Education Reform

Consulting with children and young people

On behalf of Professor Ken Muir,
University of the West of Scotland
and Independent Advisor to the
Scottish Government
December 2021

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Purpose of the Consultation

Professor Ken Muir is consulting as an independent advisor to the Scottish Government on aspects of education reform. A public consultation provides an opportunity for agencies, groups and individuals to comment. The engagement with children and young people reported on here provides an opportunity for learners to have their say.

Professor Muir has expressed an interest in several areas of reform which children and young people respond to in this report, namely in terms of:

- **The vision we have for the education of children and young people.**
- **Curriculum and assessment which should reflect on whether children and young people have the best possible experience, one that enables them to realise their ambitions, and considers the role of assessment.**
- **Whether technologies are fully and appropriately utilised in our education system.**
- **The involvement of children and young people in decision-making.**
- **Learner engagement with inspection.**

While the focus of the consultation is a response to Professor Muir's work, there is much in this report that should inform and influence a range of work currently underway in terms of our education system. A key message from this children and young people's consultation is that all efforts in this regard, whether concerned with educational recovery post pandemic or in terms of the future shape of Scotland's national education agencies, must be rooted in the rights of the child.

Approach

Consultation tools were designed and promoted by project partners Children's Parliament, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights).

For children of primary school age an online and downloadable toolkit provided adults with the means to facilitate groups of children to get involved. Fourteen statements were offered for discussion (see below). The toolkits offered an opportunity to capture children's views via direct quotes or for adult facilitators to report a summary of children's views.

1. **My education helps me to develop my personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.**
2. **My education helps me develop respect for human rights and freedoms.**
3. **My education helps me to develop respect for my parents/carers, my cultural identity and language.**
4. **My education helps me to develop respect for other countries and peoples.**
5. **My education prepares me for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance.**
6. **My education helps me to develop respect for the natural environment.**
7. **My education helps me to develop respect for the national values of Scotland.**
8. **My education meets my needs as a learner.**
9. **I enjoy learning.**
10. **I enjoy school.**
11. **My education will help me to realise my goals.**
12. **My school is good at using technology to support my learning and assessments.**
13. **I am involved in making decisions about my learning.**
14. **The views of children should be taken seriously when schools are inspected.**

Looking at the complexity of the work, timelines and the lack of opportunity to do any cognitive testing in terms of a self-completion survey for under 12s it was decided not to provide a survey option to this age group.

For children and young people aged 12 to 18 at secondary school or college an online and downloadable toolkit was provided so that groups could engage, supported by an adult facilitator. Direct quotes from children and young people, or a summary of responses could be recorded by the facilitator. A self-completion online survey for individual children and young people aged 12 to 18 was also provided. In terms of both approaches seventeen statements (see below) were offered for consideration. Survey respondents used a Likert scale to respond. The Likert scale asks respondents to state whether they strongly disagree, disagree, are neutral, agree or strongly agree with a statement.

1. **My education helps me to develop my personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.**
2. **My education helps me develop respect for human rights and freedoms.**
3. **My education helps me to develop respect for my parents/carers, my cultural identity and language.**
4. **My education helps me to develop respect for other countries and peoples.**

5. **My education prepares me for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance.**
6. **My education helps me to develop respect for the natural environment.**
7. **My education helps me to develop respect for the national values of Scotland.**
8. **My education meets my needs as a learner.**
9. **I am having the best possible educational experience.**
10. **My education will help me to realise my goals.**
11. **My school/college is good at offering the chance to get vocational/professional qualifications.**
12. **In my school/college, vocational/professional subjects and academic subjects are equally important.**
13. **My school/college is good at using technology to support my learning and assessments.**
14. **I would prefer more continuous assessment by my teachers with less focus on end of year exams.**
15. **I am involved in making decisions about my learning.**
16. **My views about my education are taken seriously.**
17. **The views of young people should be taken seriously when schools/college are inspected.**

Participants and Thanks

1,210 primary school aged children engaged with the online or downloadable toolkits, taking part in conversations facilitated by adults known to them. This included 53 Members of Children's Parliament.

394 secondary school aged children and young people engaged with the toolkit designed for them, again facilitated by an adult known to them. This included 25 Members of SYP's Learner Panel.1

3,889 12- to 18-year-olds responded to the online survey. (See appendix 2 for respondents' details).

Our thanks to children, young people and colleagues at:

Airyhall Primary School, Aberdeen
Auchengray Primary, Auchengray
Ayrshire College
Banchory Primary School, Tullibody
Barr Primary and Early Years Centre, Barr
Barrhill Primary and Early Years Centre, Barrhill
Barthol Chapel School, Inverurie
Bell's Brae Primary School, Lerwick, Shetland
Carnock Primary School, Carnock
Chapelton Primary School, Chapelton
Cleeves Primary School, Glasgow
Croftfoot Primary School, Glasgow
Croftmalloch Primary School, West Lothian
Crosshouse Primary, East Kilbride
Dalneigh Primary School, Inverness
Drakies Primary School, Inverness
Drummore Primary School, Drummore and Port Logan
Forces Children Scotland
Grange Academy, Kilmarnock
Greenhills Primary School, East Kilbride
Haddington Primary School, Haddington
Heathery Knowe Primary School, East Kilbride
Innellan Primary School, Innellan

King's Park Secondary School, Glasgow
Kirktonholme Primary School, East Kilbride
Knockando Primary School, Aberlour
Mauricewood Primary School, Penicuik
Mount Cameron Primary School, East Kilbride
Mount Cameron Primary School, East Kilbride
Park Primary School, Oban
Parklands School, Helensburgh
Port Ellen Primary School, Port Ellen
Rhunahaorine Primary School, Tarbert
Riverside Primary School, Stirling
Robert Owen Memorial Primary School, Lanark
Sandhead Primary, Sandhead
South Park Primary, East Kilbride
St John's Primary School, Barrhead
St Mary's RC Primary School, Haddington
St. Serfs Primary School, Tullibody
St Thomas RC Primary School, Keith
Stirling Pupil Parliament
Taynuilt Primary School, Taynuilt
Whiteness Primary School, Whiteness, Shetland
Who Cares? Scotland

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[1] The Learner Panel is a young people led forum facilitated by SYP in conjunction with the SQA to create an independent platform where young learners from school, college and university have their say on education issues important to them.

Findings

We report on the views, experiences and aspirations of children and young people under these 7 headings:

1. **Vision: Building an education system that is directed to the purposes described in Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**
2. **Education: My needs and goals**
3. **Learner empowerment and participation**
4. **Use of technology**
5. **Vocational/professional and academic subjects: balance and importance**
6. **Assessment**
7. **Quality of educational experiences**

When it comes to analysis and reporting on children and young people's views, we are working with two kinds of responses.

For children of primary school age, we have qualitative data, reported by the adult facilitators who supported children's participation in discussions on some or all of the prompt statements provided. Some of these responses we received reported on numbers of children who indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement – using the Likert scale provided – but others when reporting gave a general overview of the group along with quotations, as we had requested. This means that for reporting on the primary school children's responses we are using more general language in terms of numbers and proportions of children expressing a view. Therefore, we might say:

- **Almost all children, meaning we estimate more than 90% of responses.**
- **Most children, meaning approximately 75% to 90% of children.**
- **A majority of children, means more that 50% but less than 75%.**
- **Less than half, means fewer than 50%.**
- **Few children, means less than 15%.**

For 12- to 18-year-olds, attending secondary school or college, we have the large number of responses to our online survey, and we will refer to this quantitative data in this regard. We will use the same terms as described above but have specific numbers that we can provide. We will also use the qualitative data received from 12 to 18-year-olds , but only in terms of the direct quotations provided rather than estimating or generalising numbers.
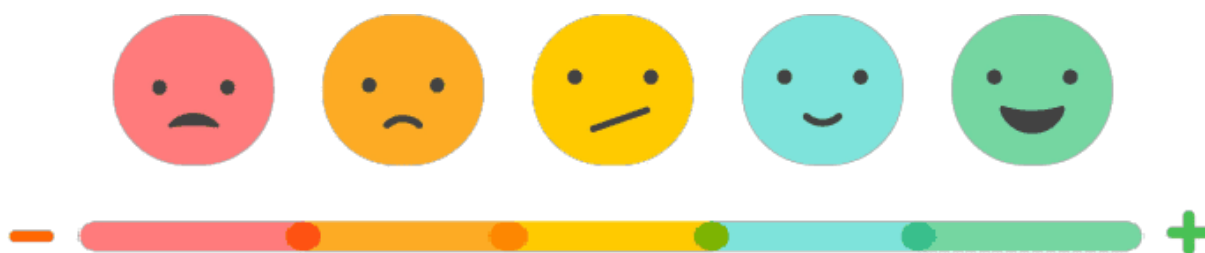
Findings:

Vision: Building an education system that is directed to the purposes described in Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Children's rights are a set of entitlements set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They apply to everyone under the age of 18 and aim to ensure children grow up in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. These rights are a minimum standard, sometimes referred to as *the floor not the ceiling,* therefore, policy, practice and law ought to go above and beyond these rights laid out within the UNCRC.

Earlier this year, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed a bill which will incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. This means that every right of every child in Scotland must be protected, respected and fulfilled as set out in the UNCRC. Fulfilling the rights of the child, enshrined in law, is not negotiable. All efforts by publicly funded bodies with an interest in education must be built from the basis of Article 29 of the UNCRC. In addition, at the end of this report we refer to General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education (Article 29) (2001). See Appendix 1 for full text of both.

To discover the extent to which Article 29 of the UNCRC is embedded in Scotland's education system and how children's rights can be further implemented through education reforms, we first need to understand the foundations we currently have. Where are we at now? To what extent is the educational experience of children and young people meeting their needs as rights-holders? And what needs to change, what needs built into the educational reforms that emerge?

The first series of statements that children and young people were asked to consider are drawn from Article 29. This consultation provides the first ever national insight from learners about their educational experience from a rights-based perspective. The statements in this section of the report are:

1. **My education helps me to develop my personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.**
2. **My education helps me develop respect for human rights and freedoms.**
3. **My education helps me to develop respect for my parents/carers, my cultural identity and language.**
4. **My education helps me to develop respect for other countries and peoples.**
5. **My education prepares me for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance.**
6. **My education helps me to develop respect for the natural environment.**
7. **My education helps me to develop respect for the national values of Scotland.**

We should reflect here that it was evident from many of the conversations directly facilitated by Children's Parliament and SYP that this was perhaps the first time children and young people had been asked to frame their educational experience as such. This is an important observation because it highlights the work we must do across the system, and with all the stakeholders involved in education, to begin to use the language and understandings that a rights-based educational offer and system requires.

My education helps me to develop my personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential

The views of primary school age children
Based on an overview of the responses to the toolkit, a majority of children expressed a level of agreement with the statement.

"For those who strongly agree there is real enthusiasm for their educational experience. The quotes that follow come from one school's submission."

"Education helps my personality grow and allows me to get better at things and come out of my comfort zone."

"Education helps us to have different views and opinions in life – without education we would not get anywhere or progress."

"Education gives us the chance to develop our talents and we get experiences where you find out new things and discover you are good at things!"

"Learning from others is an important part of education. We do that every day, others inspire you and give you ideas – this was what was missed most during home learning, I think."

"Education provides us with the guidance and the push we need to get better at things. We get this encouragement every day and we have a Growth Mindset attitude."

Children have acknowledged the role that their teachers and friends play in this area. This can mean being encouraged to try things. It can mean having achievements recognised. Teachers can also be responsive to the child's curiosity.

"I now go to a running club because we did it at PE."

"My friends and teachers encourage me to do things I didn't think I could."

"Our teachers know us really well."

"It does because we do lots of different things, and sometimes we have to do stuff we don't like, but it might help us get better at it. Personal learning projects can help us grow ourselves."

"In the senior class, if you want to learn something you go up and ask the teacher. I asked if they wanted to teach about Zodiacs and this will be done next term. We wanted to know what's inside a conker and now we are learning about seeds."

"My teacher tells me what I am good at."

"I get to practise lots of things."

When discussing the statement, children who felt more neutral, or who disagreed that this was descriptive of their educational experience, tended to see their education in terms of subject areas rather than having an influence on developing their personality, talents or abilities. A further theme was a belief that personality is intrinsic, or that talents or abilities are a product of what happens outside school.

"It doesn't help your talent. It only helps with literacy and numeracy."

"School can help you read if you can't read. Reading is very important in life."

"I neither agree or disagree because it does help you develop personality but not really your talents."

"I'd say I disagree because school doesn't teach you everything and personality just grows in time. Talents you have to work out yourself and practice and practice. Schools can't teach you talents, they come from yourself."

"I think I develop my personality when I'm playing with my friends."

For some children school *could be* a place where possibilities, new things, are explored:

"We need a number of different subjects so that people can find out if they are good at something."

"I would like more chances to do outdoor activities like rock climbing, abseiling and canoeing- we can't do it in school and a one-week trip for p6/7 is not enough."

"We would like to build more practical skills like woodworking, dirt bike and quad bike tracks, skateboard parks, surfing schools."

For some children, where school has a role, it is perhaps in certain areas, but this can be limited by the quality of resources.

"PE does that, and I guess Maths and Literacy. I don't think to your fullest potential, but I do think they help you get a wee bit better at certain stuff."

"Some people who like sport in PE show their personality, and who like writing also show their personality. But those who like drawing, dancing, singing, only get to show personality at break."

"I agree because books in our school help to educate us, but some of the reading books aren't the best."

A strong message was that education may develop personality, talents and abilities, but that what happens at home and in the community is more likely to impact and support the child

to develop these to their fullest potential. For some children there is a clear separation of who they are in each setting.

> "I am more creative at home."

> "We think our education is important, but we think we can also achieve stuff out of school."

> "I don't get to show my proper personality at school. At home I would be louder and act different."

> "It helps a bit but there are things outside of school that help too."

> "Having more knowledge helps you to understand things. School helps you to find out what you're good at and new interests, but you need real world experiences to reach your full potential. Personality is developed more out of school."

> "It's like we have a home personality and a school personality."

The experience of Covid was recognised as having limited the sharing of interests and abilities in school. Post Covid, children want more opportunities than traditional curricular subjects provide:

> "Covid means we can't always share them in school with everyone."

> "We need more clubs… I would like coding club. We did have a coding club but it was stopped by Covid. I would like to do arts and crafts at break. Our PSAs are going to help us."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 3.7%
Disagree 12.1%
Neutral 28.2%
Agree 44.4%
Strongly agree 11.6%
Totals: 3,879

As the graphic shows, just over half of children and young people responding to the survey agree to some extent with the view that their education helps them to develop their personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential. As will become evident as the responses from 12- to 18-year-olds

4% Strongly disagree
12% Disagree
28% Neutral
44% Agree
12% Strongly agree
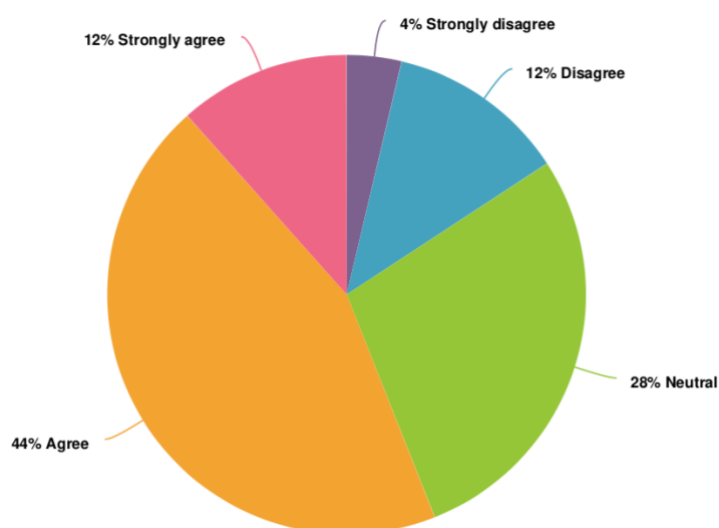
are reported in terms of subsequent statements, the proportion of learners who feel neutral when prompted is significant.

For young people who report negatively, there are concerns about the limiting nature of the curriculum available to them in school, too many subjects and the demands that are made on them in terms of course work and assessment.

> "The curriculum limits us on developing our uniqueness, our own talents and abilities."

> "Not much time with all the school work."

> "Well, I don't agree with this mainly because of rotation in school. There's too many subjects to do that you don't really develop any long-term skills because you don't get enough time in each subject. The outcome in the subjects really needs to be better and how well you have developed a skill should be the goal instead of how good you are in the exam."

> "I feel neutral about this question…I mean I guess it feels like school, it's really about just the curriculum and exams and there isn't much outside of the curriculum for me to do. I feel like we're just working towards examinations only. I also feel like the lack of support from teachers and the school on this and the fact I don't think the curriculum is very inclusive feel like a big barrier to me and why I don't really agree with this. There are options, but I just don't think they are very helpful."

A particular theme for young people is that developments in terms of personality, talents or abilities is something that is done outside school life.

> "I get how it kind of develops it but at the end of the day its mainly social and home life."

Young people expressed concern that aspects of school limit individuality and expression, for example school uniform and being grouped with others rather than making individual progression.

For young people in agreement with the statement there was an acknowledgement that they feel encouraged and there are opportunities for peer learning.

> "Yes, it does. We are encouraged to do our best in everything we do. We are taught manners and how to ask for help. We are allowed to work in groups."

While these young people quoted below also agree, their view is that opportunities for the development of personality, talents and abilities are options rather than intrinsic to the daily educational experience.

> "There are well-rounded options outside of just preparing for exams."

"I agree with this. For me at least, there are a lot of opportunities that my school offers and if you take those up I think you have a lot of options. But also, on the other side if you don't take those opportunities, you can be sort of hindered by yourself."

Particular subject areas were also identified as offering opportunities for development of talents and abilities, but the potential of these subjects were not always realised.

"I agree, for example drama lets us express our feelings and personality."

"I disagree but because if you want to do a sport in PE they don't let you choose what sport is your favourite."

For one group of respondents there were different and improved experiences when in the college setting.

"This depends on the people in the class and feeling comfortable. I didn't feel this at school but have at college. College is a more mature environment."

One final observation from SYP Learner Panel members was that in their discussions it became evident to them that those attending schools in more affluent areas reported more opportunities to engage in a range of formal and informal activities and indeed felt more supported to develop their personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.

My education helps me develop respect for human rights and freedoms

The views of primary school age children
A majority of children of primary school age agreed to some extent that their education helps them develop respect for human rights and freedoms.

For children who strongly agree, comments often referred to rights being taught or learned, facilitated by teachers or highlighted via assemblies or pupil committees, connections are made with learning about GIRFEC wellbeing indicators[2].

> "In school we are educated to be respectful and include others."

> "We strongly agree with this. We get taught about our rights and how we should respect others and why. We get taught about rights for all, Black Lives Matter and the importance of equality. Our wellbeing indicators are important."

> "We are taught at assemblies, and in class about different groups of people and backgrounds. We get to read books like 'Wonder' which highlights how important it is to respect and include people."

> "We are learning about UNCRC. Our class meetings use SHANARRI to set the agenda."

> "There are posters about rights around school. We are learning about global goals."

> "We have a right of the month every month. And a class charter. And through our topic the suffragettes."

> "School teaches you to be well mannered and respectful."

> "It teaches us what we shouldn't do to other people to respect their rights. We learn about the rights of the child and create a class charter focusing on different articles."

Children also talked about their school participating in the UNICEF Rights Respecting School[3] award.

> "We have a rights respecting school."

> "We talk about rights at assembly."

> "We have a Rights Respecting School Committee to promote children's rights."

Fewer children who agreed with the statement referred to the *experience* of being in school, although the theme of mutual respect and kindness were highlighted as ways to evidence learning and a commitment to rights and freedoms.

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[2] GIRFEC Wellbeing (SHANARRI) https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/wellbeing-indicators-shanarri/
[3] UNICEF https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/

"We learn about rights in class. We are quite respectful to each other at our school. I believe we all respect our beliefs and opinions. I respect people who respect me and other people."

"I think our school is a 'Kind' school, it is the kindest school I have ever been to! We have the Kindness Award at the end of year too."

"I strongly agree because we have learnt about the human rights and freedoms, and you should never judge people by how they look."

"We are socialising with other children, so we learn to respect others and be kind."

The importance of equality and empathy and social justice was also recognised by children in some comments:

"We are all equivalent here no matter where you come from."

"When you learn about people who had their rights removed it deepens your understanding."

"In school, we are taught to treat others how we want to be treated."

"We need to do more about racism and help people who don't have enough money."

In one response there was an acknowledgement of rights as entitlements.

"Recognise our rights and what we are entitled to."

As stated, while the majority of children reported positively about this statement others did not necessarily agree. Some wanted more experiences of school-based learning on human rights and freedoms.

"I'm not sure of my rights."

"It's not talked about."

"Like, last year it was, but for one time."

"I think we need to learn more about rights. My family told me things I never learned in school."

"They probably have taught us about this topic, I just can't remember."

"We do learn about some of this in Primary school, but we feel it is very important and we should learn more about human rights and freedoms. Education about these subjects helps us to develop empathy for others less fortunate than ourselves."

In one response a child identified an experience of rights infringements as an example of the disconnect between teaching and learning and lived experience.

"I strongly disagree because say you'd been talking with your friend and you get kept in, then they're having fun and you've got to finish your work."

In much of the reporting back, values were the basis of children's comments about the prompt statement.

"We learn about values and how to live by them."

"Our school values always help with this."

"We are taught good values. School values teach us about rights."

"Our school values are respect, responsible and ready."

Why might this be problematic? To clarify, values are a collection of guiding principles, what might be deemed to be correct and desirable in life or in a particular setting, especially regarding personal conduct. They are not the same as rights which are universal (they belong to every child) inalienable (no one can take them away) and indivisible and interrelated (all rights having equal status and being necessary to protect human dignity). If children perceive that education about rights and freedoms is the same thing as learning about or respecting their school values, the purposes of education as described in Article 29 are not being met.

One final issue for the partners reporting back on feedback is a response about this statement that connects it to specific approaches in school which are a reward/punishment model. In response to the statement, scribed by an adult facilitator, is this response:

"Golden time[4] has to be earned. Respect problem solving. House points for respect and kindness etc. Rewards systems in classes."

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[4] Golden Time is a model of rewarding children with play or unstructured time in class when all allocated tasks and responsibilities are complete. Children who breach rules have Golden Time removed and have to do set academic work whilst others play.

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 2.7%
Disagree 8.1%
Neutral 25.5%
Agree 48.7%
Strongly agree 15.0%
Totals: 3,864

A majority of children and young people responding to the survey agreed to some extent that their education helps them develop respect for human rights and freedoms. One in four remain neutral when asked. As examples of learning in this area young people said:

3% Strongly disagree
8% Disagree
15% Strongly agree
26% Neutral
49% Agree
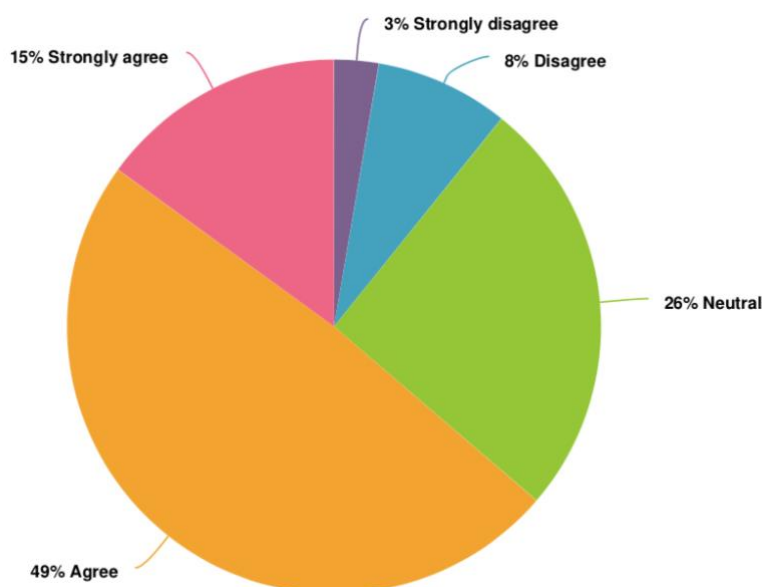
> "They give us the right to express yourself and you can have your own beliefs. For example, LGBT+ club and the teachers can call you by the name you prefer."

> "We are taught about this and our school principals - be safe, help learning and teaching, consider all others, make this the forefront of our learning."

The extent to which education is focused on this area was contested to some degree in the qualitative reporting where there was a view that the teaching of human rights and freedoms lacked depth and was not necessarily matched by an experience of rights and freedom in educational settings; in other words, the rights of individual children and young people are not thought to be respected or protected consistently.

> "We get taught about them, but they could be acted on better."

> "We need a deeper understanding of it."

> "We get taught about it, but it's not really talked about much."

> "It doesn't help develop respect; it just educates us. We could be educated on it and still have no respect for something."

One learner spoke about the "toxic culture that existed" within her school, saying:

> "Things like hate speech, when they happen, the teachers and the school don't really do anything about it. I mean, if someone does something they do get in trouble, but it's not actually addressed so that it stops. It's also the same when teachers embarrass someone who has done something wrong in front of the whole class. Like,

instead of going out in the halls or something they like embarrass them in front of everyone and I don't think that's a really good example to have in my opinion."

One young person gave this description of the experience of rights infringements in school.

"We were told we have to stay outside even during the cold. We are kicked out of toilets during breaks and lunch and can't go during class. Sometimes teachers don't let people with a toilet pass go to the toilet."

Feedback highlighted the need for education about human rights and freedoms to be undertaken with some sensitivity when learners might be members of communities for whom infringements were commonly experienced; young people from LGBTQ+ communities or young people who are Black/People of Colour do not want to be responsible for explaining who they are, nor be responsible for challenging rights infringements when they occur.

One contributor acknowledged that for them it was only in college that there had been any teaching and learning about human rights.

"I didn't learn about human rights at school. I have done some at college."

One contributor reported on an informal survey of peers they initiated, to find that most knew nothing about the UNCRC.

"It was really shocking that all of these students had no idea they even had rights or what the UNCRC stood for. I only know it because I am running as a MSYP and I do other stuff that has talked about it, but if not for that I probably wouldn't know."

My education helps me to develop respect for my parents/carers, my cultural identity and language

The views of primary school age children
A majority of children of primary school age agreed to some extent that their education helps them develop respect for their parents/carers, their cultural identity and language.

Children again reflected on the broader learning they do in terms of *respect*. One child reported there has been a positive experience of respect for their cultural/linguistic heritage. There are positive links made between learning about one's culture and pride in that heritage. As with the earlier statement, children make links with school values statements and rights.

> "One year for Mother's Day and Father's Day we made cards and said what our parents do for us."

> "Respecting adults in school helps you respect adults at home."

> "Respect is huge at our school."

> "I am half French so being able to teach French in my class helps to celebrate my differences. It really teaches you how to respect people. The school supports my special way of communicating."

> "When we learn about our culture, it makes us feel proud to be Scottish."

> "One of our school values is We Respect Each Other. We have learned Doric in school which helped us to learn about our culture."

Whilst not a direct quote from children this feedback from an adult facilitator explains how respect for these areas happens in their school.

> "Most of the children said strongly agree only a few said agree. They said that they are taught in school to respect everyone including parents/people at home. They mentioned that one of the key values in the school is respect and that it is very important in the school. The children said that they have learned about different cultures and traditions. They said that if someone in their class was from a different country or their family was from a different country they would learn about their traditions/culture in class to better understand their beliefs. The children commented on posters/books around the school. they said that there are pictures of people who look different and have different needs (wheelchair) and that they all feel included. The children also explained that they have chosen countries as their class topic and learned about their culture, traditions and their language."

Children reported that their Scottish cultural identity is represented through learning traditional dancing and through poetry and language learning.

"We learn Gaelic from P1 and we use it in lots of projects like local archaeological digs or bingo or community cafes. We have a Gaelic choir in school and take part in the national Mod. We do lots of learning about the history and culture of our Island…"

"We do Scottish country dancing and learn about Scots words."

"We sometimes look at Scottish Culture and songs."

"In school we do have opportunities to explore our cultural identity and language by doing poetry, Burns work, assemblies and a Scotland topic. We learn other languages too like French. We discussed that we feel Scottish and are proud of that, but we also respect children in our school from other cultures."

In contrast to the views expressed so far, some children reported few opportunities to engage in learning that helps them develop respect for cultural identity or language, particularly when they come from a minority community or are originally from a country other than Scotland.

"The school doesn't talk about Scotland that much."

"We don't really learn much about Scotland or anywhere else."

"We don't learn much about Scotland and where we come from."

"Respect is in our school values, and we do religious learning, but I feel that we focus too much on Christian festivals."

"Children from Poland and England do not feel represented. I would like to learn more about these."

A theme across children's qualitative feedback was that developing respect for their parents/carers is something that is done at home in the context of relationships between children and parents, rather than at school.

"School doesn't change how I act with my family."

"I learn respect from home, not school."

"I don't learn to respect my family at school because they are not here.

"I think we should already know to respect our parents."

"Yes, so you listen to your parents and their ideas. If you don't listen to them, it won't help you in life. If you don't listen to them, why should they listen to you. You are better just to listen to them."

"I don't think it encourages us to develop respect for parents/carers because we should have that anyway."

"Ideas of respect also come from home. You should be nice anyway and it's nothing to do with education."

"We think school helps and supports with manners and behaviour, but we think we would be respectful to our parents anyway."

For some children there is an appetite to do more in terms of an experience of education that develops respect for cultural identity and language.

"We need to learn about other cultures. We need to learn more languages."

"It would be fun to have online friends in other schools to learn about other countries."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 3.9%
Disagree 11.8%
Neutral 29.8%
Agree 40.5%
Strongly agree 14.0%
Totals: 3,868

A majority of children and young people responding to the survey agreed to some extent that their education helps them develop respect for their parents/carers, their cultural identity and language. 30% remain neutral when asked. As an example of learning in this area this young person said:

"We take RMPS allowing us to learn about other cultures. We learn to appreciate our differences. We have language options in school. We learn to appreciate our teachers and the hard work. There are some cultural aspects to our learning. Think there could be improvements."

The 12- to 18-year-old respondents also acknowledged that learning at home matters in this regard.

"I would say my influence came from my mum. Looking up to my family. My teachers didn't influence my home life. I was more influenced by sibling etc."
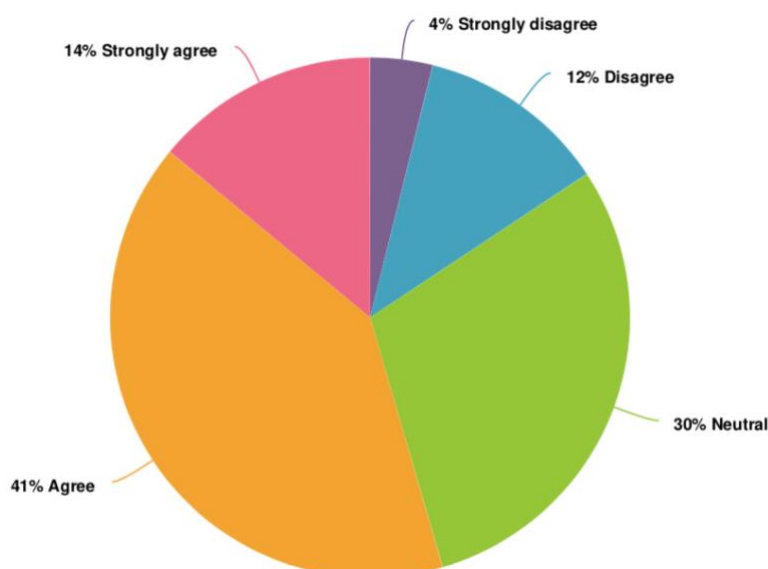
"The respect you have for your parents/carers is going to come from home, not school. The respect you have for anyone comes from the environment it's based in, e.g., teachers and schools, parents and home."

For children and young people from minority communities the qualitative responses offered a different insight from the majority view expressed via the survey.

"Some teachers don't let pupils speak their own language in class."

"I don't feel this is true, like at all in my school. We get taught about how to appreciate Scotland and a lot about things in a Christian way, but I am Muslim, not Christian. I don't get taught anything about my culture and neither does anyone in my school, either…. the teacher usually puts it on me to educate other people which is not fair, and it makes me feel even more like I am not included."

"We don't really get taught about other cultures and other identities in school, so can be difficult to respect."

From members of SYP's Learner Panel there was reporting of refugee children and young people not receiving adequate support or being underestimated in terms of ability. Young people from faith backgrounds other than Christian reported feeling their cultural identity is poorly represented in school.

My education helps me to develop respect for other countries and peoples

The views of primary school age children

From online responses to the consultation toolkit, the majority of children of primary school age agreed that their education helps them develop respect for other countries and people. This is often done through project work via links some schools have with partner schools in other countries. From responses to the consultation packs this is clearly a part of their curriculum that children in primary school enjoy.

> "We learn about other countries and that's fun. We have met a real school in another country (Nepal)."

> "We get the chance to learn about other countries and their traditions and it is very interesting and enjoyable."

> "My education helps me learn about different countries and what they are going through."

> "We learn about countries and people like Martin Luther King and about France."

In some responses children identified that this education addresses important social issues including racism and inequality and the experiences of refugee children.

> "We strongly agree as we are taught about racism and inequality and how this is wrong. We respect everyone. We agree because everyone is different in their own way and we respect that."

> "We have assemblies on racism and also European day of languages."

> "Yes, we agree. Our novel study is about a refugee boy from Syria and has helped us empathise with what other people may have experienced."

> "Yes, because they teach the conflicts. So you see the state of things in, like, Iraq and Afghanistan."

> "The book we're doing right now is about Afghanistan and the Taliban."

From detailed responses scribed by teachers the prompt statement helped identify learning around sustainability and current affairs.

> "We read books about children's lives around the world like *Shadow* on Afghanistan. We have cooked food from around the world, learnt about different religions. We took part in a plastics meet with schools in Hawaii, learned about other island communities through the COP message in a bottle project and linked with schools in Scotland. It would be good to meet more regularly with children in other schools around the world and be able to talk to them about our lives."

"We are learning about life in other countries linked to UNCRC - we were learning about COP26 and sustainability as a topic."

"All the children said strongly agree. The children stated that they have chosen different countries as their class topic and researched them. One child said they had been learning about Japan and the traditions/culture in Japan. The children explained that they watch Newsround in class most days. They have class discussions on topics being raised in the news. They spoke about learning about what is happening in Afghanistan and how people are being treated."

Whilst there was mostly agreement that their education helps them develop respect for other countries and peoples, some children did question whether this can be achieved as part of their school experience. Others saw room for improvement and continuing challenges in school.

"I don't know how education will help develop respect. I don't know how it will learn you to respect other countries. Respect is a whole different kind of education."

"I don't have disrespect for other countries, but I don't learn about it at school."

"There's room to improve."

"It would be good to learn much more about other countries."

"There is still too much racism."

The views of secondary school age children and young people
Strongly disagree 2.4%
Disagree 7.0%
Neutral 24.3%
Agree 47.7%
Strongly agree 18.6%
Totals: 3,859

Of these initial seven prompt statements which are drawn from Article 29, this received the highest level of agreement from 12 - 18-year-olds responding to the survey with 66% responding agree/strongly agree that their education helps them to develop respect for other countries and peoples.

2% Strongly disagree
7% Disagree
24% Neutral
48% Agree
19% Strongly agree
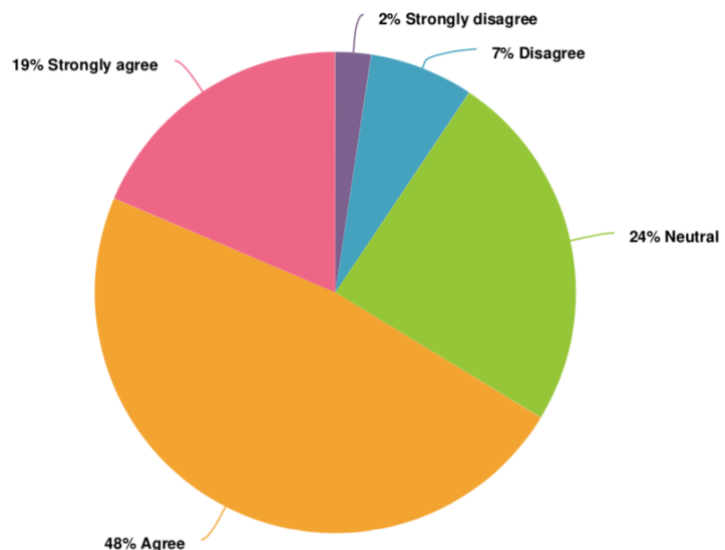
In one online/toolkit response children and young people identified the role that specific subject areas played including Modern Languages, RME and Social Subjects. They also remembered their primary school experiences, for example learning about Christmas traditions around the world.

In their discussion of the statement SYP Learner Panel members reported that while there were some opportunities to learn about other countries and people this often felt superficial, and that there was little time available to go into depth.

Some members of SYPs Learner Panel did not agree with the prompt statement, citing personal experience of an education that neither reflected on diversity within Scotland, nor addressed Scotland's colonial role.

> "I don't feel like we're taught about other cultures much. Like, we talk a lot about Scottish pride almost and like how great Scotland is, but we don't talk about anything else beyond that, especially like the bad things Scotland has done. I always feel like so different in my classes and I guess I am sort of used to it by now, but my teachers don't make an effort really to teach about like everyone in Scotland, not just you know like 'white and Christian' people."

> "It's really important that Scotland be honest about what they've done to other people. Sometimes it seems as if Scotland hasn't done anything wrong in history, when they have, and especially for a lot of students they might know this but feel like since it isn't being talked about it's not important."

My education prepares me for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance

The views of primary school age children
From online responses to the consultation toolkit a majority children of primary school age agreed that their education prepares them in ways suggested by the prompt statement.

In their reporting back, children have been drawn to the word responsible. They may know this in terms of the GIRFEC SHANNARI wellbeing indicators, or in relation to Curriculum for Excellence capacities, with one of the four being responsible citizens[5].

> "Looking after your own desk and trays is small but still teaches us responsibility."

> "I have the responsibility to learn."

This online/toolkit feedback, from children via their teachers, explains the breadth of activity children perceive to be of relevance to this prompt statement in these two settings:

> Yes, education helps a lot with this, especially as you get older through the school. Everyone here gets leadership opportunities with everyone being in a committee, House and Vice Captains and clubs. All these things prepare you to develop tolerance and responsibility. If we were not taught how to be responsible and how to set an example to the wee ones, then no one would grow to be responsible. I am glad we learn this in school and at home. We care about our school, and we respect it by how we behave. It is taught all day and it is one of our school values.

> Most of the children said strongly agree, only a couple said agree. The children explained that their learning is related to the real world so they understand why they are learning about it and how it will help them in the future. They referred to maths and learning about money and estimating the cost of items they would like to buy. The children all agreed that they felt free to ask questions to get answers about things they are interested in or worried about. They said that they are taught about respect and how to treat others. They said that they have also learned about how others think and that their viewpoint might be different from theirs. The said that they feel free to express their interests in class and that their teacher will try to include their interest in their learning. The p7's said that they are working on transition to secondary school and are looking at skills they need when they are in secondary.

Children have reported how their school experience helps them learn to co-operate and collaborate:

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[5] Curriculum for Excellence 4 capacities https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence

"At school we have responsibility to complete our own work. We work in teams and collaborate together. We don't always get to pick our own teams, but we are learning to work well together even if not your friend."

Children also reported that learning to manage conflict is an aspect of their education.

"We strongly agree as we know what is right and wrong and we learn how to handle conflicts calmly. We know that our rights relate to all children and adults. We learn how to control arguments as a professional."

"When I disagree with people, I have learned to deal with this in a calm way that respects others."

For these children there is an understanding of the importance of interpersonal relationships and understanding:

"To get peace you have to give other people peace to get peace back."

"Our education helps us to build an awareness and understanding of people around us and to not judge others."

There is however a tone of children being passive recipients regarding the intent behind this prompt statement. From online submissions we hear:

"We get taught to be respectful of everyone. We follow school rules and values."

"We agreed that we promote tolerance, and it equips us for a responsible life."

For one group, whilst in agreement with the statement there was a need to state:

"We agree, however we still need the right to have a voice and speak out and be taken seriously."

For some children online/toolkit feedback evidenced some scepticism about whether in their primary school experience they were being prepared for a responsible life as described.

"Primary school is about learning the basics."

"We barely do IT skills and all that."

"We don't do this stuff in our school."

"We don't learn enough about the real world and its problems."

"I want to learn more life skills and how to be a good person."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 6.0%
Disagree 14.2%
Neutral 29.5%
Agree 37.3%
Strongly agree 13.0%
Totals: 3,856

Half of 12- to 18-year-olds responding to the survey agreed that their education prepares them for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance; nearly 1 in 3 were neutral when asked, 1 in 5 disagreed.

6% Strongly disagree

14% Disagree

30% Neutral

37% Agree

13% Strongly agree
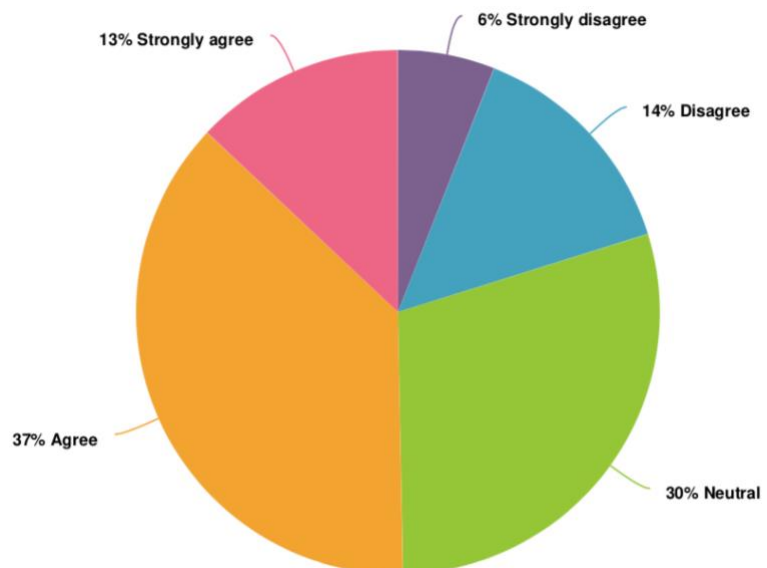
For members of the SYP Learner Panel, it was difficult to see how this can be achieved if the experience of school is one in which learner voice and rights are not respected day in day out. However, some Panel members acknowledged that opportunities that they had had to engage in learning about and advancing their rights means that they understand and feel committed to a responsible life as described. Panel members also reported that opportunities to be involved/have a say are not always available across the full student population. Panel members wanted to see more of a focus on this purpose of education.

From other online/toolkit responses children and young people identified the role of home and community life in promoting understanding, peace and tolerance.

> View of the class is that much of this should be done at home before pupils arrive at school but recognise that the school makes attempts to reinforce the positive ideas and promote tolerance and understanding.

However, there was also some identification of space/subjects within the curriculum that supports these efforts.

> Examples of learning about friendships in PSE and restorative conversations were cited.

These further submissions from young people identified how a school can fail to address behaviour that is the antithesis of respectful or tolerant, that the curriculum can lack learning about important life skills, and a link is made to the focus education gives to

jobs/employment. (This is discussed further in regard to the statement My education will help me to realise my goals.)

> "Bad behaviour is not punished in school. Teachers do not respect pupils until they reach the senior phase."

> "They don't teach you a lot of key info i.e., taxes, money management, buying a house, how to apply for a job. You mainly get it from your family and what they taught you rather than school. It does but I would like to know how to pay taxes. It does prepare you for a responsible life. It teaches you everything you need for jobs."

My education helps me to develop respect for the natural environment

The views of primary school age children
Most children agreed that their education helps them to develop respect for the natural environment.

COP26 has been a real opportunity for learning that primary schools have grasped.

> "If COP26 hadn't happened, we wouldn't have learned about global warming."

> "We learn a lot about COP26, sustainability, trees."

> "COP 26 is very important to us. We love learning about our environment."

Children have identified the importance of learning outdoors.

> "We do outdoor learning and go to the woods to learn. We have to take care of the trees."

> "We go to Forest School. Every subject is linked to the environment."

These children provided an overview of school learning and activity, through programmes and children's committees:

> "I don't throw plastic in the ocean it's very bad. You recycle. The school teaches us not to do it and tells us what happens to the earth if we do it. The school has an ECO committee, and I am part of it. We learn it is bad to throw things in the ocean. Not to kill animals. We built a bug hotel. Our school does beach cleans to help the environment because animals are dying in the ocean."

> "We are an Eco school with our 8th green flag. We have just finished a peatland project where we learned how peat is great for carbon capture. We regularly do beach cleans to remove plastics and rubbish from our beach. We learn about the wildlife around us and visit different local habitats."

From a teacher/facilitator:

> "The children all said strongly agree. They explained that they have been learning all about COP 26 and how they can help the environment. They explained that there are STEM leaders and sustainability leaders who have made presentations to classes and have helped to organise activities on how children can help the environment. The children referred to their pledge they made about how they personally will help to save the environment (turn the lights off when they leave a room/ recycle). The children said that they have done a lot of debating in class about how the school can help the environment too."

From toolkit/online responses children want to see schools do more as settings to develop respect for the natural environment and in particular to address the climate emergency.

We don't do enough about the environment at school.

Teach more about climate change.

I want to learn more, not just every second Tuesday.

We should have solar panels and do more recycling at school.

As it will affect our future, we need to know what is going on now.

If we did not learn about it, we wouldn't be able to do anything about it.
So, it is very important.

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 3.3%
Disagree 10.6%
Neutral 30.9%
Agree 42.0%
Strongly agree 13.2%
Totals: 3,856

A majority of 12-to-18-year old's responding to the survey agreed that their education helps them to develop respect for the natural environment, but nearly 1 in 3 feel neutral about the prompt statement.

As with primary school age children COP26 has focused learning on the natural environment. This online/toolkit response identifies the role that education plays for this group of learners.

13% Strongly agree
3% Strongly disagree
11% Disagree
31% Neutral
42% Agree
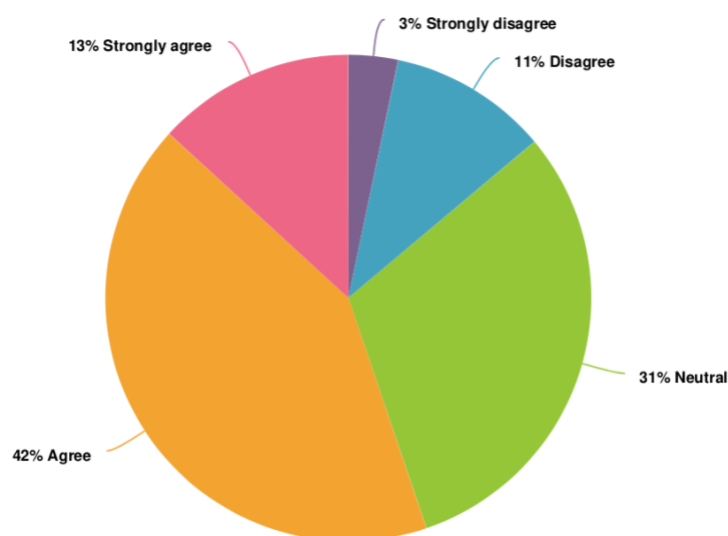
"Yes, we learn a lot about environment and because we live so close to the school, we know our local environment well too. We know a lot about climate change, and we are learning even more just now because of COP 26. Education teaches us the impact of climate change and natural disasters on different places in the world and shows us to respect the power of nature! I think we appreciate more where we live in the world through our knowledge from school. School supports our understanding of these things and the more you know then the more you respect."

Most SYP Learner Panel members agreed with the prompt statement. Learning at school was seen as developing a 'care for the environment' although Panel members also agreed

that there could be more opportunities and depth to this learning. Again, COP26 was seen as a prompt and motivator for ongoing learning and action across the education system to address the climate crisis.

These Learner Panel members identified some progress, including action on addressing learner demands, but that this is not always followed through and much remains to be done.

> "At my school I am like the head of our environmental council, and there's, like, I don't know, a few of us on there, not many. They let us do what we like for the most part, but I feel like they don't take it too seriously beyond that. Like, we ran a campaign to start recycling and they encouraged that, but people still littered, and the school didn't really do much about it. There's…there's a long way to go, in my opinion, but yeah, I agree mostly."

> "We didn't even recycle in our school, like not at all, we didn't even have recycling bins. So we petitioned the school to get recycling bins and we were successful, but the school wasn't responsible for emptying them, it was the local council because they had some like contract or something with a cleaning company, and anyways they ended up not collecting the recycling bins when they were supposed to and they just overflowed and eventually got locked up and then taken away. Our school tried to help but it was the council's decision, and they couldn't do anything about it."

My education helps me to develop respect for the national values of Scotland

The views of primary school age children
Across contributions there was a shared view that children do not know what the national values of Scotland are. In their responses children and the adult facilitators supporting their input have reported about learning about Scottish history, culture or language. They have also made connections with their own school values statements, but simply do not know what our country's national values are.

> "I don't know what that means."

> "I don't know what the values of Scotland are."

> "I already respect Scotland. Does Scotland have values?"

> "We know what the school values are but not the national values of Scotland."

> "They tie in with the values of our school, which we talk about regularly."

> "We agree as we love to respect our values and treat people with kindness and respect. We welcome new people."

> "Right now we are learning about the Scottish Wars of Independence, so I am being given a change to support Scotland."

> "We do Scottish country dancing and learn Scot's poems."

> "We have our school values, however we feel that the Scottish values need to be more visible in our community."

From one group of respondents a bit of research took them to the values inscribed on the Mace which sits in the Scottish Parliament. On this Mace the craftsman who made it inscribed these words which have come to represent what values the Parliament should uphold but have never actually been discussed or established as 'national values' as such: *wisdom, justice, integrity* and *compassion*. But with these in mind this response:

> "We had to look up what the national values of Scotland are and found out they are wisdom, justice, integrity and compassion. My education does this because we are taught to be kind, to do what we are supposed to, keep our promises, to be fair and to learn."

From one teacher responding on behalf of their class:

> "Most of the children said strongly agree. The children explained that they learn a lot about Scottish traditions and about their own culture. They said that they have Burns Day and St Andrew's Day. They learn about Scottish traditions in class and watch Newsround to learn about what is happening in Scotland. They said that they have

been learning a lot about COP 26 which is based in Scotland this year and the conversations and news surrounding Scotland and how people in Scotland can help to save the environment."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 5.8%
Disagree 15.5%
Neutral 34.9%
Agree 33.2%
Strongly agree 10.6%
Totals: 3,858
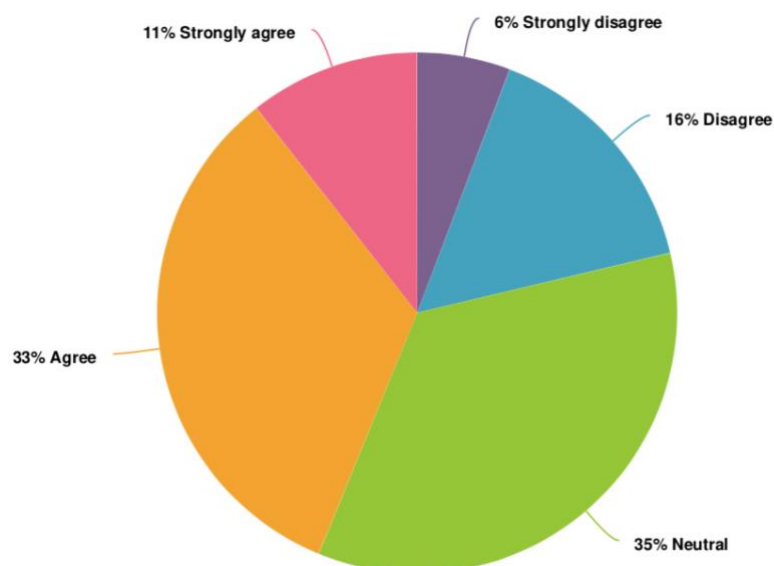
Less than half of respondents aged 12 to 18 agreed with the prompt statement, with just over 1 in 3 being *neutral*. Reflecting the qualitative responses from children, older children and young people also do not know what the national values of Scotland are. Again, there was some conflation of the study of Scots history or heritage and the stated values of a school with an understanding of what the values of the country might be.
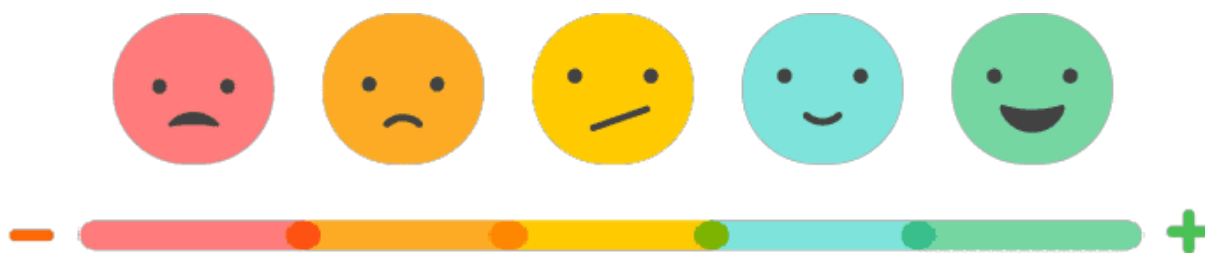

- 6% Strongly disagree
- 16% Disagree
- 35% Neutral
- 33% Agree
- 11% Strongly agree

"I don't know what they are."

"School does develop these values in us. We learn about the history of Scotland and realise how far our country has come along over years, lots of change has happened over time."

"I wouldn't know these things without school. I feel very Scottish and love my country. I have visited places and admired the environment and the sun setting."

"Learning in school makes me respect Scotland and to show understanding/ compassion to others. I feel learning about my country and its values has shaped who I am and who I want to be in the future!"

When this statement was put to SYP's Learner Panel members none knew what the national values of Scotland were. Learners remarked on their disappointment at this realisation and recognised they had never been taught what they might be. To support discussion the values inscribed on the Scottish Parliament Mace were discussed, young people agreed that the values were good. Young people acknowledged some values are taught, like respecting the environment, but in terms of those on the Mace, learners disagreed they were being taught at all, and if they were an aspiration that they often felt they were not being honoured.

Findings:

Education, my needs and goals

Professor Muir's consultation document asks for comment on the assertion that 'Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3 to 18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience that enables them to realise their ambitions'. It also seeks views on the statement that: 'In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners'. Do learners agree? Children and young people were asked to comment on two statements that addressed this claim.

My education meets my needs as a learner.
My education will help me to realise my goals.

My education meets my needs as a learner

The views of primary school age children
A majority of primary school children, reporting via their facilitated discussions, were in agreement that their education meets their needs as a learner, but others were neutral. For one contributor there was the insightful view that education *"… teaches you how to learn."* Others raised several issues including support for learning and the need for challenge.

Having one's needs met can mean asking for help. For some learners this is available, for others this can be problematic as these children reported.

> "Yeah, I think if you have needs you can go ask a teacher and they'll help you and explain it."

> "I agree because we always get help from our teachers and we set ourselves targets. If we get stuck an adult always helps us."

> "I am dyslexic and I am really well supported in school."

> "Teachers help me when I need help."

> "I disagree because I used to worry I would be made fun of."

> "It can be embarrassing to ask for help."

> "The teacher doesn't always see my hand."

Reflecting on whether education meets their needs, children also commented on the matter of being challenged by their learning and being able to make decisions about their learning. There were reports of this being achieved to different extents.

> "I get to talk to my teacher about what I'm good at."

> "Sometimes I need trickier things to try."

> "We should do more where we chose the level we work at."

> "More range of difficulty is needed."

> "I think my learning is at the right level because I can do it but it's still tricky."

> "Sometimes my teacher gives me harder work to challenge me."

Rather than reflecting on having learning needs met in the here and now, for some children an understanding of this statement was to link it with future prospects or 'getting a job'

> It does meet my needs. If you stick in school, you will get a job and have a good life.

We are learning for our future!

This response from a teacher/facilitator on behalf of a group of children also addresses the issues raised so far, with children expressing a positive view that needs are known and met.

All of the children said that they strongly agree. They said that in class they get a lot of choice when it comes to what level their work is at. They said that they do chilli challenges every day and that they chose which option they would like to do and feel that they are able to do. They said that they can ask their teacher for support and they will get the support they need. They also said that if the options are too easy for them, they can speak to their teacher and get challenged more. The children explained that when it comes to their social needs there are two nurture teachers who support them and help them.

For one child, responding to his prompt statement: Learning should be more fun! From another, an issue we regularly hear about from children: Shouting doesn't help me learn[6].

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 6.1%
Disagree 13.9%
Neutral 28.9%
Agree 39.4%
Strongly agree 11.7%
Totals: 3,860

Half of children and young people aged 12 to 18 agree that their education meets their needs as a learner. 1 in 5 learners disagree, whilst the remainder are neutral in their response.

Some learners reported good support. For some children, care-experienced or coping with complex home circumstances, school can be experienced as a safe, productive space.

"I think if you have needs you can go ask a teacher and they'll help you and explain it."

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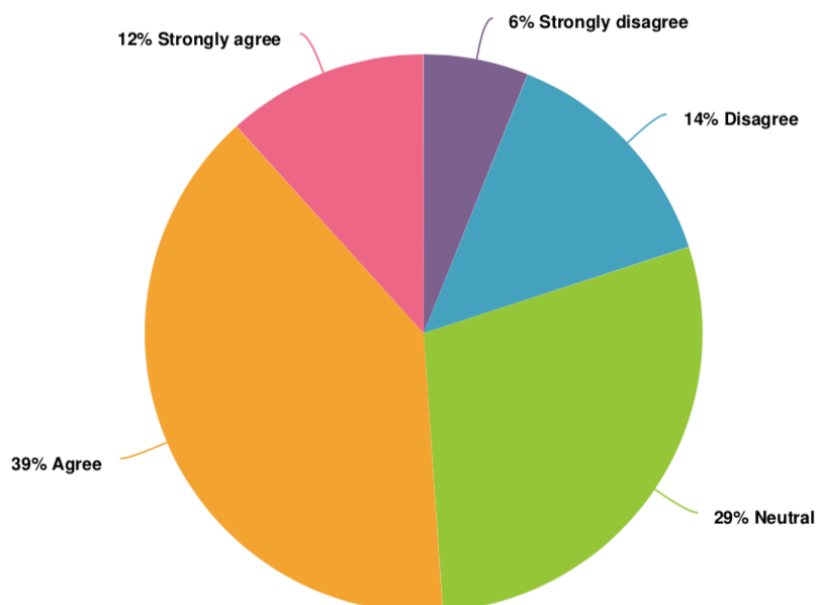
[6] As an example the Children's Parliament Dignity in School project has been responding to children's identification of this issue https://dignityinschool.childrensparliament.org.uk/

"School was always a good distraction from my outside life, it was something I had control over in my life."

"...that year and my final year of primary stay with me. The class was very small and the teacher was amazing, she believed and went that extra mile for me. She provided me with so many opportunities which took me away from the chaos at home."

Learners with additional support needs/disabilities cited problems.

"Lack of understanding of dyslexia means you can't keep up with class, so are always lagging behind. I feel teachers didn't take the time to help people that had fallen behind for different reasons. I feel at college everyone is at the same level and given the support to catch up."

"The education system restricts what you can do."

Children and young people from armed forces families, who may move between schools, have reported poor communication and breaks in support for those with additional support needs. For care-experienced children moving placements can also be points at which support needs to be better.

"I have learning disabilities but have had pretty much no support. Not talking to new schools."

"I had a few barriers at school but the main ones were always when I was moving to a different placement. It was sometimes hard to concentrate whilst thinking about moving."

This learner acknowledged a positive experience, but also a realisation that this is may be their good fortune rather than an experience that is everyone's entitlement.

"I know for others it's not always this way, but for me at least, yeah definitely I think my needs are met. I have opportunities and my teachers are supportive and I feel like I am getting a lot out of everything. So, yeah if I was speaking for myself, definitely. But I know others who have not been that lucky and I know it should really be good for everyone, not just a few."

For members of SYP's Learner Panel, the prompt statement initiated discussion about whether the education system is interested or able to meet the needs of individuals. The shared view was that the system provides a standard experience and is unable to be truly oriented towards the needs of individuals. This illustrative example from a Learner Panel exchange:

"Everyone learns differently and some people, like myself, I really don't mind exams because I'm quite good at memorising, but that only works for me. Others don't do well and might be better at assessments or like art or essays or something and it

should really be about how can we show we know something in a way that works for us instead of just doing the same thing as everyone else. I think I disagree with this because it needs to be individual and not the same for everyone because we all learn differently."

"Yeah, I agree and also like we're not being respected in the process …I mean in terms of making choices about what we want to study and being included in our education, it just feels very much like here is what you do and then you go to uni or something. I lucked out with my teachers who are supportive and let me learn what I want to and make sure it matches with my exams and stuff, but I know because no one helped my friend she picked the wrong subjects and now can't study what she wants at uni. I just wished they helped and like guided us, you know."

For Learner Panel members the key to meeting the needs of learners is the relationship between teacher and pupil. For Panel members with positive educational experiences, at the heart of these were stories of teachers.

My education will help me to realise my goals

The views of primary school age children
While a majority of children agreed with this statement and some connected it with learning - "*We talk about our goals and targets in learning*"/"*We set targets*" – others identified a lack of opportunity to consider this notion that their education should help them realise their goals, or were of the view that *it depends.*

"It depends what your goals are."

"I don't have any goals. We don't have any goals in school."

"We don't talk about goals in school, but we should."

From the reporting based on the consultation tool, most discussions emerging from this prompt statement were fairly narrow, with children very much interpreting this statement to be about *getting a job*.

"I know I need to be able to spell and read for future jobs. I need to be able to say things properly (communicating)."

"We can learn more about different jobs."

"If your goal is to become a scientist, you might need maths and science, so education helps to achieve that."

"I want to be an engineer and I will need science and maths to be good at engineering."

"I want to be a vet and you need to be good at reading and maths and science to be a vet. There are not any jobs that school does not help with."

"I know what job I want to do already and learning grammar helps me."

"A wee bit, I don't know what I want to do because I'm only P6."

"When I grow up I want to be a fashion designer - art in school has helped me realise that."

"We do some learning about jobs and we have had parents in to talk about their jobs."

"If we don't go to school we won't learn so can't get a job."

"School helps you with writing which you need for almost all jobs and applying for jobs."

Finally, some children reported a more philosophical or lifelong view in response to the prompt.

"My goal is to live a good life."

"Goals should be happiness, not exam results."

"Yes, my life goals are to get a family and live a good life and get a job. The school is helping me to do this."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 4.7%
Disagree 13.5%
Neutral 29.4%
Agree 39.0%
Strongly agree 13.3%
Totals: 3,858

A little more than half of 12- to 18-year-olds agree that their education will help them realise their goals. Nearly 1 in 3 are neutral in terms of the prompt statement.
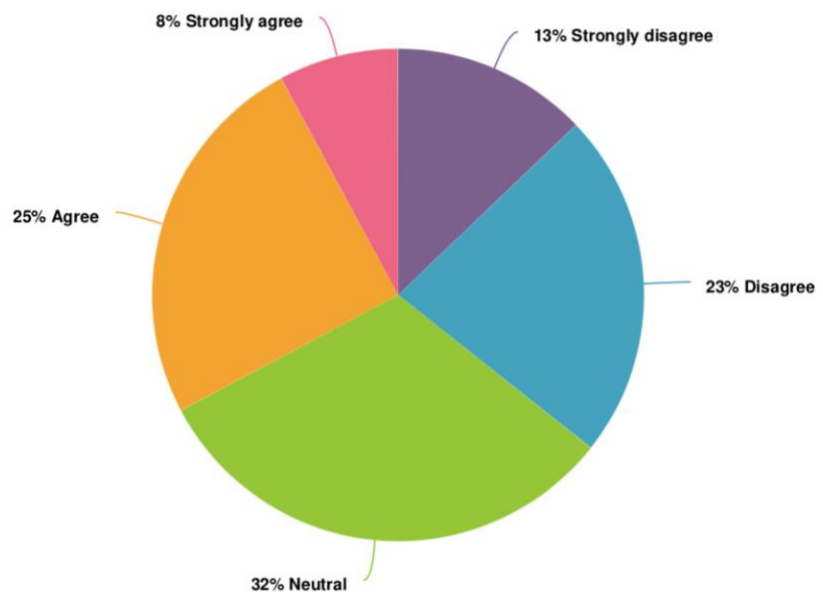
As with primary school age children, it is evident that this statement is very much connected with career choices and employment. From teachers/facilitators responding on behalf of a group:

"We feel that there could be clearer links made in classes between the work we are doing and how this relates to jobs we might do in the future. Pupils generally like to be pushed hard, held to account and asked to keep the standards high. They feel some parts of the school encourage this more than others."

"Pupils realise in every career, skills in literacy and numeracy are needed."

From learners themselves.

"Qualifications from school will help us progress."

"Careers Advisors are helpful in PSE. We can't get a job without skills. Don't yet know what careers we want to do."

"The subject of Biology and the teachers initiated my interest in Biology which led to me deciding on the career of medicine. The teachers provided a nurturing environment which encouraged me to succeed in the subject. The science department related what they were teaching to real life scenarios and jobs."

"I don't know what I want to do when I leave school, but I do want to be successful and happy in my chosen profession."

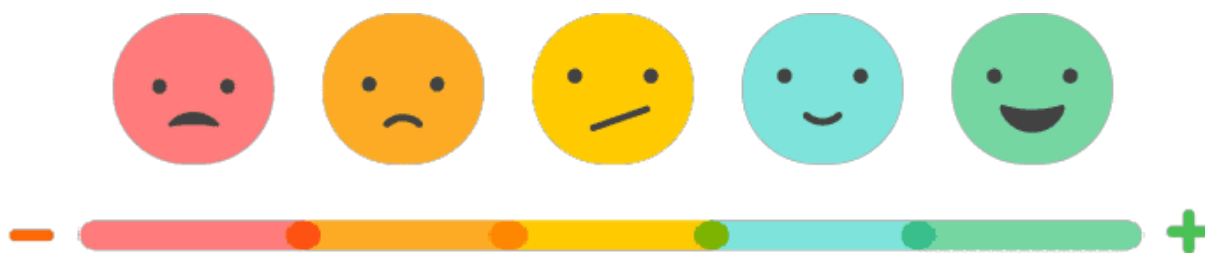"I chose subjects I enjoy and I'm good at to find a career."

In terms of this overt connection with goals and careers support/jobs members of the SYP Learner Panel highlighted different experiences of advice and support; some rarely saw or could access a professional for careers advice while others could be proactive and make appointments and ask for information and advice.

"I know it's different for me, I go to a really small school, but I can go to the library and make an appointment when it suits me and speak with my careers advisor. They've been really supportive and have helped me choose the subjects that interest me and tell me what paths I can take with it after school. But I know that's just my experience."

For Learner Panel members a key issue in terms of reflecting on whether their education helps them realise their goals is the focus that is placed on exams and preparation for exams; such a focus leaves them feeling ill-prepared for life beyond school. Other young people submitting views online shared similar concerns.

"Feeling that life skills such as buying a house could be covered."

"I feel neutral about this because I don't think the school teaches about outside of school and how hard it will be outside without guidance in life. But they do what they can in everything else."

Findings:

Learner empowerment and participation

Professor Muir has sought views on the statement: 'There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents and carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making'. The education system is committed to learner empowerment and participation, within what is described as an empowered system. It should be expected within such a system that learners are involved in making decisions about learning and that their views on their educational experience are taken seriously. In addition, when a school or college is being inspected it should be the case that the views of learners should be taken seriously.

Via two statements, children and young people have expressed their view on current experiences, and their aspiration in terms of being heard during inspection.

I am involved in making decisions about my learning.

The views of children/young people should be taken seriously when schools/college are inspected.

Children and young people at secondary school or college were asked views on a third statement:

My views about my education are taken seriously.

I am involved in making decisions about my learning

The views of primary school age children
From feedback reported via our consultation packs, the views of children are fairly evenly spread across the continuum of options in terms of agreeing, feeling neutral or disagreeing with this prompt statement.

Children reported examples of choices made within a subject or topic. Some children reported a broad range of experiences of making decisions about learning.

> "I agree cause sometimes we get to pick our learning."

> "When we're doing our literacy we can choose sometimes."

> "We get to choose whether we want to tackle bronze, silver or gold level questions in our learning. We get to choose our own long term personal projects called Endeavour. We spend the first 30 minutes of every day working on our personal targets which we choose ourselves and are linked to areas we need to work on. We get to choose and ask questions to answer on the topics we do in class."

> "We talk to teachers about our learning, we get to do feedback on ourselves and others. We sometimes get a choice."

> "Yes. Cause quite recently our teacher asked us 'I've picked some things we could do as a topic, which one would you like to do?' So if you were there that day you got a say. Most people put their hands up for Victorians so now we're doing Victorians."

> "We strongly agree as we get to take part in many committees. We get to select themes for our writing and we get to choose topics and subjects. We get lots of choice with our learning. We always get pupil voice."

> "We are the Pupil Council. We get to say what we think. You can say your answer in class without feeling worried about making mistakes."

Recording on behalf of a group this teacher reported as follows:

> "The children mostly said strongly agree and a couple said neutral. The children said that they are spoken to by different teachers about their learning and how they feel about their learning. They referred to when the principal teacher got a group from each class and asked them about their learning and experience in the classroom. The children said that their learning is displayed on the wall every day, so they know what they are learning that day. They mentioned that they can see the benchmarks they are covering in class and what area they are focusing on. The children mentioned that they get a choice in their learning."

Some decision making is recognised by children as somewhat limited. Sometimes making choices can feel like pressure to get it right.

"If we're choosing work, the teacher says 'ah I think you can do that one', so you don't really get to choose."

"Sometimes, yeah. When you're involved in making decisions about your learning you need to make sure you make the right decisions because if you don't it can go all wrong. So, say the teacher asks you to do something, it's your decision if you say yes or no. I would usually say yes."

Across contributions children reported some frustration with the range or lack of meaningful opportunities to make decisions about their learning or other aspects of day-to-day life at school.

"I'm pretty sure the government gives the teachers what we need to learn so we don't really get a say."

"I think I strongly disagree because the teachers get to decide what you get to do and they decide how long you get for lunch and break and it's not fair."

"I disagree. The teachers have to decide every little thing."

"Sometimes when we're planning our day sometimes we get to choose but usually we don't."

"We don't get any say in what we learn."

"It's the adults that decide what we learn. That's why it's not fun."

"I want to choose more about what to write about."

"We are told what we are learning. We make more decisions when we are older."

This child recognised the formal/committee-based opportunities for pupil voice in their school, but also the lack of involvement in the classroom.

"We get asked what topics we want to do. We have a pupil council and an eco-committee. I don't get asked my opinion in class. When we play games the teacher always decides what game."

There is an appetite for more opportunities to make decisions about learning and life at school.

"I think we should get our own decisions."

"They don't let us do stuff that we want to do."

"I don't get to pick what I do in a day. We don't often get to pick what we do. We pick topic things and spelling words, we don't choose enough."

"I think the teachers need to tell us what we have to learn at times but sometimes we can decide."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 7.0%
Disagree 17.9%
Neutral 32.4%
Agree 34.4%
Strongly agree 8.2%
Totals: 3,856

Less than half of 12- to 18-year-olds responding to the survey agreed that they are involved in making decisions about their learning. 1 in 3 learners report that they feel *neutral* when asked.

In contributions via the online toolkit, learners recognised the importance of subject choices including at S2, but also recognised the need for more support and information around those choices.
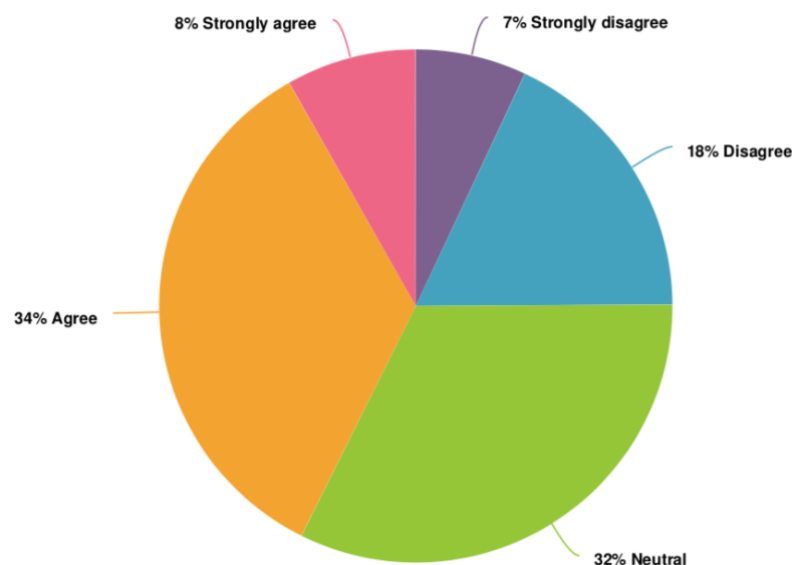
> "There is some subject choice from S2 onwards."

> "We make our own decisions about what to study and how to do it. We do get to pick our subjects and decide if we're going to leave or stay on."

> "Picking subjects is good."

> "You can choose your own subjects, however, you are often too young to fully understand your subject choices. More support in explaining what taking certain subjects offer (university, college)."

This respondent highlighted that 'choices' can be challenged or changed:

> "Subject choices is an area that views aren't fully considered. Sometimes teachers ask us to change our mind. Then dropping subjects is frowned upon, but what if we change our minds?"

In responding on behalf of a group this teacher reported how the group felt that making decisions for themselves left learners feeling vulnerable in an exam/assessment-focused system.

> "In some subjects like music and to an extent, art, there is choice about what to learn but actually more pupils preferred to be told what to learn and how to learn it because they felt they needed to know how to pass assessments at the end."

From several contributions, came the view that 12- to 18-year-olds want more input to what and how they learn across subjects.

> "PE choices of sport are good. Would like more say in what we learn about in subjects. Would prefer less homework unless valuable. Would like to choose teacher and stay with same teacher for longer."

> "The pace of learning in maths can be a challenge for me. I would like more choices about this."

> "Young people expressed the view that they are only involved in choosing their subjects but even then, you don't always get the subjects you choose or a say in the style of learning to suit your own needs. Young people highlighted lack of involvement in assessment arrangements during Covid - no one asked how assessment processes were going to affect the young people themselves."

This young person highlighted an example of when and how learners can and should be empowered to make decisions.

> "I feel there is strong negativity around this subject. Such as when it comes to supported study… there are issues around trying to pick and choose times to study but breaks should be okay… it shouldn't be forced upon us to study all the time, allow us to make the decision."

Unanimously, SYP Learner Panel members disagreed with the statement. They commented that their educational experience was happening *to them* and not *with them*, with little sense or experience of autonomy. Whilst acknowledging all schools are different, Panel members often felt unsupported when they sought to make changes to their experience of being in school, they did not feel their views were taken account of. For older school pupils there were signs of increased engagement and influence based on positive relationships with teaching staff. In general, a sense of engagement and influence improved when attending college.

> "I feel like being in college now I do have a lot of say around my education because colleges are more open and prepared and willing to listen to what you have to say, but I don't think I felt that way when I was in school."

> "I go to an underserved school and our teachers are in and out constantly. Because we're a big school, and not a great one, teachers don't tend to stay very long which

means I don't get to make relationships with them or they don't get to know me and when I stand up for myself if something isn't working or to make things better, I think they think I'm just making trouble because I'm really confident and I stand up for what is right and to them it's just more work to do. So, I do try really hard to make changes, but I definitely don't get listened to by the teachers or the school at all. I have to fight constantly to be heard and not seen as just someone making a fuss."

"I think that I have more of a say now in my later years because I had the chance to make relationships with my teachers but definitely not in like S3-S4. I didn't really know my teachers and because of that, well I just got told what I would do, whereas now I can choose what I want to do and they support me, but only because they know me."

"I feel like they don't really listen at all, they just give you something to do and then you're on your own. Like, if I am really interested in learning more about a subject I just get told to like Google it myself and learn about it myself. There's a lot of expectation to like learn about things yourself because teachers don't really have the time because the curriculum is so full or it isn't on the exam so they won't even bother. I feel like there are so many things I want to learn but can't because, like where do I even start?"

Only one Panel member had an example of their school actively seeking to engage learners.

"At my school they do a survey like every year asking us how they're doing and what would we like to see, and they also do POPS? I think that's what it's called. I think if more schools did that, we would be more involved in how we learn and our education and a lot of these issues would sort themselves out."

The views of children/young people should be taken seriously when schools/college are inspected

The views of primary school age children
Across submissions from children there was support for the notion that children's views should be taken seriously when their school is inspected.

For children, Inspectors cannot have a full and fair view of the school unless they see children/learners as central to the process.

> "We are the people that are getting taught, so our voice is important and our feedback."

> "I think children should be taken seriously because some schools might lie and you'll never know what the real experience is unless you ask children."

> "School is for us so our voices should be listened to."

> "All the children should be interviewed because they need to say what they like about the school and how good it is. But I don't know what is going on in the office."

> "We think they should send out questionnaires for children to answer about their school as we know it best."

> "They need to pay attention to the children not just the teachers."

> "We think they should talk to us because it is our school."

> "Children should be able to speak about their opinion and have freedom of speech."

> "The inspectors need to find out information about the school from everyone in the school and the children's opinions are very important."

One child reported: "When the schools are inspected you need to be on your best behaviour and make sure the school looks its best."

A final thought from one group of children was to ask Inspectors to remember that children should not just be observed but included, and with proper consent.

> "I want to be noticed. Some people just come and stare at us for five minutes and then go."

> "I don't think children should feel pressured if it's not something they want to do."

> "I remember there was an inspector in our class and he was just staring at me, and I looked round and he was staring at me."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 1.1%
Disagree 1.4%
Neutral 11.2%
Agree 36.0%
Strongly agree 50.3%
Totals: 3,841

This statement received by far the strongest response in terms of strongly agree; with almost all young people agreeing to some extent.

From feedback to the online engagement tool some students can remember school inspections being stressful for everyone, including for learners when speaking to Inspectors while teachers were present.
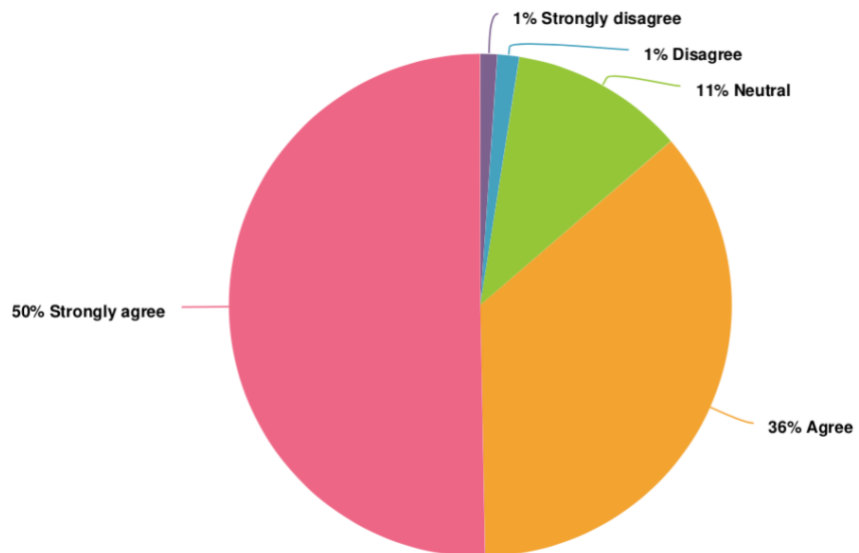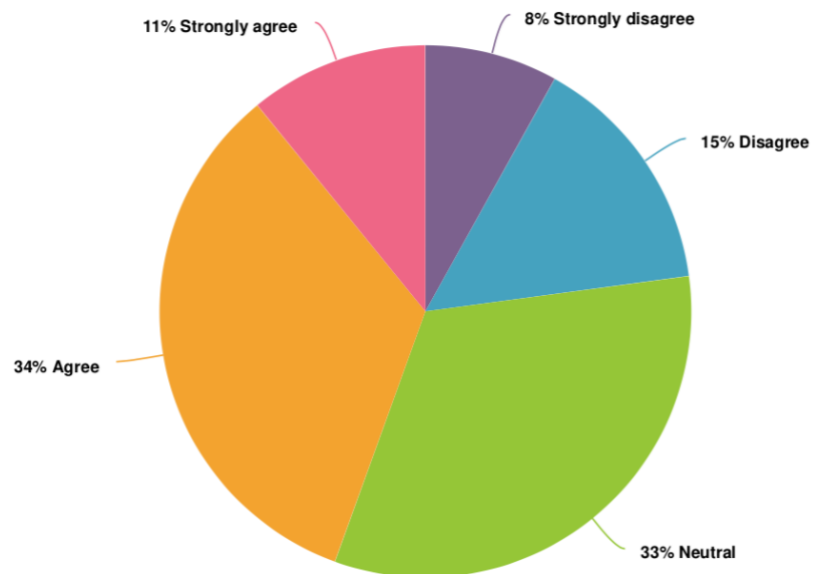

All SYP Learner Panel members agreed with the prompt statement. They reported finding school inspections to be "performative" or "a performance with certain people on display". When asked about this more in-depth, learners explained that oftentimes school inspections are not natural, but the best-looking and best-performing students were picked to represent the school and the teachers were on their best behaviour, so none of the real structural issues were ever noticed or addressed.

> "They tend to pick like…you know like a very specific student. Like one who looks nice and is usually getting really good grades. And I guess I get that, but then you leave all the other students, especially like students who might have a really hard time in school, them. Like they get left out and then maybe the teachers who aren't teaching the best or students who are struggling they are pushed to the back and they don't have their voices heard and then it just feels like why are we having inspections anyway? I think if students had an opportunity to be involved in the inspections it would look a lot different and a lot of people who don't get put in front would be able to, you know, talk about the issues they are having and maybe get them fixed. I don't know, I think we should be involved, you know?"

My views about my education are taken seriously

Strongly disagree 8.1%
Disagree 14.8%
Neutral 32.7%
Agree 33.6%
Strongly agree 10.9%
Totals: 3,846

Fewer than half of young people aged 12 to 18 reported agreement with the statement that their views about their education are taken seriously. Again, 1 in 3 are neutral on the proposal.

11% Strongly agree
8% Strongly disagree
15% Disagree
34% Agree
33% Neutral

For one contributor the difference comes in terms of attendance at college rather than school: "At college, but not at school"

The SYP Learner Panel members all agreed with this statement, with the caveat that this is only true when they are given the space to have their views heard. They reported a lot of other factors apply, close relationships with teachers are beneficial, the smaller the school the better the opportunities, and schools must commit resources to support learner participation and voice.

All Learner Panel members agreed that when given opportunities to voice their concerns or issues, being listened to led to action to make things better. They highlighted that if children and young people are listened to from the start, problematic issues can be resolved.
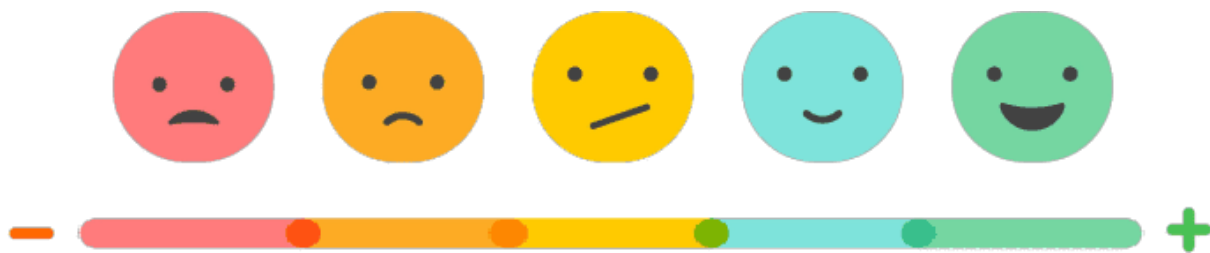
Findings:

Use of technology

Professor Muir's consultation asks for views on the statement: "Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments." There is also a request for comments on what could be done to deliver improvements. Children and young people offered their views on the basis of this statement:

My school/college is good at using technology to support my learning and assessments.

My school/college is good at using technology to support my learning and assessments

The views of primary school age children
Children have reported that technology plays an important part in their learning, this is viewed as a good thing, often a highlight, and a particular support for some learners. Primary school age children have not commented specifically on its role in assessment.

"That's the only fun thing about school and class – using technology."

"My school is extremely good at using technology in our learning. We have Seesaw to record our learning and share with parents and in our class we also use Google Classroom, Teams, Glow, Blogs, Sumdog, Active learn, Readworks, Microsoft and Google tools every day."

"It is fun."

"It's cool."

"Technology increases your knowledge about the world. I have been making a ppt about traditional clothes from around the world. My school let me present this to the class, so I was proud of my technology skills."

"My iPad helps me capture memorable moments at school."

"Yes, because we have laptops we use all the time. and for writing and for literacy. We do Sumdog and Reading Wise and Education City and Cool Maths Games. Our iPads help with the clay model inspiration. Garage Band helps you create music. My iPad and computer help me."

"It makes some people calmer."

"We have the school computers and they can help us make PowerPoints and put files together and do research."

"We do spelling on our Chromebook sometimes and it's way better than writing it."

"It can help with maths, it can help with Literacy, it can help with most things that we learn."

"Enjoy coding and using Giglets to do reading comprehension."

"Easier to edit which makes me more motivated."

Children would like to see an extension of the utilisation of technology for learning.

"My talent is coding and I don't get to do that."

"I think we could use it a wee bit more."

"Sometimes they sit and don't get used."

"We use them for image search and research, but we could use them for other things too."

Children have identified problems associated with use and access including issues with connectivity and a need to update what is available to them.

"It kind of depends on how the technology is acting. Sometimes it freezes and crashes and sometimes it's fine. It really depends on the technology, not the people using it."

"Agree. But some of our school equipment is not very reliable and breaks down."

"My Chromebook keeps saying 'please reconnect' because I've got one of the old laptops."

"Sometimes it doesn't let me in the password."

"We use Google Classroom, Sumdog, laptops and computers. The Wi-Fi doesn't always work which stops us learning."

"We all have our own Chrome Book. We use them in lessons. Sometimes the internet is slow, and it doesn't work."

Technology is also seen as supporting a connection between learning at school and at home.

"It's easy to access it at home if you don't finish your work."

The views of secondary school age children and young people

Strongly disagree 3.8%
Disagree 8.9%
Neutral 23.8%
Agree 47.2%
Strongly agree 16.3%
Totals: 3,849

A majority of children and young people responding to the survey agreed to some extent that their school or college is good at using technology to support their learning and assessments. Nearly 1 in 4 remain neutral when asked. Reporting positively learners said:
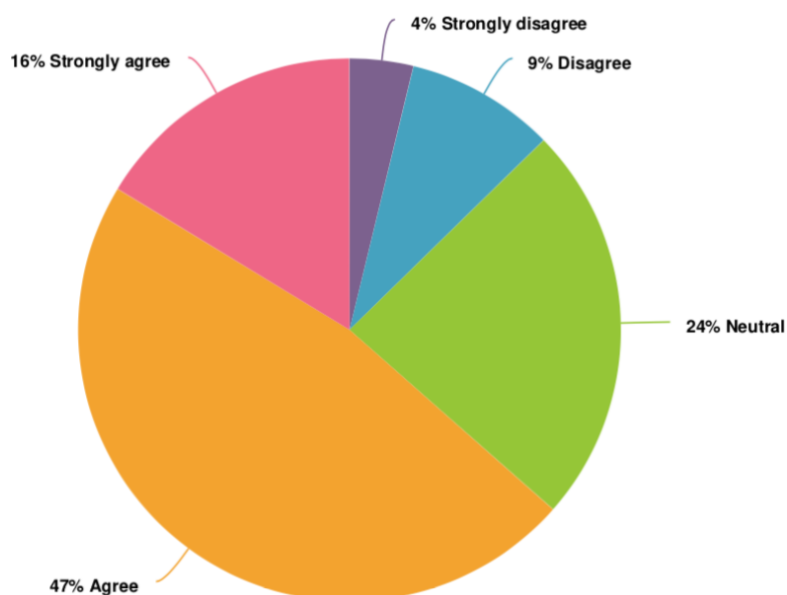
> "The school are good at using technology in order to support our learning as they have granted us with iPads in order to help our studies."

> "They use PowerPoints and material as well online on the iPads during classes, but perhaps the iPads could be used even more to engage pupils with the lessons."

All members of SYP's Learner Panel unanimously agreed with the statement. Many mentioned that their options for technology were quite limited pre-pandemic, but that it got significantly better during Covid and had improved a lot, with some learners mentioning their school prepped for online lessons and provided Chromebooks so that they would be fully prepared.

From other submissions via our online toolkit, children and young people of secondary school age expressed a preference for online learning. The use of online learning was, however, dependent on subjects and not necessarily consistent across settings, with learners in one setting reporting that Music and English departments made good use of technology during and post pandemic, while others like maths teachers were not using it effectively. This learner highlighted the dependence that young people have on the teacher's skills or intentions regarding utilising technologies.

> "School is great at using technology when it comes to work… but the issue comes down to teacher response on how they are going to use it as some don't use it at all."

There were mixed views on the use of technology to support learners with disabilities. One response identified that an electronic pen that connects to a hearing device is used well by a pupil who has hearing impairment. But one SYP Learner Panel member with disabilities reported that she struggled with online learning as she is visually impaired and reasonable adjustments were not always made with this in mind, making something that was not

stressful for others extremely stressful for her; this did get slightly better towards the end of her last year at school.

From one response we heard that pupils with Dyslexia highlighted laptops support them well although there is some frustration with PCs that take a long time to log in and slow down learning. From some reports there also seems to be an issue with learners accessing/using school Wi-Fi.

> "Yes, this is good in our school. Good at offering laptops. ASN support is good. Effective use of Teams and Satchel One. We'd like to use the school Wi-Fi. We use Satchel One across subjects."

> "We would like to be able to access the Wi-Fi."

As with the earlier reports from younger children there are some settings in which technology provided is not of an adequate standard, or not enough is provided.

> "Yes, but some of the laptops are slow and some keyboards are damaged."

> "Strongly disagree. There's no funding. Technology is only available in school for those with a specific learning support need."

There were no comments shared in terms of technology and assessment.
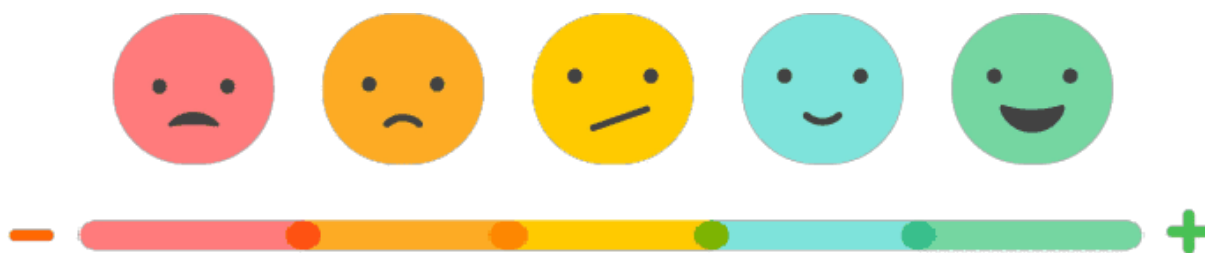
Findings:

Vocational/Professional and Academic subjects: balance and importance

Professor Muir's consultation asks for comments on whether the full breadth of SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools. Other work by the OECD highlights that the academic and vocational strands our curriculum offers could be better integrated with the assessment system to offer a broader range of curriculum options.

The focus given in this consultation with 12- to 18-year-olds was to explore the balance and importance given in terms of vocational/professional and academic subjects and qualifications. This was done via the two statements that follow, in this section we report on the statements together.

My school/college is good at offering us the chance to get vocational/professional qualifications.

In my school/college, vocational/professional subjects and academic subjects are equally important.

My school/college is good at offering us the chance to get vocational/professional qualifications

Strongly disagree 3.3%
Disagree 7.5%
Neutral 31.2%
Agree 44.2%
Strongly agree 13.9%
Totals: 3,846
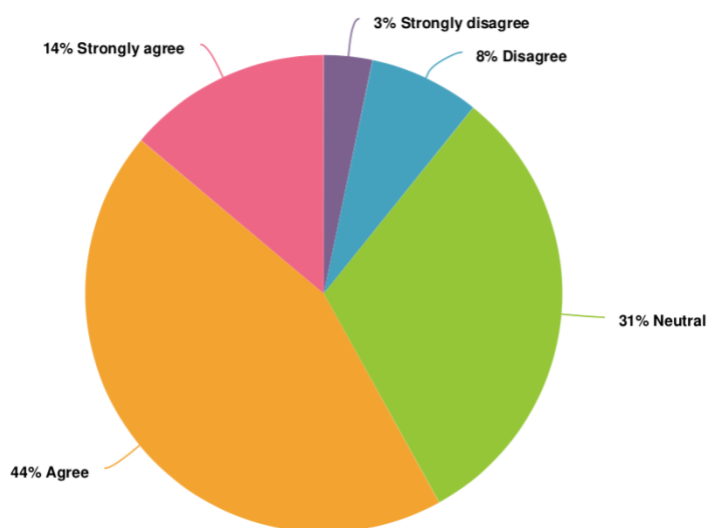
In my school/college, vocational/professional subjects and academic subjects are equally important

Strongly disagree 4.8%
Disagree 12.3%
Neutral 34.5%
Agree 38.3%
Strongly agree 10.0%
Totals: 3,839
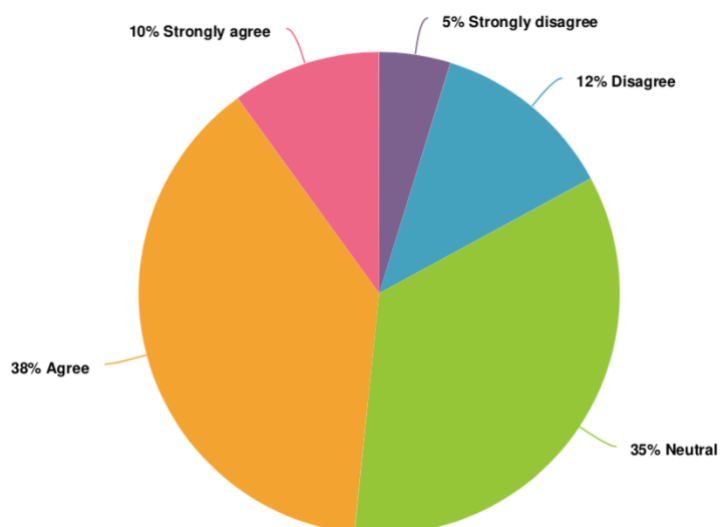
A majority of 12- to 18-year-olds responding to the survey agreed that their education offers a chance to get vocational/professional qualifications but fewer than half agreed that vocational/professional subjects and academic subjects are seen as equally important. Around 1 in 3 survey respondents reported a neutral stance on both prompt statements.

Adult facilitators provided these comments on behalf of groups that had been consulted, providing some criticism of both opportunities and the value given to vocational and professional subjects.

> "There are not enough job-related course options in the school. Pupils feel they don't always get the chance to learn skills that they would actually use in a place of work (e.g., doing journalism in English or accountancy in maths). Pupils feel more opportunities like this would be worthwhile."

> "For this S6 group, many vocational experiences now on offer were not available to them as younger pupils - e.g., DYW courses."

"The young people felt more academic subjects were pushed more, particularly STEM subjects."

"Young people agree school was very focussed on the main subjects like English, maths and science. Most students did say school offers some vocational courses."

"The young people did not agree with this statement. They felt academic subjects were viewed as more important. They felt STEM subjects were viewed as particularly important and there was a real push for this, particularly for girls."

And from young people directly, these comments.

"Many people have to get jobs themselves - not much support in applying for jobs. They are good at getting us qualifications though, due to a wide range of subjects."

"So, when it comes to opportunities for professional qualifications we are able to achieve them but vocational these are slim to none or maybe if they do offer it, there isn't a lot of awareness for it."

Learners who have reported attending smaller schools said they had fewer opportunities to undertake vocational/professional qualifications due to the potential small class size making delivery unfeasible.

"I go to a small school and while it is very supportive there are times when I have wanted to take something and it had been cancelled because so few students actually wanted to do it. I remember they almost didn't have drama once, and I was required to take it, because only a few students had signed up and we just didn't have enough students to do it."

From SYP's Learner Panel members there was the view that colleges offered better opportunities and were more open about these opportunities in general. In some young people's experience, it has been necessary to go to college for further vocational qualifications because their school did not offer them what they wanted.

For SYP's Learner Panel there was also a lack of balance in terms of the support or emphasis any careers support or guidance gave to vocational/professional learning. Finally, the impact of the pandemic on vocation learning has been felt.

"Coronavirus restrictions have meant no real work experience (just virtual). A lot of people do vocational qualifications at college. Some school courses are relevant to industry. The school gives us chances all the time for jobs. Helps us get there."
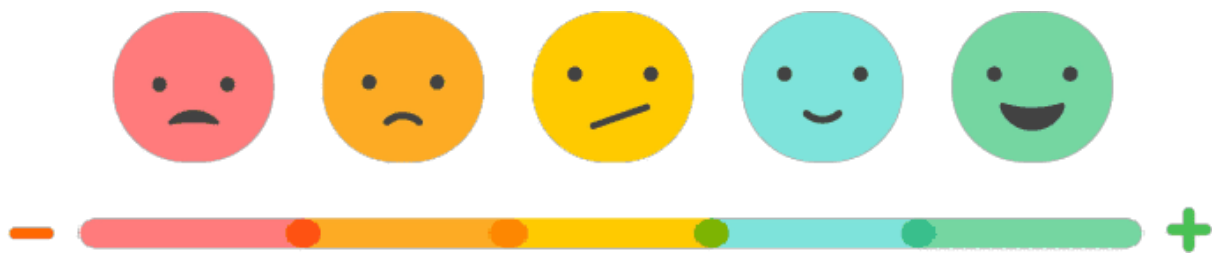
Findings:

Assessment

Professor Muir's consultation asks for comments on assessment. Other OECD work has identified that the role of teacher assessment could be reconsidered. Responses to Covid have brought attention to the choices made in terms of continuous assessment and end of year exams. This statement was put to children and young people of secondary school age for comment:

I would prefer more continuous assessment by my teachers with less focus on end of year exams.

I would prefer more continuous assessment by my teachers with less focus on end of year exams

Strongly disagree 5.5%
Disagree 10.1%
Neutral 30.0%
Agree 27.4%
Strongly agree 27.0%
Totals: 3,854
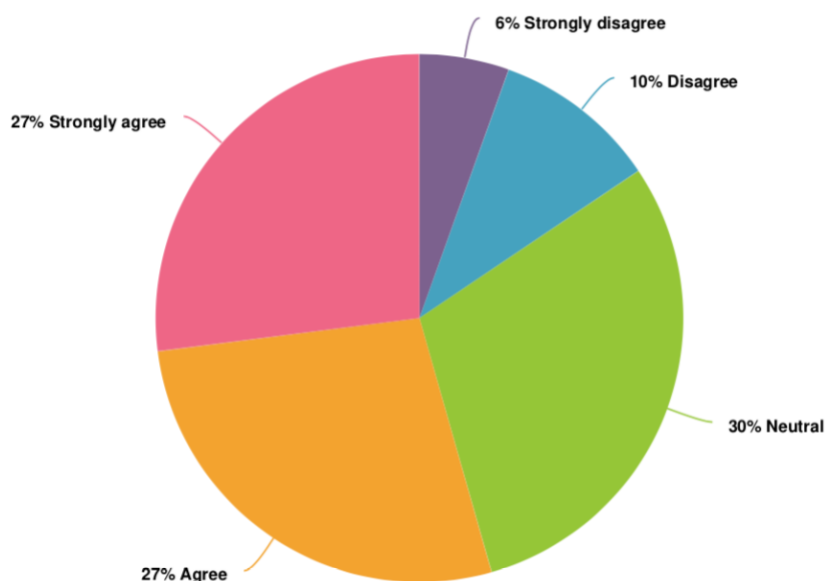
A majority of 12- to 18-year-olds responding to the survey agreed that they would prefer more continuous assessment by teachers with less focus on end of year exams. This statement received one of the highest responses in terms of learners stating *strongly agree*. 30% of young people remain neutral, while only 16% disagree to some extent.

6% Strongly disagree
10% Disagree
30% Neutral
27% Agree
27% Strongly agree

For those that agree with the statement, the focus was on an educational experience with less stress, and the belief that continuous assessment gives a fairer representation of learning. Exams are viewed as akin to testing memory rather than knowledge or understanding.

> "Yes, as it gives a fairer representation of your understanding of the subject."

> "It puts less stress and worry on the end of the year. It would put less pressure on all pupils throughout the year. Less stressful. More accurate. Less risk of failing over a mistake. It will be more efficient if we do less focus on end of year exams and it will help us with stress levels."

> "I'd rather this because exam stress can be very bad for mental health. Another point is sometimes you could be doing well all year and getting good scores on assessments throughout the year but could have an off day on the day of the exam, which determines your final grade and qualification, which isn't fair."

> "We think assessments should be evenly spread out like once a month, so we don't get overwhelmed and stressed out."

> "Too much pressure in one exam, one final exam. We might panic. An exam will get stressful."

> "I believe ongoing tests would be better for students due to them possibly forgetting information over time."

"I would prefer more continuous assessment form my teachers because I get more opportunities to improve and see how good I am. Let's say I have a bad day and I don't do well with the continuous tests, I will get a chance to improve and do better."

Adult facilitators also reported on group discussions as follows, again most comments were in support of the call for more weight to be given to continuous assessment by teachers.

"The young people said ideally an individualised approach would be in place to meet the needs of each learner. They felt one system would never be able to meet the needs of all learners. There was some preference towards continuous assessment rather than exams. The young people said a focus on course work rather than multiple assessments throughout the year would be preferable."

"Most pupils in favour of continuous assessment. Feel that this consolidates learning and gives opportunities to improve throughout the year."

"Agreement. Less pressure overall. Leads to deeper learning by continually assessing. Feel you can get a better grade overall."

"More focus on internal assessments reflects your performance all year. Too stressful to focus on one big exam."

Some learners did also identify that continuous assessment in itself, if overloaded, can also be stressful. The first quotes directly from young people, the final from adult facilitator notes:

"Too many assessments causes a lot of stress."

"There's lots of pressure to do well throughout the year if there is continuous assessment."

"Variety of opinions but most preferring continuous assessment: Continuous assessment removes stress. Too much pressure on one day [with only a final exam]. Continuous assessment creates more work/revision so more stressed all year. Exams rely too much on memory."

Some groups suggested a mixed approach.

"We would prefer both because we probably need the little tests throughout the year to make sure we remember everything."

"Split view, some feel continuous assessment throughout the year is better avoiding the high-pressure exam and others feel the exam forces you to work harder and be more independent for your learning. One idea was to run both. A pupil would do continuous assessment through the year and be told their provisional grade before

the exam (e.g. 65%) then be given the choice to take a final exam to improve on that mark or if you performed worse, you'd be given the provisional."

Members of SYPs Learner Panel supported a mixed approach, with options for other skill-based assessments included for those who may not find continuous assessment or exams necessary for their subject. All learners agreed that incorporating different methods and ending the high-stakes environment of exams would improve their educational experience and would make sure everyone is performing in the ways that suit them, not a standardised version that works for some, but not for all.

In one group response there was a strong feeling that their views on this statement would have no impact. They responded: "They will still do exams so what is the point?" Another learner frames their view of assessments in the context of the wider issue of learner empowerment and participation.

> "We don't have a say in what we learn about (course specifications) and don't have much of a say in the exam and or continuous assessment debate which affects us most. We don't get to choose the topics we learn about."

Findings:

Quality of educational experiences

As stated earlier, Professor Muir has sought to ascertain whether learners have *the best possible educational experience*. To conclude our reporting on children and young people's views of their educational experience, and to discover what a good quality education is perceived to be, primary school age children were asked to comment on two statements:

I enjoy learning.
I enjoy school.

Secondary school age children and young people were asked to comment on one:

I am having the best possible educational experience.

I enjoy learning

From feedback gathered via the range of conversations held across schools and reported via our consultation packs it is clear that most children of primary school age agree that they enjoy learning. There are also children who highlighted areas for improvement.

Children like learning when it is active, creative and participatory. This can be facilitated across curricular areas. When schools facilitate learning that might not be possible outside school this is also highlighted by children as a positive aspect of their learning.

> "I like doing experiments. PE and Science are both fun and they are in our learning zones. I like art because you get to draw and paint. We don't all get to paint at home."

> "I strongly agree because it helps me understand not only the country I live in but the world I live in."

> "I strongly agree because we get to learn about a lot of things and if we don't learn things we won't get into high school or college and get a good education."

> "I enjoy learning about the world around me."

> "I enjoy learning art as it helps me grow a more a creative mindset."

> "We agree because teachers are trying to make learning more fun. We like learning in different ways. We like being active through games. We like using imagination."

For children a positive learning experience is captured in the word 'fun'. Some children have reported that learning is fun, for others this needs to be more of a focus for their learning experience. Children also highlight practices that are the antithesis of fun and creativity.

> "We do fun things when we can."

> "When we have fun in learning it makes learning more enjoyable and we learn more."

> "We are always learning new things. Learning is fun in our school. Every day is a school day - we learn something new every day!"

> "It should be more fun as you remember more when it's fun."

> "I don't enjoy the way I am taught maths. It should be taught in a fun way that is easier to understand."

> "You know times tables? We're doing add and then just times and nobody understands it. It's really hard. Maybe if they explained it more simply. If somebody

hides it in something we like instead of just plain learning that would be better; like we're playing a game and you have to keep the score."

"It's not a waste of time but… They do help you learn but they don't help you understand it. They just give you a worksheet."

There are some things learners want more of.

"I think we need more P.E. and brain breaks."

For some primary school children, the purpose of learning is already being connected to going to college or university and particularly employment/finding a job.

"Yes, because it will help me study for high school and college and university."

"Yes, because if I don't, I won't be able to get a job."

"When I'm older I'll be able to get a job. I want to learn more hard things. I don't like literacy."

"It helps you with maths because you might get a job that needs maths."

"Say you wanted to work in a hospital, you need to know maths and that."

Children also highlighted the need for more personal support for learning, and in particular a more relaxed pace to learning throughout the day.

"If you're struggling with something like maths, I'd like more time to finish off instead of moving on to the next thing."

"Yeah, the one thing I don't like if I'm doing maths is having pressure put on me."

"Teachers should help us more with our individual needs and learning."

"Sometimes I don't understand things. It hurts my brain too much."

"Sometimes they explain it to me and I have no idea what it meant."

Children highlighted the importance of relationships between teacher and child. For some children positive relationships are in place. For others they are not.

"I really like my teachers. My teacher likes to challenge me. My teacher tells funny jokes."

"My teacher never asks if I enjoy learning."

"If you don't understand, sometimes you get told off."

"Sometimes you get told… If you make a bad choice in the playground the teacher talks to you and you get sent outside for like two hours. That's what happened to me once."

Children also report that sometimes they find learning hard.

"School is tricky and challenging. Maths is hard."

"Sometimes the work is too tricky - sometimes we just don't feel like learning - maths is too hard."

"Sometimes we do things I don't like, like art."

There are also children for whom the return to school, post Covid lockdowns, has been difficult. They may have lost an enthusiasm for learning. Some have preferred home learning.

"I like learning at home because I don't like being out of my house."

"I just don't like it. I want to be learning at home not at school."

"I don't know why I just don't like it. I miss my bed."

I enjoy school

Again, from feedback gathered via the range of conversations and reported via our consultation packs it is clear that most children of primary school age agree that they enjoy school. There are also children who highlight areas for further consideration.

Children have reported on relationships with teachers and peers, these are at the heart of a positive school experience.

"The best type of teacher for enjoying school is kind, fun, good sense of humour, respectful, polite, safe, caring, helpful with your learning."

"It's fun. There's art. You get to see your friends here."

"I like seeing my friends and playing. I have good friends. I would be lonely without school."

"School is entertaining and teachers try their best. It was boring working from home."

"Our school is fun. There are lots of different activities going on - active, outdoor, P.E. Our school is our safe place and everyone is treated equally."

"I just love school. Everything except handwriting."

But experiences do differ.

"I think our teachers really care about us, but they don't always get it right."

"People can be mean."

"Sometimes the work can be enjoyable but there are a few people, I'm not going to say who, who bother me a bit and make me feel anxious."

"Sometimes there are lots of arguments that happen in school."

"Sometimes people can be bad, and it ruins everyone else's fun."

"You get bad days and good days at school. Sometimes it can be really boring but sometimes it can be great."

"I know it's important, but I don't find it fun."

"I was in the middle because sometimes school can be a bit frustrating and sometimes it can be good for you and easy."

"I neither agree or disagree because I don't mind in school in general but getting up for it at an early time is quite draining. I stay up quite late – not on purpose – and have to get up early. On the whole, school's alright. Loads of stuff is quite boring but it does help."

"Sometimes I'm bored, sometimes I'm excited to go."

"I like P.E. I don't like arguments. When you tell a teacher they don't really do anything about it."

Children would like to have choice and fun in terms of their educational experience; this is room for improvement for some children.

"We should get to help design the lessons."

"We don't always get to do everything we want for example some activities we enjoy."

"A few bits are fun but most of it absolutely not."

"We just sit in chairs all day in the classroom, it is boring."

Children have also identified how to improve enjoyment of school, including more outdoor learning

"School should be outside all day and there should be more fun in lessons."

"I like going to the forest and I like playing football in the playground."

I am having the best possible educational experience

Strongly disagree 12.9%
Disagree 22.8%
Neutral 31.6%
Agree 24.9%
Strongly agree 7.9%
Totals: 3,854

With 36% of 12- to 18-year-olds disagreeing with this statement this is the statement most likely to see a negative response from survey respondents. Nearly 1 in 3 young indicate they are neutral on the statement, only 1 in 3 agree.

8% Strongly agree
13% Strongly disagree
23% Disagree
32% Neutral
25% Agree
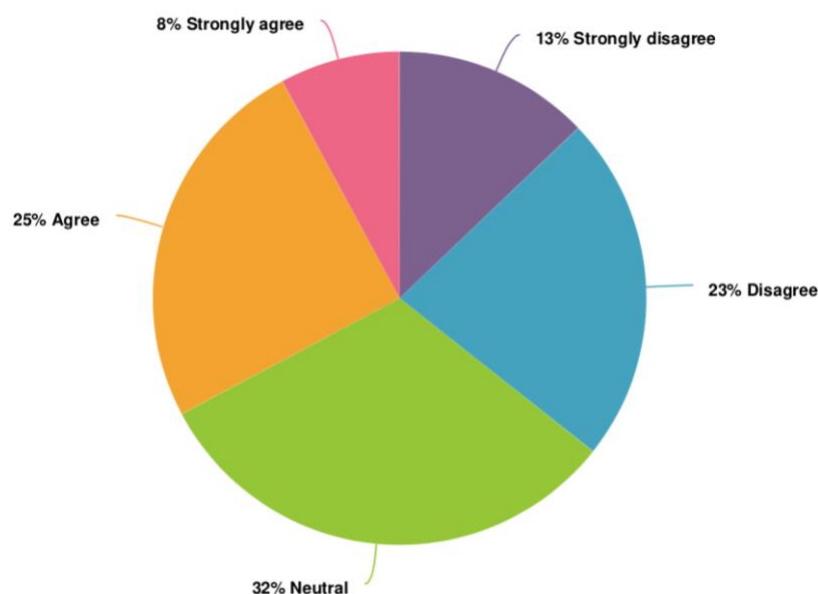
All members of SYPs Learner Panel who took part in discussions said that they were neutral on this statement. While young people felt that aspects of their time in school were positive, the formal aspects of curriculum delivery were not necessarily so. Unanimously, the Learner Panel members agreed that individual experiences, skills development, and an experience that is well-rounded and not just focused on grades would ultimately be better.

One Learner Panel member commented on their experience being a disabled student.

> I had to fight really hard to get basic accommodations made so that I could take exams. Teachers weren't prepared for me and online learning was really hard. We had to really push to get adjustments made and it still ended up being a very upsetting experience.

A lack of support for mental health concerned this respondent.

> I feel like I need more support. I don't think there is enough mental support for those who worry too much.

And for this respondent, care-experienced, a clear sense and experience of a lack of care and support.

> I felt that she never believed that I can achieve, and I can do well, and I also felt disappointed that a Corporate Parent doesn't care about my academic ability.

For this learner there was a problem with being overwhelmed by the number of subjects taken and the education system's overt focus on exams and attainment.

You take so many subjects and it becomes more how well you can take the exams in the subject than if you are really learning the subject. I know I have taken some exams and then forgotten them the next day, is that really helpful? It would be great if you could see subjects through, based on developing your skills in that area. I know some people who have been told they couldn't take a subject because it wasn't relevant, but they really wanted to do it and would have been good at it. It needs to change.

For these young people it was the move to college that brought a sense of an educational experience that is as good as it should be; the first contribution from a care-experienced learner:

When tutors reassured me and convinced me to come back to college, I felt that people believed that I can achieve…that they wanted me to be successful and not to give in to the people who told me I can't. The thing that drives me to study is to achieve more and prove to the people that told me I can't that I can.

At college I agree, as I didn't have a good experience at school. It's very different now and enjoy the interaction in class. It's a more mature environment so I feel more comfortable.

For young people who are members of the SYP Learner Panel there are concerns around the usefulness of what they are learning, They noted that assessment can ruin the enjoyment of learning. They noted that the quality of the school environment is key to school enjoyment and their educational experience.

SYP Learner Panel members also acknowledged the impact of Covid on views about this statement; home schooling or a blended approach has had some negative impact one way or another and it will continue to impact them until they leave school. One learner mentioned that because of Covid they ended up having to "work a lot harder" which made them feel more "stressed" and having a harder time keeping up with everything.

Three
Key
Challenges

Three Key Challenges

Children's Parliament, SYP and Together urge all those with an interest in the education system to read and reflect on children and young people's views in this report, they give insight into the lived experience of our education system. **We wish to highlight these overarching challenges to any notion of education reform**.

1. **Education, reform and the rights of the child**

For the partners facilitating this consultation it is increasingly evident that children and young people are not practiced in discussing their educational experience in terms of their rights to an education as described in Article 29. This may explain to some extent why their responses to statements 1 to 7 which focus on Vision: Building an education system that is directed to the purposes described in Article 29 of the UNCRC lean in such numbers towards a stance that is neutral.

When we design, resource and deliver an educational experience for every child that is grounded in Article 29 of the UNCRC then we fulfil our responsibilities as duty bearers and children and young people experience their rights as rights holders. While General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education (article 29) (2001) emphasises that rights-based education happens in the home, in school, or within the community in the context of this report, as partners in this consultation process, we must insist that all adults with an interest in education, and with any degree of responsibility for education reform, take the time to read, understand and act on both Article 29 and the associated General Comment. For ease of access these are presented in the Appendix to this report.

Further, when we discuss and plan for education reform it would be more appropriate and impactful to talk about the education system rather than Curriculum for Excellence. At every stage of the design and delivery of the education system, children and young people's views must be sought (as per UNCRC Article 12) and they must be involved in the development and evaluation of these processes. It is Government and public authorities charged with the design and delivery of the education system, and so the educational experience of learners, that must be cognisant of and act in accordance with the UNCRC/Article 29. Curriculum for Excellence is not something that learners can hold to account, but Government Ministers and the leaders of any new or reformed agencies, are.

2. **Why so many neutral stances? Are learners *inspired* by their educational experience?**

While one explanation for the levels of children and young people taking a neutral stance in relation to prompt statements may be a lack of experience of discussing their educational experiences in the terms presented, it may also be that learners are just not enthused by their experience of our education system; *only 1 in 3 secondary school learners agree that they are having the best possible education experience, only half agree that their education meets their needs*. Across many of the adult/professional discussions and debates about our education system a commonly heard claim, including from the OECD, is that Curriculum for Excellence *offers an inspiring and widely supported philosophy of education.* Reflecting on their experience of our education system, do the views of children and young people in this report support such a claim?

3. **Education reform, the impact of Covid and the meaning of recovery**

It is self-evident that current discussion about education reform is happening in the context of Covid 19. Children's Parliament and SYP have been reporting on children and young people's experiences since March 2020 and we continue to report on the negative impacts on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing7.

In response to the pandemic there is much talk of recovery. This could be defined as a return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength. The problem with this definition is the word normal. Pre-pandemic normal was not good enough. Perhaps we need to look to a more nuanced or social understanding or definition of recovery, particularly relevant when we acknowledge the levels of anxiety and other manifestations of poor mental health across our population. Through this lens, recovery means something along the lines of a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. ...Recovery is person-driven and supported through relationships and social networks8. This feels like a child-centred and rights-based understanding of recovery and wholly applicable to an educational experience which acknowledges that teaching and learning are relational. Rather than a misguided, systems-focused politically-driven debate about attainment, can we focus on the learner through the lens of recovery? Finally on this point, if adults do not yet understand how children and young people have been affected by the pandemic, and how they feel coming out of it, this comment was received in this consultation from a primary school age child:
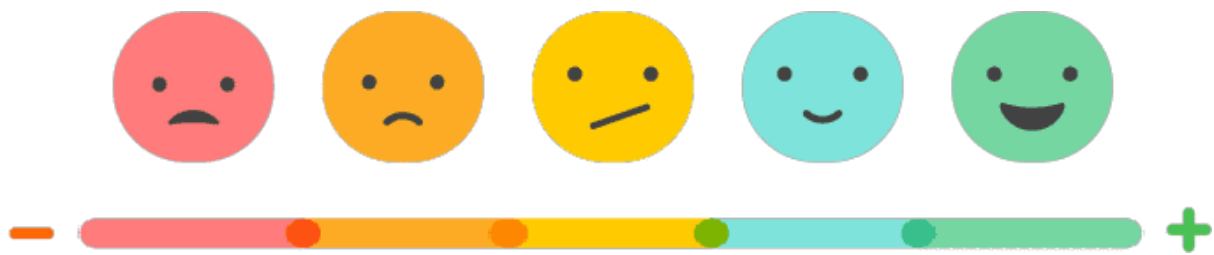
> There is a mental war going on now. Adults don't hear about children's mental health.

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[7] Childrens Parliament; children and coronavirus
https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/
SYP https://syp.org.uk/our-work/political-work/covid-19-lockdown-lowdown/
[8] What is recovery? https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/care/cmhc/recovery/

Summary of earlier work by partners:

Informing education reform

This is a summary from project partners on what we already know from work we do with children, young people and representative organisations about their view on issues of relevance to this Education Reform consultation.

1. Children's Parliament

Our work on school, education and learning is a major focus and we have built a body of work that has placed an emphasis on the child's lived experience. In this short summary we highlight key issues of relevance to the Education Reform process.

A school that is excellent and equal: In 2008 a team of children undertook an investigation as part of the Scottish Government's UNCRC reporting. The children wrote a description of what school would be like if it reflected the rights of the child. There were 6 themes, and within each theme several characteristics were identified. This remains, as far as we are aware, the only child-led and authored tool of its kind in Scotland and it describes what every school should be like. Whenever we return to children's experiences and aspirations for school we come back to these same themes and messages. They are simple and straightforward and make complex notions of excellence and equity feel real (for detail see *School Should be a Joyful Place*) The themes are:

- **A school where everyone is safe, cared for and included.**
- **A school where everyone if free to learn.**
- **A school where everyone is happy and healthy.**
- **A school where everyone has their say.**
- **A school where everyone is important and special.**
- **The school environment is one that everyone wants, inside and out.**

Poverty is the greatest children's human rights infringement. All partners involved in the education system must address their role in ending poverty. While important work has been done on the Cost of the School Day[9] children still report the impact of poverty on things like accessing trips and activities, school uniform, stationery and books, being left out because the child can't afford to do things with friends, being hungry and worrying about families having enough. In Children's Parliament work during the pandemic our How are you Doing? survey reported that 1 in 3 children said that their parents or carers worry about having enough money for their family. As one MCP has said: "I think that children should be treated fairly and should always have what they need for a normal kid's life".

Attainment is a human rights issue. Scottish Government have identified the attainment gap experienced by children from our most disadvantaged communities, so recognising that there are specific and complex barriers to learning and achievement for some children. We need to understand and overcome these barriers before we can ensure their experience of school and of learning meets the minimum standards set with incorporation. Alongside poverty, Children's Parliament has brought a focus on the experience of being a learner, on the relationships that nurture and enable positive learner self-perception, because as Educational Psychologist Bob Burden recognised: 'Ability alone is not enough: how we think about ourselves matters too.'

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[9] Child Poverty Action Group https://cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day

Learner participation: The education system is committed to extending learner participation within what is called an empowered system, yet a minority of children, as expressed to Children's Parliament in the 2020 *How are you Doing?* surveys, agree that they have a choice in what they learn.

Play, sport, learning outdoors and Learning for Sustainability: Children want adults to play with them more. Children tell us they want more PE and opportunities to play in the school day. Children like additional after school, lunchtime and weekend sports at school, as well as community-based opportunities. Children say that facilities in primary school need to be better. One of the positive outcomes of Covid mitigation has been increased opportunities for learning outdoors, with a refreshed focus on teaching and learning about climate and the environment, now would be a time to refresh national commitments to learning for sustainability.

Shouting: If there is one issue that comes up repeatedly when children talk about school it is shouting. It exemplifies much of what is problematic about the ethos and experience of school. A common adult response when we raise the issue is that *it doesn't happen here*. We would suggest that adults need to reflect on this, perhaps take some time to observe and listen. Or ask children. One of our Corona Times Journalists reported in 2020: "*You need to be more aware of when you are shouting. Children can do just fine without you being annoyed at them. So, one thing I would change is teachers making sure to put effort in being kind to the kids and not being rude for no reason*".

The empathic teacher is the key. Rights are made real when the child's lived experience is valued, understood and when adults fulfil their responsibilities as duty bearers to deliver the care, love and professional interventions that the child requires. A child's right to an education that is concerned with realising their fullest potential means getting alongside the child, valuing their lived experience, giving them love and care, and using our best professional knowledge and skills to make a positive difference. Teachers need to be reflective practitioners, developing the skills and confidence to be both supported and challenged by children. If Scotland is to be the best place to go to school, it needs to be the best place to be a teacher.

To conclude: Teaching and learning are relational activities. Rights-based relationships are based in kindness, empathy, trust and the core idea of human dignity. Further, learning is a joyful, natural, challenging and complex activity. Understanding this means that it is beholden upon us as adults, as educators, to fulfil our duty to engage the learner with dignity and respect.

For more:

- **Link to [Children and Coronavirus/How are you Doing?/Corona Times Journal](#)**
- **Link to [Doing Our Best: a focus on learner self-perception and classroom relationships](#)**

- Link to **Children's Parliament Investigates our Health and Wellbeing Curriculum as part of the PSE Review**
- Link to **Attainment is a human rights issue**
- Link to **The Weight on Our Shoulders: Child Poverty Bill and Delivery Plan**

2. Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

Overview

Content in this summary has been compiled over the last and current academic year from MSYPs and other learners through consultation, panels, focus groups, and wider discussions. All of these issues have been discussed at-length since the pandemic began as existing inequalities were made more transparent.

The golden thread that connects all of these issues below are for learners to be at the very centre of education, not just in discussion but in practice. The young people SYP works with feel strongly that the current framework that exists is that things are done *to* the learners who are expected to adapt, instead of the system adapting and doing things *with* the learners.

Young people believe that one of the main underpinnings of their educational experience should be rights and participation. If learners do not have the right to influence their education and participate in the creation of making a system that works to their abilities, they are not being meaningfully consulted, nor is there right to education in Article 29 of the UNCRC being honoured.

On Exams/Assessments

This is an issue that has been ongoing for some time and the response from young people on this includes a lot of solutions, but the main message is clear: examinations are too high-stake and do not represent a learner's growth, skill, and knowledge of a topic. Recently in our #HaveYourSay on the Future of Assessments survey, we had over 400 respondents, with 75% of those being of learner age (12-17 years old). More than half said they would prefer a blend of both exams and continuous assessment, and over 70% of respondents said they would prefer continuous assessment overall as it would make them feel less stressed and would give them more accurate grades. This coincides with what young people have been saying for a while now, especially that individual needs should be taken into consideration, which would make continuous assessment the more ideal option.

What learners believe does not work:

Communication

Communication is something that has been highlighted frequently. Since the pandemic started and the changes to grades and assessments have been made, different students have noticed either a lack in communication or confusion around appropriate communication differing just between subjects in the same schools. Young people have said that communication between the SQA and schools (which was offered as the main form of communication during the recent changes) has been minimal at best, with some MSYPs advising they had more information from the SYP Learner Panel than even some of their teachers. Again, this goes back to including learners not just in the development of their education system but including them in everything else as well. If learners are centred as a main driver, making sure they are always aware of changes and new systems, this will lessen confusion and allow them to engage in discussion around the changes or be informed at the very least.

Measurement of knowledge

This was an interesting subject that learners have voiced many opinions on, most recently in the SYP Learner Panel in September. A lot of learners felt within their curriculum that they were consistently having to adapt to an exam or even a form of continuous assessment, leaving no room for those who do not perform well in either. Suggestions around looking at assigning folios and other means of skill attainment that suited the learner were made, with an emphasis on making sure a learner's skill was what was at the heart of their education, what they managed to get out of it, not what the school or qualifications authorities were looking to get out of the students. Measurements of knowledge should take a learner-centred approach and a consensus from the young people was that curriculum and the school experience should be shaped around making sure young people are getting the most out of their education to prepare them as best as possible for any path once leaving school, not just a trade or university, but civic responsibilities as well. When also taking into account those who may have learning disabilities, those who are neurodiverse, and those with ASN, this approach can only have benefits instead of trying to make young people fit within one small box in order to get the grades they need.

Curriculum

On this, young people have contributed many times over on having a say in their curriculum. The responses from young people around this are vast and the tone of most of their suggestions is around inclusivity, honesty, and well-rounded knowledge. Suggestions ranged from curriculum subjects should always be underpinned by equality and inclusivity; PSE in schools needs to be more robust and updated to protect young people; teaching more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) history within schools and making curriculums more transparent of their origins; dismantling ableism; teaching kindness, patience, and respect (emotional literacy) within the curriculum; and focusing on skills rather than across-the-board attainment. Young people want an opportunity to have a hand in how their curriculum is shaped so that it works for them and not the other way around.

What could be done better and/or differently?

As mentioned above, communication could be better. The last two years have highlighted what has already been an issue in pre-pandemic years. Learners should not be seen as just students who attend school to do coursework and obtain grades. Their education should be well-rounded, inclusive and made so that the main goal is what learners can take away from it. Bettering communication between young people in school and the schools themselves is crucial, as that is where a lot of where learners get their information from. Additionally, bettering communication between the government and schools is just as crucial so that schools feel prepared and able to not only communicate with learners but feedback concerns of learners back to the government.

Making rights and participation, more specifically UNCRC, a main educational goal overall. Learners have a right to be included in the development and reform of their education and curriculum, as they are the only ones who are truly affected by it. However, equally centring them in the spaces where they are not being included is just as important. In every aspect, whether young people are present or not, those that sit to reform or change the education system and its curriculum should at all times been underlined by a rights-based approach. By doing this it will almost become automatic in engaging and including learners in the development process and adapting the system to meet their needs.

Legitimate meaningful engagement with young learners across Scotland, especially with seldom-heard groups. It is important that there is consistent consultation as much as possible with young learners and learners from seldom-heard groups on the functionality, development, and reform of education and curriculum. As one of our MSYPs mentioned, himself and other chosen young people who are invited to provide their prospective or give advice are not monoliths of youth perspectives, especially seldom-heard perspectives. Engaging as often and as much as possible with different diverse communities and young people will help guide decision-makers in making decisions that continuously involve young people and allow learners to have a real impact on their education and curriculum.

Looking at education, the framework, and the curriculum through the lens of young people is also essential. As mentioned earlier, by taking a rights-based approach it almost becomes automatic, but it doesn't stop there. Making sure that the young learners coming out of school with experiences that don't just serve them good grades but add up to encourage them to grow into well-rounded people is as important as any exam or assessment and taking into account in what ways learners perform best so they get the most out of their education is essential.

Making health and wellbeing a priority as much as academic achievement. Mental health and wellbeing are not seen as equal to academic achievement, and this is something young people have been saying for quite a while, especially during the pandemic. There is often not enough support within their schools as schools were not prepared for the number of students seeking mental health support. With a backlog of CAMHS referrals, a lot of students have been left trying to manage their stress, anxiety, and pre-existing mental illness or health issues on their own. Integrating mental health and wellbeing within the curriculum should be mandatory as the effect it would have would be massive. Also making sure that staff within the schools have basic understandings of how mental health and

wellbeing in young people manifest and how to help diffuse situations or offer support is as essential as them being able to teach their subjects. Mental health and wellbeing feed into performance and what young people can take away from their education. Both are interlinked and by weighing attainment the same as mental health and wellbeing, there will be a natural shift in the curriculum (like implementing emotional literacy and staff support training) that will inevitably centre and favour the young people overall.

3. Together **(Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)**

This summary draws on a range of work conducted by and supported by Together.

Children and Young People's Panel of Europe: What Happens After BREXIT survey answers
- **Children and young people think it's important to be able to study in EU countries and think Erasmus should continue.**
- **Children and young people would like info about studying in EU countries through social media.**

Link to **Conversation events with children and young people**

Black and Brown children and young people expressed that some of their basic rights such as the right to education hasn't always been respected while in the asylum system.
- **One young person was very positive about their experience in education and felt they had been treated equally to other young people:** *"My experience from places that I've been –whether it's the Red Cross that teach us or education establishment or college -the staff don't treat us any differently, it doesn't matter what the colour of skin is. My experience is that they treat us equally. I don't feel there's been any difference –whatever rights go to them go to us as well."*
- **Another participant spoke of delays in accessing education and appropriate housing:** *"Right of housing and right of educating –I was told I have these rights, but then I have also been told I need to wait. When I first came here –I had a lot of spare time and I would like to learn and study but then I was only given two hours a week which was not enough for me."*

Disabled children and young people spoke of difficulties in accessing their right to education.
- **This was because children felt teachers didn't understand their condition or the support they needed wasn't put in place:** *"when I was in primary my main teacher was constantly shouting, telling me off. I don't think she understood what autism was and how it affected me." "My teachers have said really nasty stuff to me, 'that's the worst thing I've seen in my teaching career', 'my 3-year-old daughter can draw much better than you.'" "In primary I needed a lot of support, but unfortunately it was not always there. The teachers didn't really understand my needs except for P7 teacher."*
- **Participants spoke of certain teachers and Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) who they trusted and valued highly. However, they said that additional support was not**

always available due to a shortage of funding. One participant gave an example of not being able to sit an exam due to additional support being unavailable: *"I needed a scribe and a reader, a writer and a reader, and the exam questions weren't really understandable. I knew I could do it, but it was frustrating I couldn't show it."*
"We had a lot of PSAs at school, and there was a really really good one who couldn't work anymore because there was no funding to pay her and that was very sad."

- **Participants also discussed how disabled children and young people might be subject to restraint and seclusion and shared the impact this could have on their right to education and to be treated fairly.**
- **Participants in the session on the rights of black and ethnic minority children and young people said more needed to be done to uphold their right to education. They said that they were not getting much ESOL2 provision –particularly in light of COVID-19 –and were finding online learning difficult albeit *"better than nothing."***
- **CYP think better teacher training on disabilities is needed, ASN budgets need to be protected from cuts and support for autistic people needs to be increased especially in mainstream schools.**
- **CYP think the new human rights law must include access to education.**

Link to Consulting with under 12's: UNCRC (Incorporation) Scotland Bill
- **CYP think the right to education has been lost to some children during quarantine.**

Link to Consulting with young people aged 12 to 18: UNCRC (Incorporation) Scotland Bill

- **CYP think rights education should be included properly in the curriculum in schools (not just one PSE lesson).**

Link to Civil society report to inform the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's List of Issues Prior to Reporting

Socioeconomic deprivation continues to have a significant impact on attainment. Alongside this, additional overlapping factors can also have an impact including care experience, ethnic background and wider additional support needs. Children have raised concerns funding to address the attainment gap does not always reach the young people who need it.

- **COVID-19 has highlighted a 'digital divide' between children with access to technology and those who do not. This has significantly impacted children's ability to engage in online learning, access services and socialise with friends during school closures.**
- **Approximately 30% of Scottish pupils have a recorded additional support need, yet there are insufficient resources and less in numbers of specialist staff available to support children. In addition, class sizes, noise levels, sensory stimulation and bullying are also huge challenges for children and young people with additional support needs.**
- **Numerous challenges prevent play-based and relationship-centred pedagogy from being fully embedded in early years education, and as such, there have been calls for its replacement by a kindergarten stage which is rights-based, relationship-centred and play-based.**
- **An example of one of these challenges preventing play-based learning include the inaccessibility and poor quality of green spaces within a ten-minute walk. To improve this, children want to be involved in decisions about their local community to ensure these spaces include features that stimulate play, physical activity and facilities to making them accessible for all.**
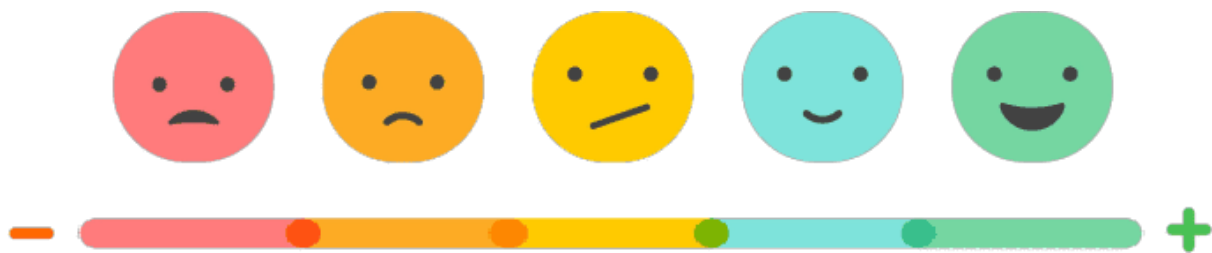
Appendix One

Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
    - **(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;**
    - **(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;**
    - **(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;**
    - **(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;**
    - **(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.**

General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education (article 29) (2001)

1. **The significance of article 29 (1) 1. Article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is of far-reaching importance. The aims of education that it sets out, which have been agreed to by all States parties, promote, support and protect the core value of the Convention: the human dignity innate in every child and his or her equal and inalienable rights. These aims, set out in the five subparagraphs of article 29 (1) are all linked directly to the realization of the child's human dignity and rights, taking into account the child's special developmental needs and diverse evolving capacities. The aims are: the holistic development of the full potential of the child (29 (1) (a)), including development of respect for human rights (29 (1) (b)), an enhanced sense of identity and affiliation (29 (1) (c)), and his or her socialization and interaction with others (29 (1) (d)) and with the environment (29 (1) (e)).**

2. **Article 29 (1) not only adds to the right to education recognized in article 28 a qualitative dimension which reflects the rights and inherent dignity of the child; it also insists upon the need for education to be child-centred, child-friendly and empowering, and it highlights the need for educational processes to be based upon the very principles it enunciates.1 The education to which every child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child's capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values. The goal is to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence. "Education" in this context goes far beyond formal schooling to embrace the broad range of life experiences and learning processes which enable children, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to live a full and satisfying life within society.**

3. **The child's right to education is not only a matter of access (art. 28) but also of content. An education with its contents firmly rooted in the values of article 29 (1)**

is for every child an indispensable tool for her or his efforts to achieve in the course of her or his life a balanced, human rights-friendly response to the challenges that accompany a period of fundamental change driven by globalization, new technologies and related phenomena. Such challenges include the tensions between, inter alia, the global and the local; the individual and the collective; tradition and modernity; long- and short-term considerations; competition and equality of opportunity; the expansion of knowledge and the capacity to assimilate it; and the spiritual and the material.2 And yet, in the national and international programmes and policies on education that really count the elements embodied in article 29 (1) seem all too often to be either largely missing or present only as a cosmetic afterthought.

4. Article 29 (1) states that the States parties agree that education should be directed to a wide range of values. This agreement overcomes the boundaries of religion, nation and culture built across many parts of the world. At first sight, some of the diverse values expressed in article 29 (1) might be thought to be in conflict with one another in certain situations. Thus, efforts to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all peoples, to which paragraph (1) (d) refers, might not always be automatically compatible with policies designed, in accordance with paragraph (1) (c), to develop respect for the child's own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own. But in fact, part of the importance of this provision lies precisely in its recognition of the need for a balanced approach to education and one which succeeds in reconciling diverse values through dialogue and respect for difference. Moreover, children are capable of playing a unique role in bridging many of the differences that have historically separated groups of people from one another.

The functions of article 29 (1)

5. Article 29 (1) is much more than an inventory or listing of different objectives which education should seek to achieve. Within the overall context of the Convention it serves to highlight, inter alia, the following dimensions.

6. First, it emphasizes the indispensable interconnected nature of the Convention's provisions. It draws upon, reinforces, integrates and complements a variety of other provisions and cannot be properly understood in isolation from them. In addition to the general principles of the Convention - non-discrimination (art. 2), the best interest of the child (art. 3), the right to life, survival and development (art. 6), and the right to express views and have them taken into account (art. 12) - many other provisions may be mentioned, such as but not limited to the rights and responsibilities of parents (arts. 5 and 18), freedom of expression (art. 13), freedom of thought (art. 14), the right to information (art. 17), the rights of children with disabilities (art. 23), the right to education for health (art. 24), the right to education (art. 28), and the linguistic and cultural rights of children belonging to minority groups (art. 30).

7. **Children's rights are not detached or isolated values devoid of context, but exist within a broader ethical framework which is partly described in article 29 (1) and in the preamble to the Convention. Many of the criticisms that have been made of the Convention are specifically answered by this provision. Thus, for example, this article underlines the importance of respect for parents, of the need to view rights within their broader ethical, moral, spiritual, cultural or social framework, and of the fact that most children's rights, far from being externally imposed, are embedded within the values of local communities.**

8. **Second, the article attaches importance to the process by which the right to education is to be promoted. Thus, efforts to promote the enjoyment of other rights must not be undermined, and should be reinforced, by the values imparted in the educational process. This includes not only the content of the curriculum but also the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment within which education takes place, whether it be the home, school, or elsewhere. Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. Thus, for example, education must be provided in a way that respects the inherent dignity of the child and enables the child to express his or her views freely in accordance with article 12 (1) and to participate in school life. Education must also be provided in a way that respects the strict limits on discipline reflected in article 28 (2) and promotes non-violence in school. The Committee has repeatedly made clear in its concluding observations that the use of corporal punishment does not respect the inherent dignity of the child nor the strict limits on school discipline. Compliance with the values recognized in article 29 (1) clearly requires that schools be child-friendly in the fullest sense of the term and that they be consistent in all respects with the dignity of the child. The participation of children in school life, the creation of school communities and student councils, peer education and peer counselling, and the involvement of children in school disciplinary proceedings should be promoted as part of the process of learning and experiencing the realization of rights.**

9. **Third, while article 28 focuses upon the obligations of State parties in relation to the establishment of educational systems and in ensuring access thereto, article 29 (1) underlines the individual and subjective right to a specific quality of education. Consistent with the Convention's emphasis on the importance of acting in the best interests of the child, this article emphasizes the message of child-centred education: that the key goal of education is the development of the individual child's personality, talents and abilities, in recognition of the fact that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs.3 Thus, the curriculum must be of direct relevance to the child's social, cultural, environmental and economic context and to his or her present and future needs and take full account of the child's evolving capacities; teaching methods should be tailored to the different needs of different children. Education must also be aimed at ensuring that essential life skills are learnt by every child and that no child leaves school without being equipped to face the challenges that he or she can expect to be confronted with in life. Basic skills include not only literacy and numeracy but also life skills such as the ability to make well-balanced decisions; to resolve conflicts in**

a non-violent manner; and to develop a healthy lifestyle, good social relationships and responsibility, critical thinking, creative talents, and other abilities which give children the tools needed to pursue their options in life.

10. Discrimination on the basis of any of the grounds listed in article 2 of the Convention, whether it is overt or hidden, offends the human dignity of the child and is capable of undermining or even destroying the capacity of the child to benefit from educational opportunities. While denying a child's access to educational opportunities is primarily a matter which relates to article 28 of the Convention, there are many ways in which failure to comply with the principles contained in article 29 (1) can have a similar effect. To take an extreme example, gender discrimination can be reinforced by practices such as a curriculum which is inconsistent with the principles of gender equality, by arrangements which limit the benefits girls can obtain from the educational opportunities offered, and by unsafe or unfriendly environments which discourage girls' participation. Discrimination against children with disabilities is also pervasive in many formal educational systems and in a great many informal educational settings, including in the home.4 Children with HIV/AIDS are also heavily discriminated against in both settings.5 All such discriminatory practices are in direct contradiction with the requirements in article 29 (1) (a) that education be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

11. The Committee also wishes to highlight the links between article 29 (1) and the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Racism and related phenomena thrive where there is ignorance, unfounded fears of racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic or other forms of difference, the exploitation of prejudices, or the teaching or dissemination of distorted values. A reliable and enduring antidote to all of these failings is the provision of education which promotes an understanding and appreciation of the values reflected in article 29 (1), including respect for differences, and challenges all aspects of discrimination and prejudice. Education should thus be accorded one of the highest priorities in all campaigns against the evils of racism and related phenomena. Emphasis must also be placed upon the importance of teaching about racism as it has been practised historically, and particularly as it manifests or has manifested itself within particular communities. Racist behaviour is not something engaged in only by "others". It is therefore important to focus on the child's own community when teaching human and children's rights and the principle of non-discrimination. Such teaching can effectively contribute to the prevention and elimination of racism, ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

12. Fourth, article 29 (1) insists upon a holistic approach to education which ensures that the educational opportunities made available reflect an appropriate balance between promoting the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects of education, the intellectual, social and practical dimensions, and the childhood and lifelong aspects. The overall objective of education is to maximize the child's ability and opportunity to participate fully and responsibly in a free society. It should be emphasized that the type of teaching that is focused primarily on accumulation of

knowledge, prompting competition and leading to an excessive burden of work on children, may seriously hamper the harmonious development of the child to the fullest potential of his or her abilities and talents. Education should be child-friendly, inspiring and motivating the individual child. Schools should foster a humane atmosphere and allow children to develop according to their evolving capacities.

13. Fifth, it emphasizes the need for education to be designed and provided in such a way that it promotes and reinforces the range of specific ethical values enshrined in the Convention, including education for peace, tolerance, and respect for the natural environment, in an integrated and holistic manner. This may require a multidisciplinary approach. The promotion and reinforcement of the values of article 29 (1) are not only necessary because of problems elsewhere, but must also focus on problems within the child's own community. Education in this regard should take place within the family, but schools and communities must also play an important role. For example, for the development of respect for the natural environment, education must link issues of environment and sustainable development with socio-economic, sociocultural and demographic issues. Similarly, respect for the natural environment should be learnt by children at home, in school and within the community, encompass both national and international problems, and actively involve children in local, regional or global environmental projects.

14. Sixth, it reflects the vital role of appropriate educational opportunities in the promotion of all other human rights and the understanding of their indivisibility. A child's capacity to participate fully and responsibly in a free society can be impaired or undermined not only by outright denial of access to education but also by a failure to promote an understanding of the values recognized in this article.

Human rights education

15. Article 29 (1) can also be seen as a foundation stone for the various programmes of human rights education called for by the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna CRC/GC/2001/1 page 6 in 1993, and promoted by international agencies. Nevertheless, the rights of the child have not always been given the prominence they require in the context of such activities. Human rights education should provide information on the content of human rights treaties. But children should also learn about human rights by seeing human rights standards implemented in practice, whether at home, in school, or within the community. Human rights education should be a comprehensive, life-long process and start with the reflection of human rights values in the daily life and experiences of children.

16. The values embodied in article 29 (1) are relevant to children living in zones of peace but they are even more important for those living in situations of conflict or emergency. As the Dakar Framework for Action notes, it is important in the context of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability that educational programmes be conducted in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict.7 Education about international humanitarian law also constitutes an important, but all too often neglected, dimension of efforts to give effect to article 29 (1).

Implementation, monitoring and review

17. The aims and values reflected in this article are stated in quite general terms and their implications are potentially very wide ranging. This seems to have led many States parties to assume that it is unnecessary, or even inappropriate, to ensure that the relevant principles are reflected in legislation or in administrative directives. This assumption is unwarranted. In the absence of any specific formal endorsement in national law or policy, it seems unlikely that the relevant principles are or will be used to genuinely inform educational policies. The Committee therefore calls upon all States parties to take the necessary steps to formally incorporate these principles into their education policies and legislation at all levels.

18. The effective promotion of article 29 (1) requires the fundamental reworking of curricula to include the various aims of education and the systematic revision of textbooks and other teaching materials and technologies, as well as school policies. Approaches which do no more than seek to superimpose the aims and values of the article on the existing system without encouraging any deeper changes are clearly inadequate. The relevant values cannot be effectively integrated into, and thus be rendered consistent with, a broader curriculum unless those who are expected to transmit, promote, teach and, as far as possible, exemplify the values have themselves been convinced of their importance. Pre-service and in-service training schemes which promote the principles reflected in

article 29 (1) are thus essential for teachers, educational administrators and others involved in child education. It is also important that the teaching methods used in schools reflect the spirit and educational philosophy of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the aims of education laid down in article 29 (1).

19. In addition, the school environment itself must thus reflect the freedom and the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin called for in article 29 (1) (b) and (d). A school which allows bullying or other violent and exclusionary practices to occur is not one which meets the requirements of article 29 (1). The term "human rights education" is too often used in a way which greatly oversimplifies its connotations. What is needed, in addition to formal human rights education, is the promotion of values and policies conducive to human rights not only within schools and universities but also within the broader community.

20. In general terms, the various initiatives that States parties are required to take pursuant to their Convention obligations will be insufficiently grounded in the absence of widespread dissemination of the text of the Convention itself, in accordance with the provisions of article 42. This will also facilitate the role of children as promoters and defenders of children's rights in their daily lives. In order to facilitate broader dissemination, States parties should report on the measures they have taken to achieve this objective and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should develop a comprehensive database of the language versions of the Convention that have been produced.

21. The media, broadly defined, also have a central role to play, both in promoting the values and aims reflected in article 29 (1) and in ensuring that their activities do not undermine the efforts of others to promote those objectives. Governments are obligated by the Convention, pursuant to article 17 (a), to take all appropriate steps to "encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child".

22. The Committee calls upon States parties to devote more attention to education as a dynamic process and to devising means by which to measure changes over time in relation to article 29 (1). Every child has the right to receive an education of good quality which in turn requires a focus on the quality of the learning environment, of teaching and learning processes and materials, and of learning outputs. The Committee notes the importance of surveys that may provide an opportunity to assess the progress made, based upon consideration of the views of all actors involved in the process, including children currently in or out of school, teachers and youth leaders, parents, and educational administrators and supervisors. In this respect, the Committee emphasizes the role of national-level monitoring which seeks to ensure that children, parents and teachers can have an input in decisions relevant to education.

23. The Committee calls upon States parties to develop a comprehensive national plan of action to promote and monitor realization of the objectives listed in article 29 (1). If such a plan is drawn up in the larger context of a national action plan for children, a national human rights action plan, or a national human rights education strategy, the Government must ensure that it nonetheless addresses all of the issues dealt with in article 29 (1) and does so from a child-rights perspective. The Committee urges that the United Nations and other international bodies concerned with educational policy and human rights education seek better coordination so as to enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of article 29 (1).

24. The design and implementation of programmes to promote the values reflected in this article should become part of the standard response by Governments to almost all situations in which patterns of human rights violations have occurred. Thus, for example, where major incidents of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance occur which involve those under 18, it can reasonably be presumed that the Government has not done all that it should to promote the values reflected in the Convention generally, and in article 29 (1) in particular. Appropriate additional measures under article 29 (1) should therefore be adopted which include research on and adoption of whatever educational techniques might have a positive impact in achieving the rights recognized in the Convention.

25. States parties should also consider establishing a review procedure which responds to complaints that existing policies or practices are not consistent with article 29 (1). Such review procedures need not necessarily entail the creation of new legal, administrative, or educational bodies. They might also be entrusted to national human rights institutions or to existing administrative bodies. The Committee requests each State party when reporting on this article to identify the genuine possibilities that exist at the national or local level to obtain a review of existing approaches which are claimed to be incompatible with the Convention. Information should be provided as to how such reviews can be initiated and how many such review procedures have been undertaken within the reporting period.

26. In order to better focus the process of examining States parties' reports dealing with article 29 (1), and in accordance with the requirement in article 44 that reports shall indicate factors and difficulties, the Committee requests each State party to provide a detailed indication in its periodic reports of what it considers to be the most important priorities within its jurisdiction which call for a more concerted effort to promote the values reflected in this provision and to outline the programme of activities which it proposes to take over the succeeding five years in order to address the problems identified.

27. The Committee calls upon United Nations bodies and agencies and other competent bodies whose role is underscored in article 45 of the Convention to contribute more actively and systematically to the Committee's work in relation to article 29 (1).

28. **Implementation of comprehensive national plans of action to enhance compliance with article 29 (1) will require human and financial resources which should be available to the maximum extent possible, in accordance with article 4. Therefore, the Committee considers that resource constraints cannot provide a justification for a State party's failure to take any, or enough, of the measures that are required. In this context, and in light of the obligations upon States parties to promote and encourage international cooperation both in general terms (arts. 4 and 45 of the Convention) and in relation to education (art. 28 (3)), the Committee urges States parties providing development cooperation to ensure that their programmes are designed so as to take full account of the principles contained in article 29 (1).**
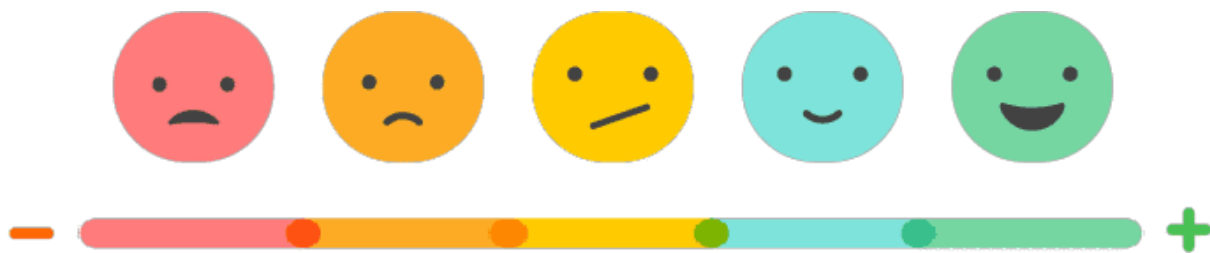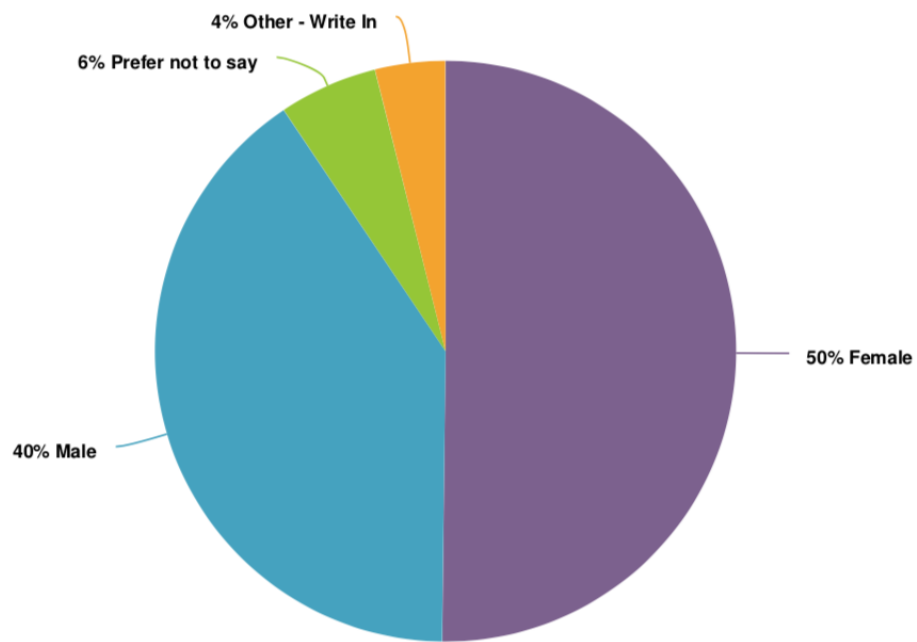
Appendix Two

More on survey respondents
Age/school year
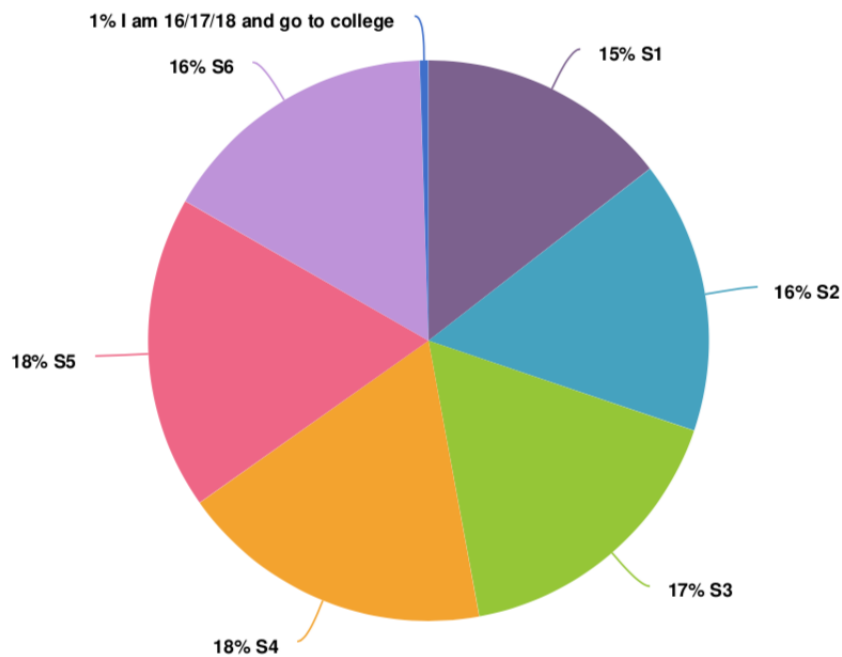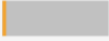
Value		Percent	Responses
S1		14.5%	564
S2		15.7%	608
S3		16.9%	655
S4		18.1%	701
S5		18.1%	702
S6		16.2%	627
I am 16/17/18 and go to college		0.5%	21

Totals: 3,878

Gender

Value		Percent	Responses
Female		50.2%	1,942
Male		40.4%	1,561
Prefer not to say		5.5%	214
Other - Write In		3.9%	150

Totals: 3,867