



Kindred²

Savanta:

2023 School Readiness Questions for MPs

November 2023



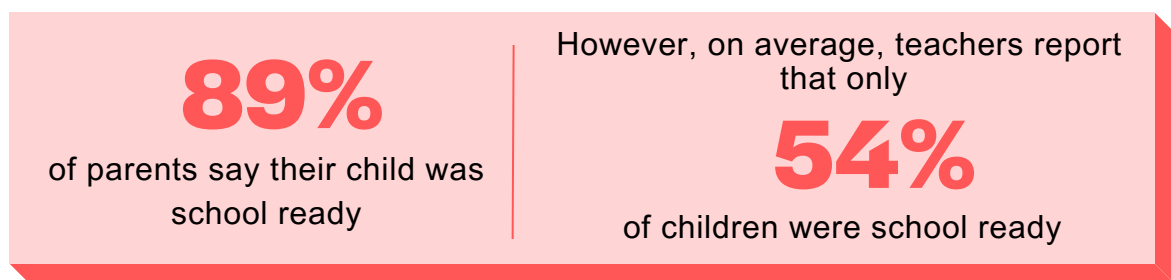
WE ASKED MPs THEIR THOUGHTS ON SCHOOL READINESS

MP Questions

Working with Savanta, an independent market research company, we surveyed 100 MPs representative of the House of Commons, asking two key questions about school readiness in the UK. The questions explored which budgets, if any, MPs would cut in order to allocate increased spending on ensuring children start school developmentally ready, as well as if it is the responsibility of parents or schools to ensure young children develop certain skills.

Our Research

For the fourth year running, Kindred² are surveying primary school teachers and leaders to understand the proportion of children starting Reception who have achieved their age-appropriate developmental milestones. Last year, for the first time, we also surveyed parents of Reception-aged children to hear their thoughts. We found that:



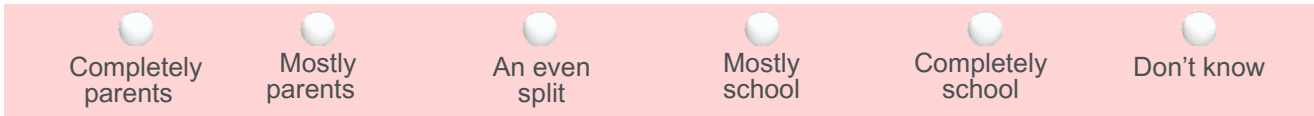
Our research identified a stark difference in the expectations of schools and parents of children beginning Reception. Parents and teachers agreed that parents do not receive enough information about developmental milestones and the skills children should develop by the time they start school, often resulting in parents not knowing what being ready for Reception means. Teachers were clear that too many children are behind before they begin their school-based education and the impact of this is felt by every child, staff member, and school finances.

School Readiness

By 'school ready' we mean children being developmentally ready to access the learning and development opportunities available to them in Reception, where this is not due to a previously identified Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). It refers to a full range of developmental measures including social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills, and is not simply a narrow measure of 'academic' attainment.

WHO DO YOU THINK IS MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING SKILLS?

MPs were asked who they thought was responsible for a child's development of certain skills using the following scale...



Percentage of MPs who believe that parents are completely responsible for their child's development of the following skills:

54%

Toilet training (that is, out of nappies with toileting 'mishaps' occurring occasionally rather than frequently)

47%

Independent dressing (i.e. putting on coat, dressing themselves after using the toilet)

35%

Basic language skills (i.e. saying their name, able to communicate their needs, answering questions, etc.)

22%

Listening/ responding to simple instruction

13%

Basic numeracy skills (i.e. counting to ten)

8%

Holding a pencil

Developing the skills listed above before starting school enables a child to access the full range of learning opportunities that Reception presents. Entering school unable to put your coat on, having frequent toileting accidents and not knowing your own name is not only distressing for a child but is challenging for teaching staff.

Many MPs believe that these skills, including toilet training and independent dressing, should not solely be the responsibility of parents to develop before their child starts school. Rather, the school should also take some responsibility for these basic life skills.

Having only one child in a class who is not school ready impacts every student. When we are seeing nearly half of all children in Reception behind before they begin, the impact on the whole school becomes significant.

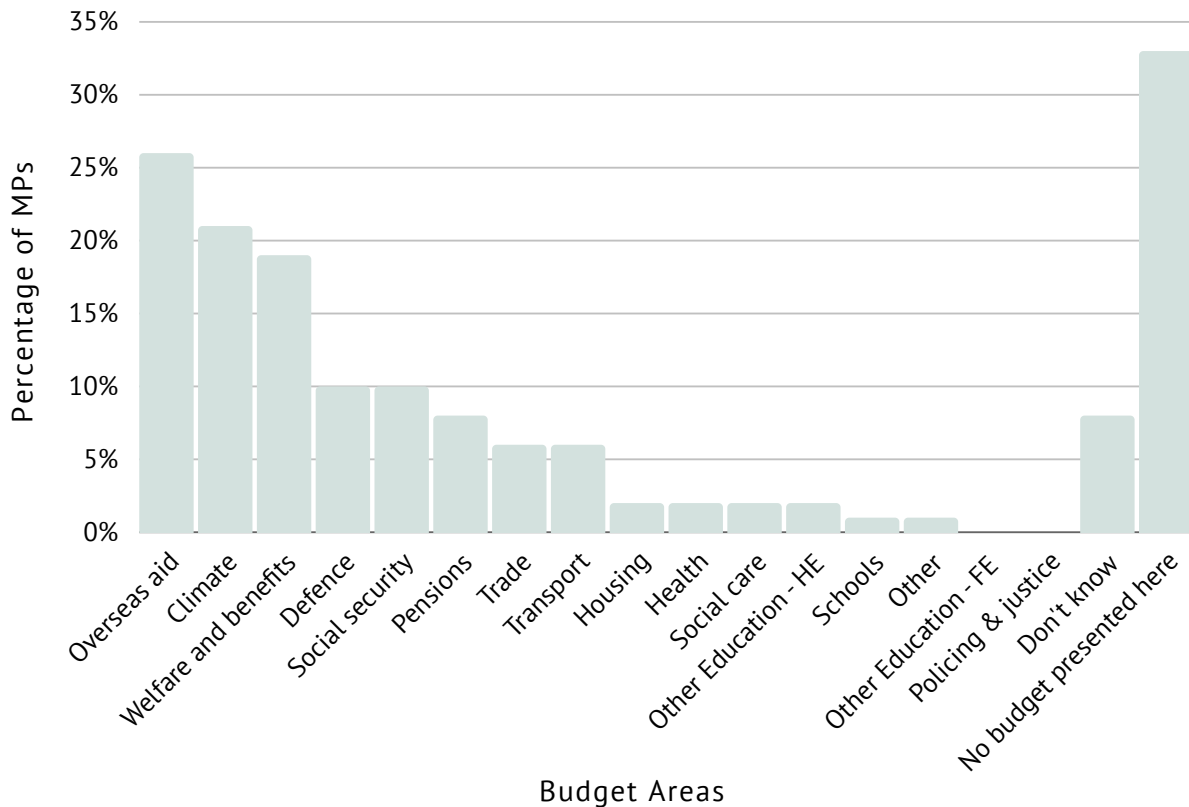
Less than half of MPs

(47%) think teaching a child to dress independently is the sole responsibility of parents, with 48% saying that some responsibility lies elsewhere including with schools.

Only a quarter

(26%) of Labour MPs compared to 70% of Conservative MPs believe it's entirely a parents' responsibility to toilet train their child.

GIVEN CURRENT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BUDGETS WOULD YOU REDUCE IN ORDER TO ALLOCATE INCREASED SPENDING ON ENSURING MORE CHILDREN START SCHOOL DEVELOPMENTALLY READY?



Of the budgets presented in the graph, MPs were most likely to cut Overseas aid, Climate, and Welfare and benefits to support early years development. A third of MPs opted to reduce none of the budgets presented above, making it the most commonly selected choice.

Almost a
third

(29%) of Conservative MPs said they would cut Welfare and benefits compared to 0% of Labour MPs

41%

of Conservative MPs would cut Overseas aid compared to just 4% of Labour MPs

Almost
two thirds

(63%) of Labour MPs would reduce no presented budget compared to 21% of Conservatives

SUMMARY

A child's experiences from birth to 5 shape their life chances as well as the nation's productivity and financial growth. We know that early childhood development drives success in school and later-life and yet year on year we are seeing too many children behind before they even begin their school-based education.

There is a widespread lack of understanding and awareness in our society of the skills schools expect children to have when they enter Reception that enable them to thrive. This lack of awareness is also evident among MPs, with many stating that they believe schools should be at least somewhat responsible for skill development such as toilet training and basic language skills (e.g. saying their name, communicating their needs).

When asked which budgets they would cut to allocate increased spending to address the school readiness problem, most MPs were unwilling to reduce any of the presented budgets (see page 4). The three budgets most likely to be cut were Overseas aid, Climate and Welfare and benefits.

Teachers and parents agree that the state has a role to play in providing guidance to parents on early development and school readiness, but currently, clear and accessible information is lacking. In order to ensure more children start school developmentally ready, we need an increased focus on the early years.

Our children deserve to have the best chance to succeed in life. We cannot continue to leave this issue unaddressed. We need an informed national conversation and a culture shift, reflecting the critical importance of the early years in order to build a healthier, happier and a more productive society.

For a full breakdown of the data presented here, please visit [Savanta's Published Polls](#).