, school resources are stretched and staff wellbeing is impacted.



Future of school readiness

- She feels parents need to be made more aware of the importance of school readiness for their child's development. Recommendations for parents are: create a language rich environment with lots of reading and storytelling and provide as many out-of-home experiences as possible.
- Limited school readiness has a large impact on her school's budget, therefore she feels that the government need to factor this in and provide additional funding for this matter. Cuts to her local authority have meant that funding has been decreasing over time.
- Her message for Kindred² is that they need to focus their efforts on lobbying for more school funding, as well as raising parental awareness of the importance of school readiness for their child's development.



“About 75% of the reception cohort are not school ready. This is hugely different to previous year intakes. We’ve had to change our systems and lower our expectations. Children are far below other year groups.”

“More teachers come from KS2 to help. We’re going to have a deficit budget for the next 3 years and we can’t have a TA in every class anymore. We’ve got a class with 64% vulnerability and the adult is gone, which has had a big impact on the students. There’s also an impact on the wellbeing of the staff.”

School type: Local authority maintained school

Region: North West, Urban



Case study: Female, Headteacher

Views towards school readiness

- At her school, the school readiness of Reception intakes has been decreasing over time, however; the 2021 intake were noticeably worse –20% more children were not school ready than the previous year.
- Expectations for school readiness are: being toilet trained, being able to communicate with speech, being able to engage socially and emotionally with peers and adults, be able to play and share with other children.
- She feels the parents have a huge responsibility in terms of getting their children school ready, however acknowledges not all know what it means. She emphasises the importance of nursery attendance for school readiness and feels that not all parents are aware of this.

Impact of school readiness

- Limited school readiness eats away at reception teachers time, meaning that classes have been a lot further back than they are expected to be – the necessity for a lot of individual support has meant that more and more children are having to catch up.
- She feels that the children who are not school ready in her school are unable to integrate with other children and really struggle socially – this can follow the children throughout their school years and give them a negative perception of school as they feel they're outcasted.
- Poor school readiness eats away at teachers' planning time, which can cause stress/anxiety. Better school readiness would free some time up for teachers and allow for a more equal spread of resources.

Future of school readiness

- In Scotland, nursery procedures have changed to allow children to stay in nursery for an additional year – she believes all parents need to be taking up this opportunity as nursery can make a huge difference for a child's school readiness.
- She's noticed a continuous reduction in funding over the years – especially pupil equity funding which the school uses to provide extra support for children who are not school ready.
- She would urge the government to consider the Scandinavian schooling system, where children don't start school until they are 7. This allows for a lot more nursery time, where children can build their social/emotional and motor skills, meaning they arrive much more prepared at school.



School type: Local authority maintained school

Region: Scotland, Urban

“It impacts the teacher - they really needs to put programs in place like individual/group support, especially during play if they're not socially and emotionally ready. This takes up a lot of the teacher's time - e.g., going over expectations and modelling with them.”

“If there was equity in school readiness, then staffing would be able to be distributed more evenly across the school - it would improve overall literacy and numeracy. It would also benefit teachers by giving them more time to plan and prepare lessons.”



Case study, Male, Headteacher



Views towards school readiness

- The Head feels it is obvious when parents have done more e.g. read stories, set clear boundaries.
- He expects the children to be able to interact with their peers, take turns, stay awake, sit and listen to stories and have some grasp of colours, basic Welsh words, counting and grouping objects.
- The Head believes it is the parents responsibility to ensure their child is school ready but that more expect the school to so the toilet training.



Impact of school readiness

- Many have lost time in nursery due to Covid-19 and lack the skills to concentrate.
- The Head believes children are not as familiar with the school / nursery routine this year and have more attachment issues – crying for longer after their parent drops them off and finding it hard to focus.
- Increasing numbers have not been fully toilet trained, which has a “massive impact”; it takes a TA out of the classroom and potentially away from a SEN child.
- The Head worries that more able children may be left out as staff are ‘firefighting’.



Future of school readiness

- He believes parents need to be educated on what school readiness is and what the schools expectations are. Parents need to be engaged with before nursery e.g. at parent and toddler groups.
- Schools need to offer more before nursery e.g. free classes for toddlers and parents to provide children a chance to interact with those of a similar age as early as possible.
- The Head would like to see greater access to a Family Link worker (who can support those not school ready pre-nursery).



“Parents can be lazy and busy. It is a shame as children may miss out...It is rare they now read to them every night. There was a lack of engagement for home learning from some parents.”

“They have had less of a routine this year [due to Covid] - they are not as familiar with the school routine. They haven’t developed the skills to focus. They don’t have as much speech, they have more attachment issues, they cry a lot....”

School type: Head of 2 Federated schools, with a nursery. 50-60 children per school.

Region: Wales, Rural



Case study, Female, Assistant Head



Views towards school readiness

- Expectations for school readiness include being toilet trained, can share with others, express feelings, able to hold a pencil, take off their coat and to hold a book correctly.
- She believes children are in front of a screen more, play less games together and are therefore less able to share.
- Many pupils live in relative poverty and have witnessed domestic violence, which makes it difficult for them to be school ready.
- She argues it is parents responsibility – they should read to their children and talk to them more. Attending nursery is important to learn routines and how to share with others.



Impact of school readiness

- C. 30% are not school ready – some still need to be taken to the toilet, can not hold a book correctly or sit still.
- More children require 1 to 1 support, which the school doesn't have the funding for.
- Those who need toilet support require two adults due to child protection, which takes away classroom resources from those more able.
- Lessons plans need to change as the gap is wider between children within a class, which takes time and resources.



Future of school readiness

- She believes there should be more free or low cost toddler groups for those on Universal Credit.
- Literacy classes for parents should be available to help them to learn English and read to their children.
- Nursery fees should be reduced so more can access them and from an earlier age.



School type: Primary school with a nursery, in a deprived area

Region: Yorkshire, Urban

“Some have homes with no carpets, sharing beds. Children from overseas may be escaping conflict. Can they be school ready when they have seen such bad things in the world?”

“They tend to always be behind. It can affect self esteem. They become aware they can't do some things like others. They can feel separated. The gap tends to widen as they get older.”