



# Ask the Parents: The Fifth Year

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Report prepared for  
London Councils

November 2017

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COUNCILS**

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## Executive summary

### *Introduction*

- 1.1.1 This report presents the findings of a London Councils commissioned project to investigate parents' views on various aspects of the education system in London. This is the fifth wave of the research study, and findings are compared throughout the report to results from the four previous years' research which were all conducted in the month of September.
- 1.1.2 The total sample size of this study was 1,030 parents of children aged 5-16 living in Greater London and fieldwork was undertaken between 24<sup>th</sup> August and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The data has been weighted to be representative of the London population by gender, ethnicity, social grade and inner and outer London location.

### *Standards, accountability and intervention*

- 1.1.3 The vast majority (78%) of parents in London feel that their local council plays an important role in ensuring high education standards in schools. This remains higher than the proportion who feel central government plays an important role – although the gap has closed over the past three years.
- 1.1.4 A consistent view over the past five years of this research has been that a fifth (20%) of parents feel that the local council is held to account for the performance of Academies and Free schools - when the local council has no statutory powers over these schools.
- 1.1.5 It also remains the case that only a minority of parents in London make the link that central government is directly accountable for the performance of Academy and Free schools – with 29% thinking that central government is accountable for the performance of Academies and 21% for the performance of Free schools.
- 1.1.6 As found over the past five years, there remains a degree of confusion from parents of children in Academies and Free schools as to the influence that local councils have. In fact 44% of parents with a child in an Academy and 63% of those with a child in a Free school believe that local councils have the power to influence or intervene if the school were to be underperforming.

- 1.1.7 Since 2013, the powers that local councils are believed to hold over failing schools have all remained fairly consistent, although the proportion of parents who think local councils have the powers to restrict funding has increased from 29% to 40%.
- 1.1.8 The majority of parents think that local councils should have powers of influence and intervention over Free schools (70%) and Academies (68%). This opinion has become more prevalent since 2013, when 62% thought councils should have these powers over both Free schools and Academies.

#### *School places*

- 1.1.9 Since 2013, there has been a strengthening in the opinion that local councils should be able to influence schools in their area to find more places or expand.
- 1.1.10 In 2017, 81% agree that local councils should have this power, an increase of five percentage points since 2013. Furthermore, half (49%) of parents in London believe that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local council requires it. The number of parents agreeing with this statement has increased since 2013 when 44% agreed.
- 1.1.11 The vast majority of parents (77%) agree that local councils should have the final say in the location of new schools within their authority boundary, with two thirds (66%) agreeing that Free schools should be set up in areas where there is demand for places.
- 1.1.12 Almost two thirds of parents (65%) think it would be a better use of the government's money to invest more in existing schools in an area with no additional demand for local places, whereas a fifth (20%) think it would be better to create a new school to increase choice.

#### *Allocating and monitoring school funding*

- 1.1.13 In relation to reforms of the school funding system by central government, meeting local needs remains the number one ranked need of any reform – with 51% ranking this their number one objective.

- 1.1.14 Over the course of the past four years there has been a gradual decrease in the proportion of parents who feel the Department for Education should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to schools, from 49% in 2014 to 41% in 2017. The emphasis has shifted slightly in the direction of the local council and Ofsted. A gap of 15% in 2014 between the Department for Education and local council in who should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to schools has been reduced to a difference of only 4% in 2017.
- 1.1.15 The vast majority (81%) of London parents feel it is important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local councils, with 47% feeling it is very important. Although parents are most likely to state this opinion about Maintained schools, they feel nearly equally strongly about the importance of local councils being able to scrutinise the spending of Academies (74%) and Free schools (75%).
- 1.1.16 Over the past five years, parents have become much more likely to believe that local councils should be ensuring Maintained schools are spending their money responsibly, rising from 44% in 2013 to 55% in 2017. In turn, parents are significantly less likely in 2017 to believe that the Department for Education should be ensuring the responsible spending of Maintained schools, with this figure decreasing from 42% to 35%.
- 1.1.17 In comparison with five years ago, London parents have also become more likely to think that local councils should be ensuring the responsible spending of Academies and Free schools (40% and 42% respectively in 2017, compared with 34% and 35% in 2013).

#### *School funding pressures*

- 1.1.18 Awareness of funding pressures for London schools is prevalent; four in five London parents (80%) indicate that they are aware of pressures on funding at their child's school.
- 1.1.19 More than a third of all London parents have been made aware of funding pressures through a letter from the school alerting them of these (38%) or asking for parental contributions (35%). This is the most common way through which parents are being notified.
- 1.1.20 Consistent with 2016, the most commonly identified impact of school funding seen by parents is parents paying for activities more than previously, reported by more than half (55%) of London parents aware of pressures.

- 1.1.21 In comparison with 2016, there has been a significant increase in the overall proportion of London parents who feel their child's school does *not* receive sufficient funding/resources to operate effectively, rising sharply from 25% to 38%. Notably, the proportion within this group who say this funding is not at all sufficient has doubled over the past year, from 5% to 10%.
- 1.1.22 The vast majority of London parents (75%) feel that the UK government should increase the amount of money it spends on education and schools. A third (33%) believe it should increase by a great deal and 41% by a fair amount.
- 1.1.23 The vast majority of parents (84%) believe that if their child's school budget were to be reduced, it would have a negative impact on the quality of the education the school provides.

#### *Central and local control*

- 1.1.24 Parents are more likely to feel that the education system is more centrally controlled (34%) than locally controlled (12%).
- 1.1.25 Opposition from parents in London to the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools has increased over the past five years. The proportion of parents opposing the growth in Academies and Free schools has increased by six percentage points from the 2013 survey, with opposition now standing at 35%, compared with 29% who are in favour.

#### *Careers and Vocational Education*

- 1.1.26 Parents in London provide no majority consensus as to whether the education system prepares children well for the world of work. Four out of ten parents (41%) report that they think the system does prepare children well while three out of ten (30%) feel that the system prepares children poorly.
- 1.1.27 Views on careers advice are also somewhat divided, with 47% confident their child will receive appropriate careers advice and 44% not confident that this will happen before their child leaves education at the age of 18. Notably, parents with a child in secondary school are more confident than parents with a child in primary school that their child will receive adequate careers advice – with 52% reporting this compared with 46%.

1.1.28 When asked how they would feel if their child chose to work towards vocational qualifications rather than A levels, a very small minority of parents (4%) report that it would be their preference that their child took vocational qualifications, while four out of ten (43%) parents would prefer that their child took A levels. This opinion is consistent for parents of children at both primary and secondary level.

## 2 Change in parents views on key measures over time

Standards, accountability and intervention	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Change 2016/17 (+/-)	Five year change (+/-)
Local council* has an important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools	82%	83%	74%	79%	<b>78%</b>	-1%	-4% ↓
Central Government** has an important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools	84%	84%	64%	71%	<b>74%</b>	+3%	-10% ↓
Local council should have power of influence over Maintained schools if underperforming	77%	77%	76%	75%	<b>79%</b>	+4% ↑	+2%
Local council should have power of influence over Free schools if underperforming	62%	68%	70%	70%	<b>70%</b>	0%	+8% ↑
Local council should have power of influence over Academies if underperforming	62%	63%	67%	70%	<b>68%</b>	-2%	+6% ↑
School places and admissions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Change 2016/17 (+/-)	Five year change (+/-)
Agree that local councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand	76%	81%	78%	82%	<b>81%</b>	-1%	+5% ↑
Agree that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local council requires it	44%	49%	54%	50%	<b>49%</b>	-1%	+5% ↑
Funding and use of public funds	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Change 2016/17 (+/-)	Five year change (+/-)
Local borough councils should ensure academies are spending money in a responsible way	34%	34%	35%	41%	<b>40%</b>	-1%	+6% ↑
The control of the education system in England	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Change 2016/17 (+/-)	Five year change (+/-)
The idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools - support	34%	31%	29%	26%	<b>29%</b>	+3%	-5% ↓
The idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools - oppose	29%	32%	36%	41%	<b>35%</b>	-6% ↓	+6% ↑

↑ = statistically significant increase from one or five years ago

↓ = statistically significant decrease from one or five years ago

\*In 2013 and 2014 the term 'Local Authority' was used, and in 2015 and 2016 the term 'local borough council' was used (applies all throughout)

\*\*In 2013 and 2014 the term 'Department for Education' was used

### 2.1.1 Over the past five years:

- There has been a fall in the proportion of parents who feel the local council and central government have an important role in ensuring standards are high in schools
  - The proportion of parents who feel central government has an important role in ensuring standards has fallen by 10 percentage points, greater than the fall in the proportion of parents who feel that the local council plays an important role (4%)

- In 2017 a greater proportion of parents report that they feel the local council plays an important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools than the proportion of parents who report that central government plays an important role
- There has been an increase in the proportion of parents who feel the local council should have power of influence over Free schools and academies if they are under-performing
- There has been an increase in the proportion of parents who agree that local councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more places or expand
- There has been an increase in the proportion of parents who agree that Academies should be forced to expand if the local council requires it
- There has been an increase in the proportion of parents who feel that local councils should ensure Academies are spending money in a responsible way
- There has been a fall in support for the idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools, and an increase in opposition to this idea from parents in London

## Introduction

### 1 Background

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of a London Councils commissioned project undertaken to investigate parents' views on various aspects of the education system in London. This is the fifth wave of this research study, and findings are compared throughout the report to results from the previous four waves, which were conducted in September 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. This report represents a five year view of parental opinion in London about the education system.
- 1.1.2 The study tracks parental perceptions relating to complex and fundamental issues which are integral to the confidence parents have in the education system as a whole and how it can be relied on to produce the very best environment for the education of their children. These include complex and not often considered issues for parents which actually sit at the heart of how schools operate. For example: the impact of funding cuts, who is ultimately accountable for performance (especially in the context of Academies and Free schools), how decisions about new schools are made, and how intervention into failing schools is managed.
- 1.1.3 The purpose of this research was to have an informed conversation with London parents through a survey and use this information to gain a richer understanding of their views. To deliver this objective a deliberative research approach was used where parents responding to the survey were presented with information throughout the survey that discussed some of the complex points of debate which relate to the various issues in the survey. The purpose of this information was to help parents understand some of the complexities and then gauge their opinion.
- 1.1.4 To ensure the information was not leading parents to a predetermined conclusion care was taken to present balanced information that outlined the pros and cons of the different policy positions with the goal of providing contextual information rather than leading respondents.
- 1.1.5 Throughout the report we have highlighted the information that respondents were shown so readers can see this information, in most cases this is presented in the footnotes.

1.1.6 With this being the fifth year in which this research has been conducted, the report also includes some comparisons with the 2013 findings. As a note, in the 2013 survey the term 'local authority' was used instead of 'local borough council'.

## 2 Sample profile

2.1.1 The survey was carried out online and administered at random to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 800,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. The total sample size was 1,030 parents of children aged 5-16 living in Greater London and fieldwork was undertaken between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

2.1.2 The data has been weighted to be representative of the London population by gender, ethnicity, social grade and inner and outer London location. The table below provides a summary of the unweighted sample profile.

<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Male</b>	456
<b>Female</b>	574
<b>Social grade<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>ABC1</b>	791
<b>C2DE</b>	239
<b>Age</b>	
<b>18-34</b>	219
<b>35-44</b>	472
<b>45-54</b>	281
<b>55+</b>	58
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
<b>White</b>	572
<b>BME</b>	379
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	79
<b>Location</b>	
<b>Inner</b>	351
<b>Outer</b>	679
<b>Total</b>	<b>1030</b>

<sup>1</sup> As defined by the Market Research Society, social grades are a demographic classification based on the occupation of the head of the household. The categories are defined as follows: AB: upper middle and middle class; C1: lower middle class; C2 skilled working class; DE: working class and non-working class.

2.1.3 Where reference is made in the report to parents, this refers to parents in London. Further, where reference is made to the top five<sup>2</sup> and bottom five<sup>3</sup> performing London boroughs this refers to the average GCSE performance in terms of the percentage of pupils gain 5 or more GCSE's at A\* to C.

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<sup>2</sup> Kingston upon Thames, Sutton, Kensington and Chelsea, Barnet, and Bromley (source: SFR01\_2017\_LA\_Tables)

<sup>3</sup> Brent, Croydon, Greenwich, Barking and Dagenham, and Lewisham (source: SFR01\_2017\_LA\_Tables)

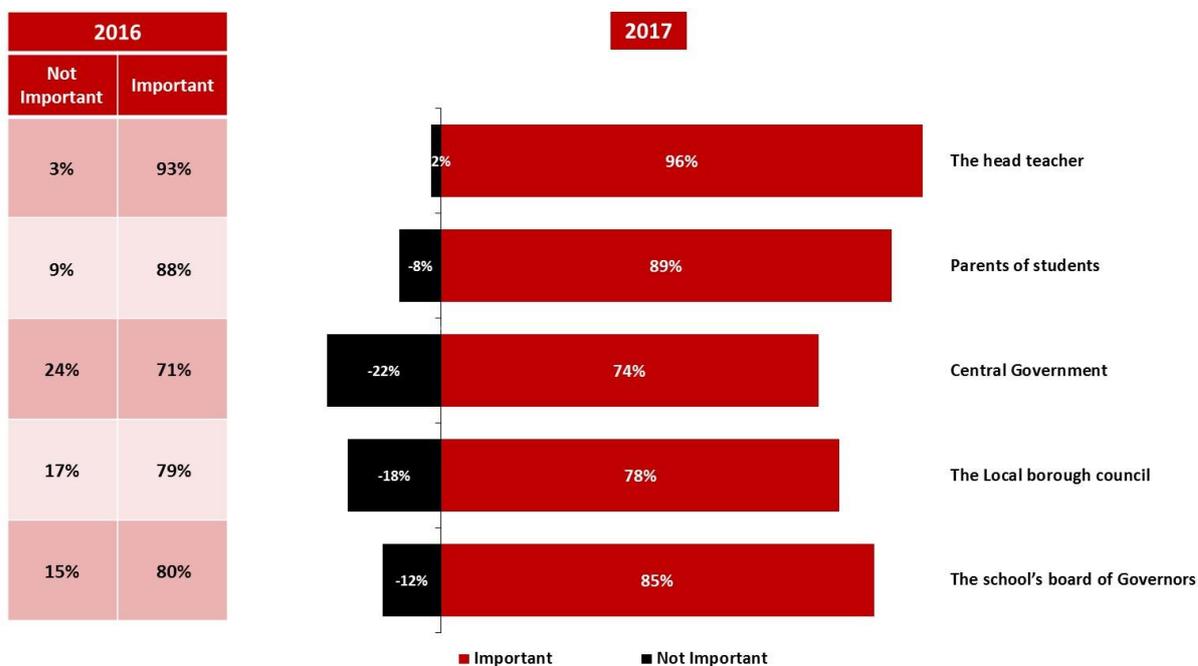
## **Section 1: Standards, accountability and intervention**

The first section of this report looks at attainment across schools, levels of education standards and who should be accountable when schools are underperforming or failing.

### **3 Ensuring standards in education**

- 3.1.1 Overall, 78% of parents in London feel that their local council plays an important role in ensuring high education standards in schools. However, the proportion of parents who hold this opinion has declined from 2013 when 82% of parents felt that the local council played an important role in ensuring education standards are high.
- 3.1.2 However, the proportion of parents who feel that the local council plays an important role in ensuring high standards in schools remains higher than the proportion who feel central government plays an important role.
- 3.1.3 The proportion of London parents who report that central government plays an important role in ensuring education standards has risen from 71% in 2016 to 74% in this research. Compared to five years ago, the proportion of parents who feel central government plays an important role in ensuring education standards are high has fallen from 84% in 2013 to 74%.
- 3.1.4 When comparing data between 2016 and 2017, we see a very consistent picture in parents' views on who plays an important role in ensuring education standards. Almost all parents are in agreement (96%) that headteachers play an important role in ensuring high education standards in schools.

**Figure 1: Perceived levels of importance each group plays in ensuring high education standards<sup>4</sup>**



**Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2016 n=1022)**

**Note: Figures for don't know have not been shown.**

<sup>4</sup> London has seen strong improvement in GCSE results and some groups have argued that collaboration between schools, and leadership from within schools and by the local authority played a key role in this improvement.

Although in recent changes to the education system the role of Local Authorities has been diminished and Academies and Free schools have much more flexibility to deliver outside of local authority control.

#### **4 Accountability for school performance**

- 4.1.1 London parents are significantly more likely to recognise the accountability of the local council over the performance of Maintained schools, at almost half (49%), compared to 22% at religious schools, 20% at both Free schools and Academies, and 11% at fee-paying schools respectively. These figures remain consistent with in the findings of the 2013 research and it remains interesting that a fifth (20%) of parents feel that the local council is held to account for the performance of academies and Free schools when the local council has no statutory powers over these schools.
- 4.1.2 Parents are more likely to hold central government responsible for the performance of Academies than other school types, at 29% compared with 25%, 21%, 16% and 12% at Maintained schools, Free schools, religious schools, and fee-paying schools respectively. However, this indicates that a majority of parents do not think that central government is directly accountable for the performance of Academies (71%) and Free schools (79%).
- 4.1.3 Parents are most likely to believe that the headteacher would be held to account for the performance of all school types. This view is particularly held with regards to the governance of fee-paying schools in particular, with 69% stating this, followed by religious schools at 68%. The headteacher is also believed to be held to account for school performance at Academies (67%), Maintained schools (63%), and Free schools (63%) by nearly two thirds of parents.
- 4.1.4 The perception of the headteacher being held accountable has risen for all school types since the first research was undertaken in 2013, when 64% believed this for fee-paying schools, 59% for religious schools, 58% of Academies, and 57% for both Maintained schools and Free schools. Parents of students are more likely to be considered to be held accountable for the performance of Free schools than for other school types, with nearly a third (30%) saying this. This suggests that the messaging around parents being able to have a role in leading Free schools may be permeating through.-.

## 5 Intervention from local councils

- 5.1.1 The majority of parents (76%) correctly identify that the local council has the power to influence or intervene with Maintained schools if they are underperforming. This is slightly higher than the proportion of parents who identified this in the 2016, 2015, 2014 and 2013 surveys.
- 5.1.2 Four out of ten parents believe local councils have the power to influence/intervene with underperforming Academies (40%) and Free schools (39%), both of which have increased significantly since last year's survey. Sixteen per cent believe local councils can intervene in a fee paying school.
- 5.1.3 As found in previous surveys, there remains a degree of confusion amongst parents of children in Academies and Free schools as to the influence that local councils have. In fact 44% of parents with a child in an Academy and 63% of those with a child in a Free school believe that local councils have the power to influence or intervene if the school was underperforming.
- 5.1.4 In addition 44% of parents who live in outer London think that a local council has the power to intervene in underperforming academies, this is higher than the 35% of parents from inner London who feel this.

**Figure 2: Proportion of parents who believe the local borough council has the power to influence/intervene if a school was underperforming – by school type<sup>5</sup>**

	2013 Total n=1019	2014 Total n=1052	2015 Total n=1002	2016 Total n=1022	2017 Total n=1030	Parents with a child in.....		
						A maintained school n=468	An academy n=396	A free School n=201
Academy	37%	34%	33%	31%	40%	39%	44%	37%
Free school	37%	35%	31%	34%	39%	32%	39%	63%
Maintained school	73%	72%	74%	73%	76%	84%	74%	59%
Fee paying school	15%	15%	10%	14%	16%	13%	18%	20%
None of the above	9%	11%	11%	11%	10%	8%	9%	13%

Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2016 n=1022; 2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

5.1.5 Those who thought local councils had power over failing schools were then asked which, if any, powers they felt they have:

- Six in ten (62%) report sending in inspectors;
- Just over half (54%) report placing the school under special measures;
- Just over half (53%) report issuing warning notices;
- Four out of ten (42%) report restructuring schools;

<sup>5</sup> Please imagine the following types of school fell within the boundary of your Local Authority. In which, if any, do you think the Local Authority has the power to influence or intervene if the school were underperforming?

- Four out of ten (40%) report restricting funding;
- Four out of ten (38%) report shutting the school down;
- Three out of ten (31%) report removing senior teaching staff;
- Nearly a quarter (23%) report restricting the number / quality of new teachers.

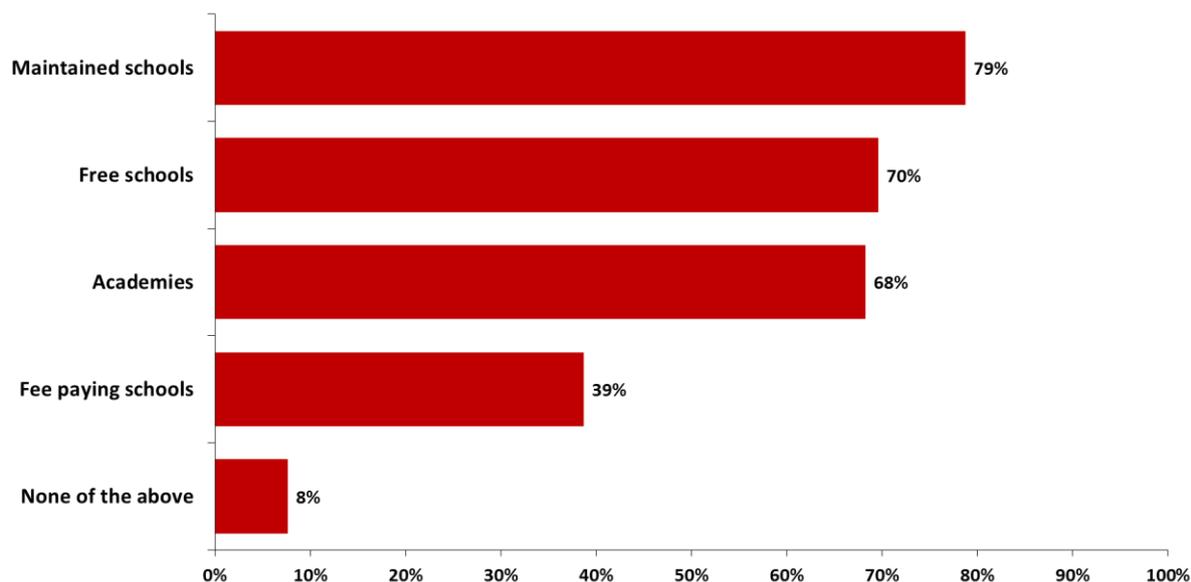
5.1.6 Since 2013, the powers that local councils are believed to hold have all remained fairly consistent, although the proportion of parents who think local councils have the powers to restrict funding have increased from 29% to 40%.

5.1.7 After ascertaining parents' responses on powers they think local councils have, a detailed description was provided of powers they actually have<sup>6</sup>. Respondents were then asked over which schools, if any, they feel local councils *should* have powers of influence and intervention. The majority (79%) state Maintained schools, seven out of ten (70%) state Free schools, two thirds Academies (68%) and four out of ten fee-paying schools (39%).

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<sup>6</sup> Local borough councils can issue warning notices to failing maintained schools in their area, upon which the school is obliged to act. Historically, this power has been rarely used as the council worked collaboratively with all schools in the area to improve performance. Prior to the Education Act 2011, the local borough council also had a duty to provide improvement services, this was removed by the 2011 Act. The 2011 Education Act also removed power from local borough councils to issue these warning notices to Academies. Now, if a council is concerned about the performance of an Academy the only formal action they can take is to write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask Government to intervene directly. Local borough councils do still, however, have the duty to hold all state funded schools in their area, including Academies and Free Schools, to account in terms of performance. They are obliged to take action where they are concerned about a school's performance but have no statutory powers over Academies and Free Schools.

**Figure 3: Schools the local borough council SHOULD HAVE the power to influence<sup>7</sup>**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

- 5.1.8 These findings are on par with those in the 2016 report and show that a majority of parents in London feel that local councils should have powers of influence and intervention over Academies and Free schools.
- 5.1.9 The perception that local councils should have powers of influence and intervention over Maintained schools (79%) has remained consistent since the research in 2013, when 77% said this. The idea that they should have powers over Free schools, Academies and fee-paying schools have all significantly increased, from 62% to 70% for Free schools, from 62% to 68% for Academies, and from 33% to 39% for fee-paying schools.

<sup>7</sup> Please imagine the following types of school fell within the boundary of your Local Authority. Over which, if any, of the following schools do you feel local borough councils should have powers of influence and intervention? Please tick all that apply.

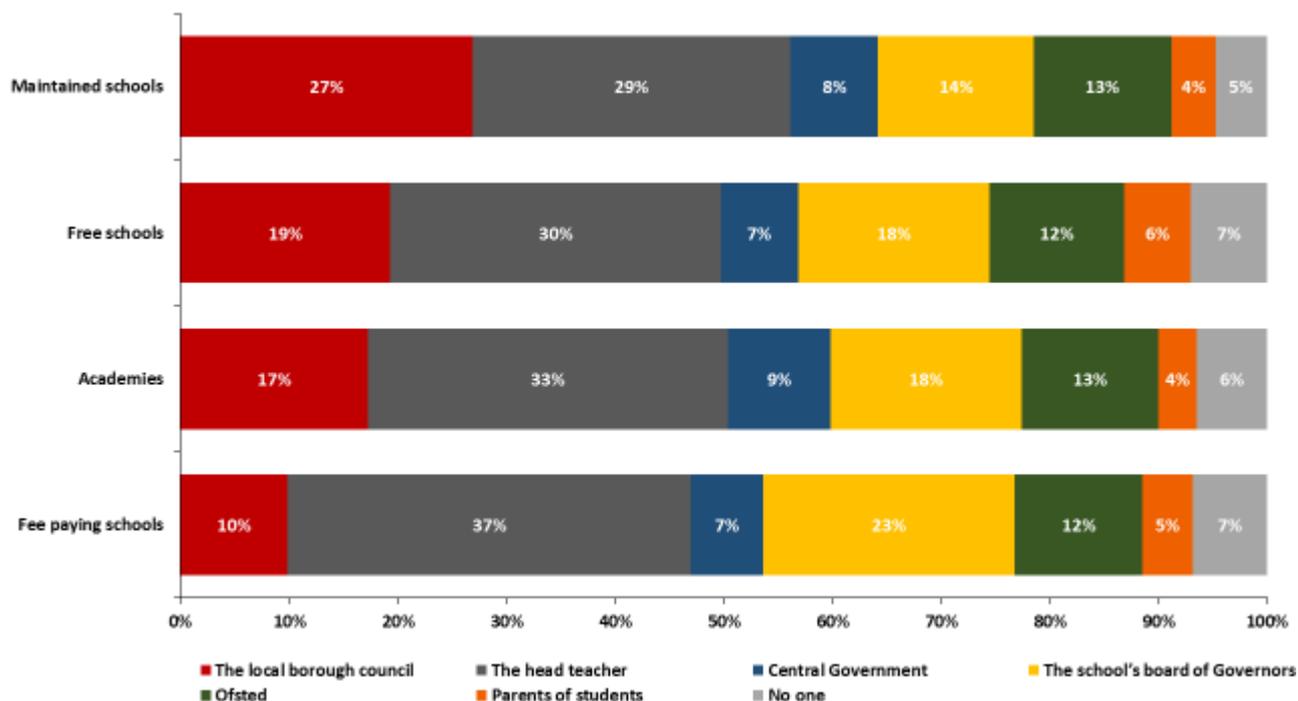
## 6 Trust

6.1.1 Parents were also asked who they trust to hold schools to account for their performance. Headteachers are ranked top when it comes to all school types, and particularly for fee-paying schools (37%). This has remained consistent since 2013.

6.1.2 A quarter of parents trust local councils to be held accountable for the performance of Maintained schools, on par with results seen five years ago. Furthermore a fifth of parents trust local councils to be held accountable for the performance of Free schools (19%) and Academies (17%). This reflects a strengthening of trust in local councils over the past five years, when 12% of parents trusted local councils to be held account for the performance of Academies and 13% for the performance of Free schools.

6.1.3 London parents are least likely to trust central government and parents of students to be held accountable for all schools (Maintained schools: 8%/4% respectively; Free schools: 7%/6%; Academies: 9%/4%; Fee paying schools: 7%/5%).

**Figure 4: Trusted to be held accountable for school performance**



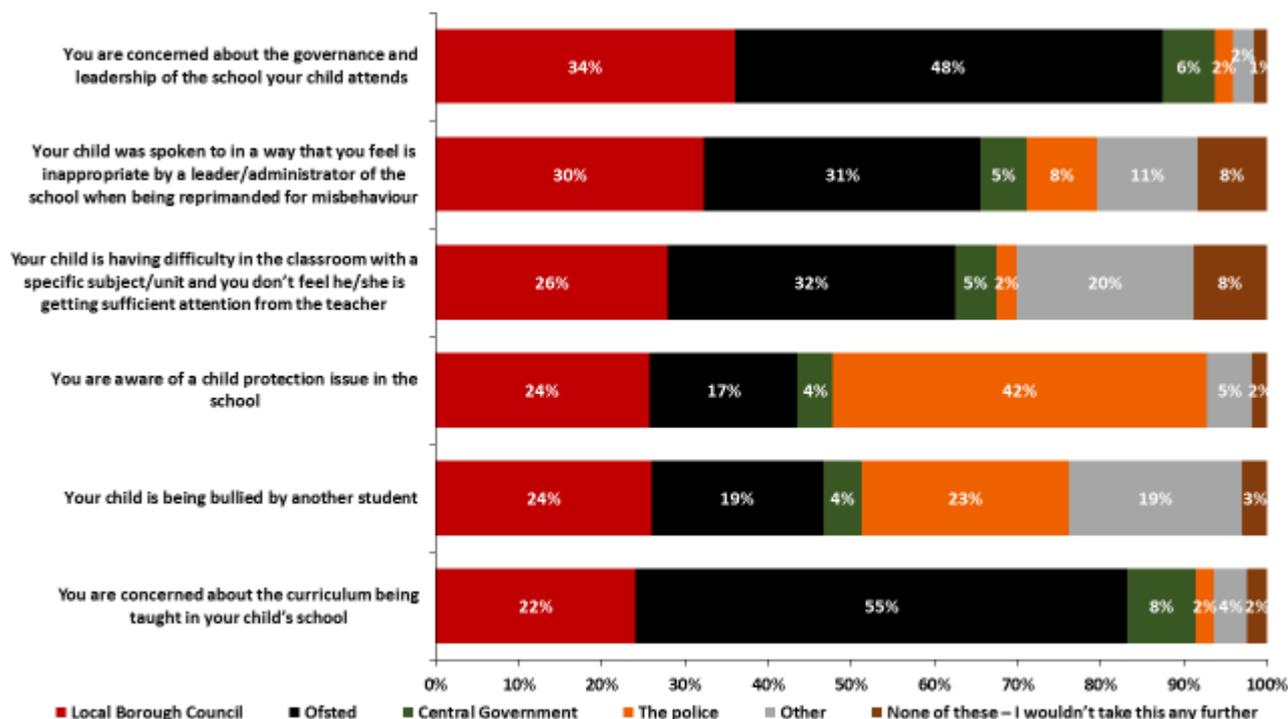
Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

## 7 Whistleblowing

- 7.1.1 When London parents are asked who they would trust most to handle a series of hypothetical concerns related to their child's school, they indicate that they would trust Ofsted more than any other organisation to resolve complaints regarding the curriculum being taught (55%), the school's governance or leadership (48%), and their child not getting sufficient attention from a teacher (32%). In each of these cases, the local council would be their second most trusted point of contact.
- 7.1.2 Since last year, there has been a shift in the trust London parents imagine they would have in local councils versus Ofsted to handle a situation where their child was spoken to inappropriately for misbehaviour. In 2016 parents were more likely to trust local councils (34%) than Ofsted (23%) to deal with this, while this year they would be more or less equally likely to trust the two organisations (30% and 31% respectively).
- 7.1.3 Thinking about hypothetical concerns regarding the bullying of their child by another student, parents would be most likely to trust their local council to resolve their complaint, with around a quarter of parents (24%) stating this. This is followed closely by the police (23%).
- 7.1.4 When considering issues related to child protection, the police (42%) are trusted more than any other organisation or institution by a significant margin. Secondly, a quarter of parents (24%) would most trust their local council to resolve the complaint.
- 7.1.5 Notably, for each of these hypothetical issues, London parents would be considerably more likely to trust their local council than central government.
- 7.1.6 Furthermore, interesting findings emerge by school type, with parents of children at Maintained schools being more likely than those with children at Academies/Free schools to say they would trust their local council most to resolve a complaint about the curriculum being taught (26% compared with 20%) or the governance/leadership of the school (38% compared with 30%).

7.1.7 However, although parents of children at Maintained schools are most likely to say they would be trust their local council to resolve a complaint about the governance and leadership of their child’s school, parents of children at Academies/Free schools would also be considerably more likely to turn to their local council (30%) than to central government (8%).

**Figure 5: Most trusted organisation/institution for help resolving a complaint about an issue at their child’s school**

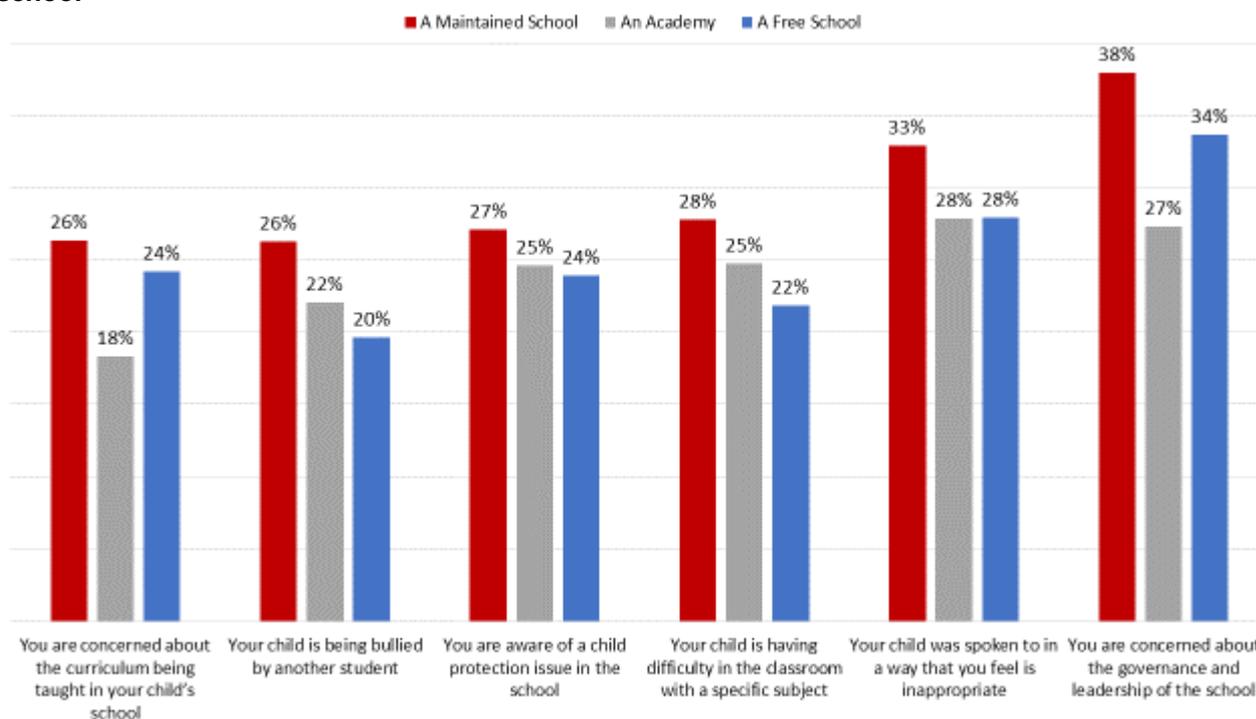


Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

Note: Figures for ‘Don’t know’ have not been shown

7.1.8 Parents with a child at a Maintained school are more likely than those with a child at an Academy or Free school to say they would most trust their local council to resolve any of the six hypothetical situations they might have a complaint about.

**Figure 6: Proportion who would trust the local borough council most about an issue at their child's school**



Base: All London Parents with a child in a Maintained school (n=468), an Academy (n=396), and a Free school (n=201)

## 8 Intervention in declining schools

8.1.1 When asked which organisation they would turn to if their child's school showed signs of declining education standards, three in ten (29%) parents opt for their local council, a fall from a third (34%) in 2016. Ofsted is by far the most likely organisation parents would contact at 55%, a significant increase from 47% last year. Both far outstrip central government, an option chosen by only 6% of parents.

8.1.2 These views are consistent for parents with children in Maintained, Academy, Free or independent schools. Therefore, along with parents of children at Maintained schools, those with children in Academies/Free schools would be significantly more likely to turn to their local council in this situation (29%) than to central government (8%).

8.1.3 Parents were also asked about important attributes of an organisation that ought to intervene if a school showed signs of declining standards. The attributes most frequently deemed important by parents are: the ability to draw upon experience of successfully

improving other schools (61%), the ability to respond quickly (59%), and access to a team of improvement support (59%). The least important factor cited is a national perspective (19%).

- 8.1.4 Parents of children at Maintained schools are significantly more likely than those of children at Free schools to deem local knowledge of the area/community as being important (50% compared with 33%). Parents of children in a Maintained school are also more likely than parents of a child in an Academy or Free school to state that it is important that an organisation has the ability to draw upon experience of successfully improving other schools – with 68% reporting this compared with 59% of parents of a child in an Academy and 50% of those with a child in a Free school.
- 8.1.5 Parents of children who attend a Maintained school are also most likely to believe that close links with other local service providers is an important attribute of an organisation who should intervene if a school is showing signs of declining standards (42% compared with 37% among Academy parents and 29% among Free school parents).

## Section 2: School places and admissions

The second section of this report looks at the level of demand for school places, expansion of schools, ease of the school applications process and quality of schools. Again, the questions reported on within this section include a large amount of deliberative text to inform respondents. As a result this has been displayed as an image within the section rather than a footnote (as in the previous sections).

**Figure 7: Question Introduction Text**

### Demand for school places

Councils have a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children and young people in their jurisdiction. As demand increases, funding levels in London don't keep pace and the easier, less costly ways of creating school places are used up, and councils are finding it more difficult to find enough places to meet this demand.

There will be significantly more school places needed in London for new pupils starting school in the coming years. Currently boroughs are predicting that 63,710 new places will be needed across primary and secondary schools in London until 2022/23.

### Process of finding new school places

The local borough council acts as the admissions authority for all maintained schools in their area. This means that they preside over appeals from parents and, importantly, ensure that every child in their area has a place. While councils seek to achieve this by collaborating with schools in the local area, this may involve directing schools under their control to take more children if there is demand in the area and schools are refusing to cooperate.

Under the 2011 Education Act, all new build schools are to become Academies or Free schools. Existing and new build Academies and Free schools act as their own admissions authorities and can decide not to expand when they have reached full capacity. The local borough council has some influence in being able to put pressure on Academies and Free schools to take more children but ultimately they can appeal to the Department for Education.

Academies are required through their funding agreements to participate in the local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements. Free Schools are exempt from this requirement in the first year of opening.

When a school becomes an Academy it becomes its own admissions authority, which means that it will manage its own admissions process, including periodic consultation, regularly publishing the school's admission arrangements, and conducting the admission process as part of wider Local Authority coordination.

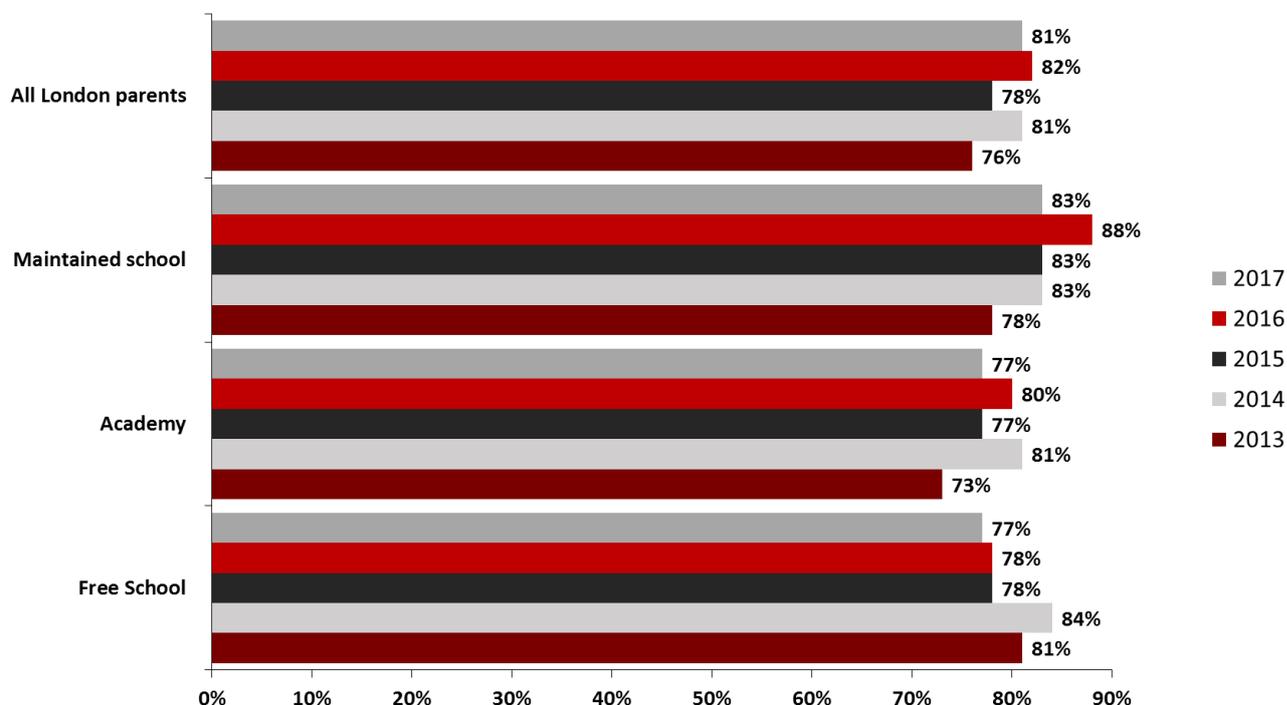
## 9 School places

9.1.1 Following the detailed information parents were provided with about demand for school places and the process of creating new school places, they were asked ‘*To what extent do you agree or disagree that local borough councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand?*’

9.1.2 Four fifths of London parents (81%) agree that local councils should be able to influence schools in their area to find more places or expand, and a minority (10%) disagree. Compared with five years ago opinion has strengthened, as in 2013 76% of parents agreed that local councils should be able to influence all schools to find more places or expand.

9.1.3 Regardless of the type of school their children attend, parents are much more likely to agree than disagree that local councils should have the ability to influence the expansion of all schools in their area.

**Figure 8: Proportion who agree that local borough councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand by type of school in which parents have a child**



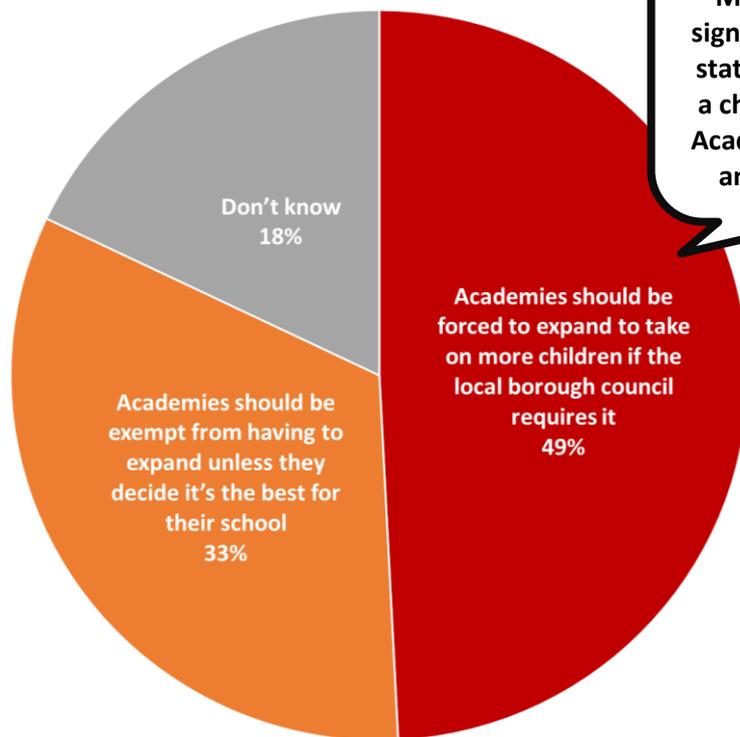
Base: All London Parents (Total n=1,030; Maintained n=468; Academy n=396; Free school n=201)

- 9.1.4 On the topic of school expansion, 49% of parents believe that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local council requires it<sup>8</sup>. This figure peaked in 2015, when 54% of parents agreed. On the whole however, the number of parents agreeing with this statement has increased since 2013 when 44% agreed.
- 9.1.5 Parents with a child in a Maintained school are significantly more likely to take this viewpoint than those with a child in an Academy or Free school (58% compared with 40% and 38% respectively).
- 9.1.6 Conversely 33% of London parents believe that Academies should be exempt from having to expand unless they decide it's the best for their school. This continues the gradual decrease since 2013 when the proportion of parents who felt this way was 38%.

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<sup>8</sup> Respondents were presented with the following introduction before answering this question: Academies and Free Schools are given an exemption from having to expand for the first year after opening. They also cannot be directed to expand at any point by the local borough council, unlike maintained schools. Some feel this is unfair as they are in a better position to maintain high standards and performance by not having to expand. Others feel that Academies should be given the freedom from local borough council control to offer the best services to their pupils.

**Figure 9: Views on Academy expansion**



Parents with a child at a Maintained school are significantly more likely to state this than those with a child in a Free school or Academy (58% versus 40% and 38% respectively)

Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

**Figure 10: Question Introduction Text**

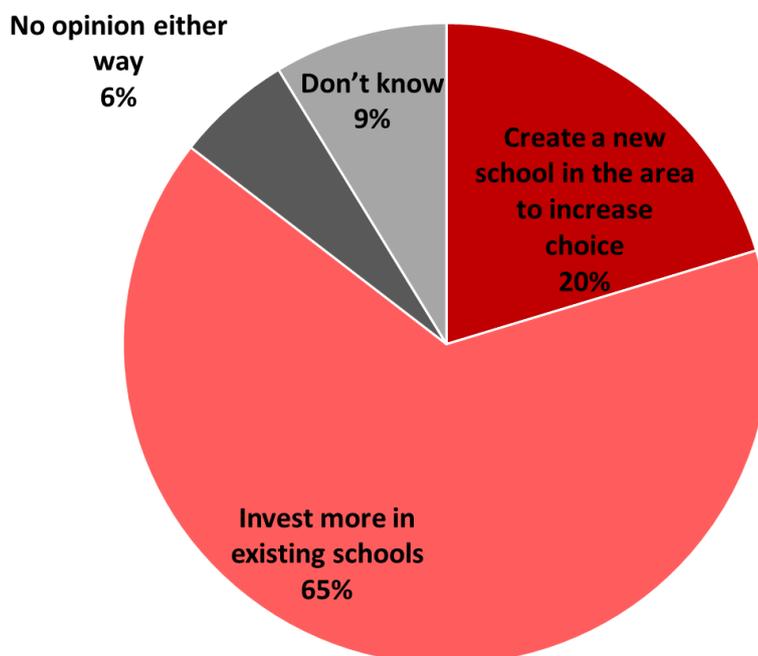
Local borough councils have a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places. To meet this duty, local borough councils prioritise creating school places in areas of basic need. This is determined by looking at where there will be more children than school places in a local area.

Where there is a shortfall, the local borough council seeks to secure places nearest to those areas to support parents' access to schools nearest to them. Following the Education Act 2011, local borough councils do not have any control over where new schools are set up in the local borough.

Instead, for all new schools, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education to approve where new schools should be set up in each local borough. New schools, known as Free Schools, can be set up by a range of different individuals/organisations that include businesses and charities as well as community and faith groups. The Department of Education usually looks for evidence that a specific school is wanted by local communities rather than prioritising basic need. This evidence takes the form of a survey that parents (or young people for 16-19 schools) sign a document expressing support for the school.

- 9.1.7 Two thirds of parents (66%) agree that Free schools should be set up in areas of basic need (i.e. looking at shortfalls between future demand for school places compared with the existing capacity). A minority (16%) disagree with this. These findings are consistent with 2016, when 65% of parents agreed with the statement and 17% disagreed.
- 9.1.8 The vast majority of parents (77%) agree that local councils should have the final say in the location of new schools within their authority boundary. Only 10% disagree with this.
- 9.1.9 Almost two thirds of parents (65%) think it would be a better use of the government's money to invest more in existing schools in an area with no additional demand for local places, whereas a fifth (20%) think it would be better to create a new school to increase choice. A minority of parents have no opinion either way (6%), or don't know (9%).

**Figure 11: Perception of what would be a better use of the government's money if there was no demand for school places in their area**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

9.1.10 Parents with a child in a Maintained School (70%) are more likely to think it would be better to invest more in existing schools, compared to parents with a child in an Academy (63%) or a Free school (49%).

## 10 Admissions

10.1.1 The majority of parents in London (82%) found the process of applying to primary or secondary school very/ fairly easy, while 14% found it fairly/ very difficult. These views on admissions are broadly unchanged over the past three years.

**Figure 12: Ease of application process**

		2017		2016		2015	
		Easy	Difficult	Easy	Difficult	Easy	Difficult
<b>All London Parents</b>	n	1030		1022		1002	
	%	<b>82%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Maintained school</b>	n	468		497		429	
	%	<b>84%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Academy</b>	n	396		353		327	
	%	<b>84%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Free School</b>	n	201		176		140	
	%	<b>74%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>20%</b>

Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

## 11 Quality of school buildings and facilities

11.1.1 Almost three quarters (73%) of parents rate the quality of the classrooms at their child's school as very good or good. This increases to 77% for parents with a child at a Maintained school. Parents living in inner London (80%) are more likely rate the quality of the classrooms as very good or good, compared to parents living in outer London (68%).

11.1.2 Three in five parents rate the quality of the playing areas (61%) and other facilities (59%) at their child's school as very good or good. Examples of other facilities include the school canteen, main hall, toilets, school carpark and entrance.

**Figure 13: Parents' impressions of the quality of their child's school**

		Classrooms		Playing areas		Other facilities	
		Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor
<b>All London Parents</b>	n=1030	<b>73%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Maintained school</b>	n=468	<b>77%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Academy</b>	n=396	<b>75%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Free School</b>	n=201	<b>72%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>5%</b>

- 11.1.3 About a third of parents think the quality of playing areas (36%), classrooms (32%) and other facilities (31%) have improved over the past three years at their child's school.
- 11.1.4 Over half of parents think the quality of classrooms (61%), playing areas (56%) and other facilities (60%) has stayed the same at their child's school over the past three years. Only a minority of parents think the quality has got worse for classrooms (7%), playing areas (8%) and other facilities (9%) over the past three years.

## **Section 3: Funding and financial accountability**

This third section of the report looks at London parents' perceptions of school funding processes and opinions on schools' financial accountability.

### **12 Objectives for allocating school funding**

12.1.1 Parents were provided with an introduction to the school funding process and informed that the Department for Education is seeking to reform the system so that it is more transparent and easier to understand<sup>9</sup>.

12.1.2 Parents were then asked to rank what they think the most important objectives should be in allocating school funding. As figure 14 shows, meeting local needs is ranked as the most important objective by 51% of parents, consistent with the level of priority it was given in 2016.

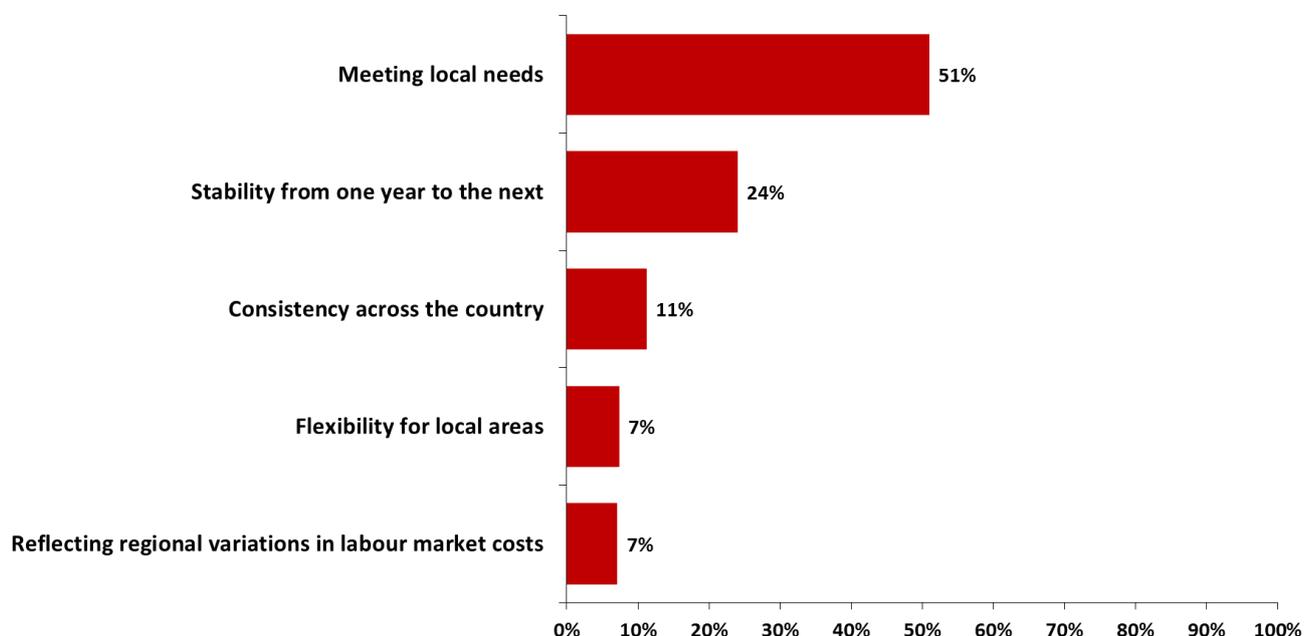
12.1.3 As second priority, a quarter of parents (24%) rank stability from one year to the next as the most important objective in allocating school funding, also on par with 2016. Parents with children in secondary school (28%) are somewhat more likely than those with children in primary school (23%) to feel that stability from one year to the next should be the top priority.

12.1.4 Relatively, however, parents place less importance on flexibility for local areas (7%), as well as on consistency across the country (11%) and reflecting regional variations in labour market costs (7%).

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<sup>9</sup> The Department for Education funds schools to provide education to children and support them in fulfilling their potential. Funding for schools is allocated through the use of a formula that includes a range of determining indicators. The Department for Education is seeking to reform the school funding system so that it is transparent, easy to understand and sufficiently meets to needs of pupils in schools.

**Figure 14: Ranking of most important objectives in allocating school funding (% ranked first)**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=between 1017 and 1023, due to question being optional)

	Ranked first	Ranked second	Ranked third	Ranked fourth	Ranked fifth
Meeting local needs	51%	22%	14%	8%	6%
Stability from one year to the next	24%	28%	22%	18%	9%
Consistency across the country	11%	12%	16%	22%	38%
Flexibility for local areas	7%	25%	31%	25%	12%
Reflecting regional variations in labour market costs	7%	14%	17%	27%	34%

Base: All London Parents (2017 n=between 1017 and 1023, due to question being optional)

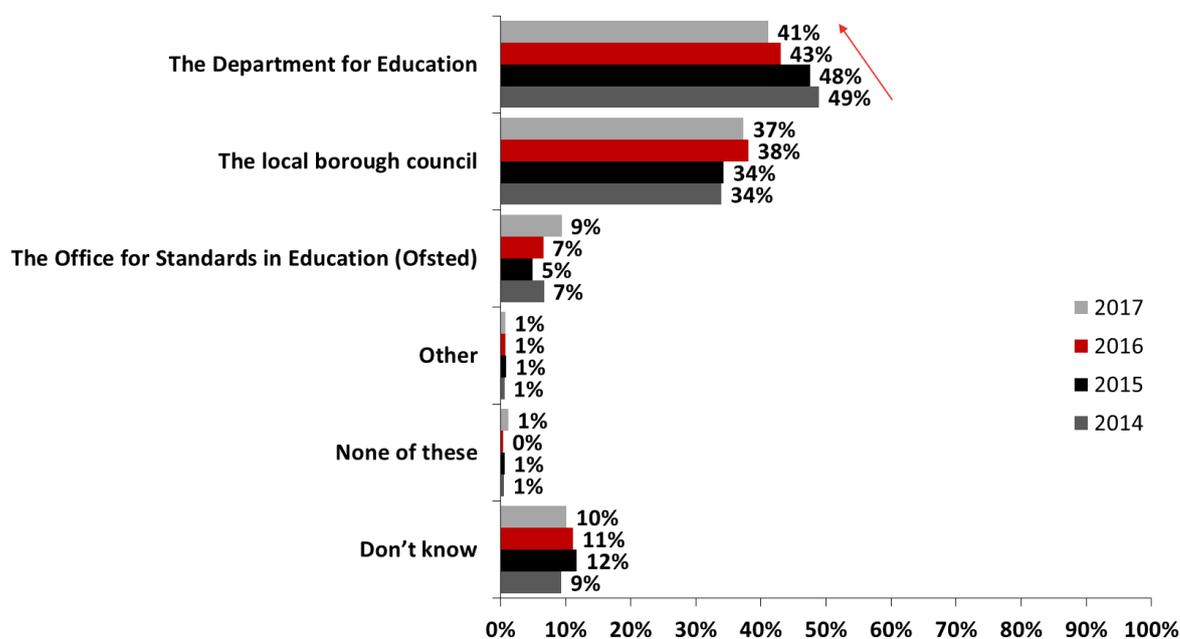
### 13 Responsibility for school funding

13.1.1 When asked who they think should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools, two in five (41%) London parents express the belief that the Department for Education should have this role, while the local council follows as a close second (37%).

13.1.2 However, as shown in figure 15, over the course of the past four years there has been a gradual decrease in the proportion of parents who feel the Department for Education should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to schools, from 49% in 2014 to 41% in 2017. The emphasis has shifted slightly in the direction of the local borough council and Ofsted. A gap of 15% between the Department for Education and local council in 2014 has been reduced to a difference of only 4% in 2017.

13.1.3 Parents of children in a Maintained school (42%) are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy (34%) or Free school (33%) to believe that the local council should have primary responsibility for allocating funding to all schools. Additionally, parents of a higher social grade (43% AB and 38% C1) more commonly express this belief than those from the lower social grades (26% C2 and 34% DE).

**Figure 15: Views on which organisation should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2016 n=1022; 2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052)

## 14 Financial auditing of school spending

### *Scrutiny of spending*

14.1.1 The vast majority (81%) of London parents feel it is important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local councils, with 47% feeling it is very important<sup>10</sup>. These findings are consistent with 2016. Although parents are most likely to state this opinion about Maintained schools, they feel nearly equally strongly about the importance of local councils being able to scrutinise the spending of Academies (74%) and Free schools (75%).

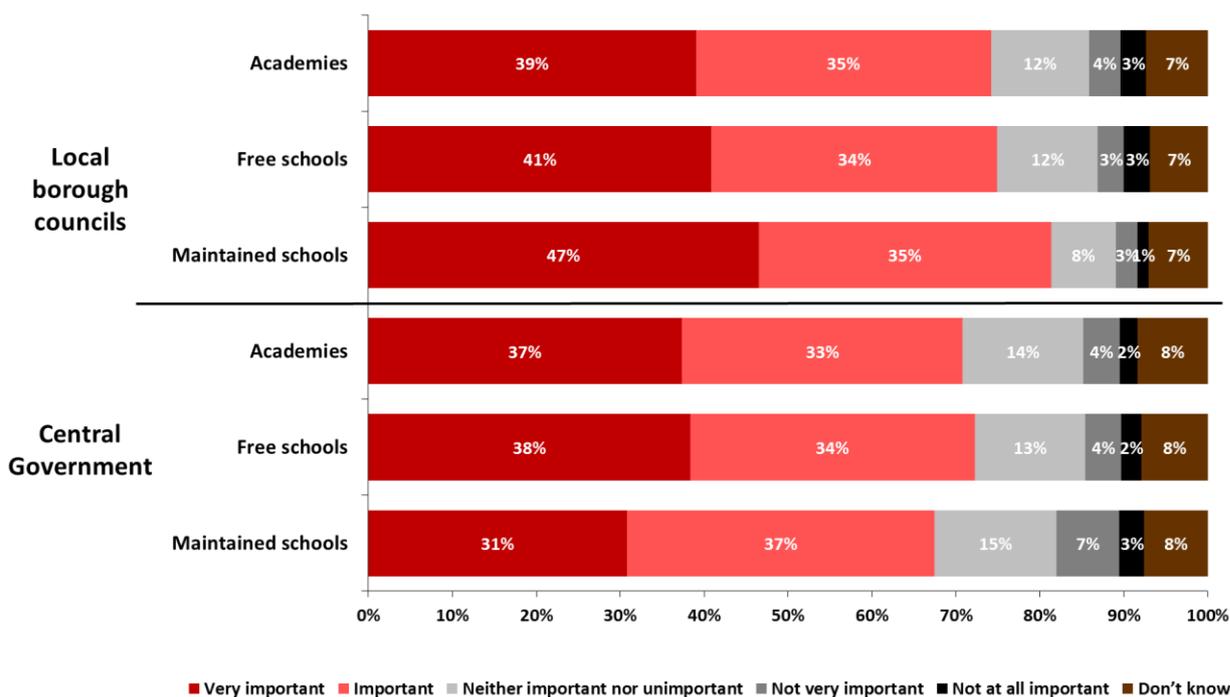
<sup>10</sup> Respondents were presented with the following introduction before answering this question: Maintained schools are funded by local borough councils by grants they receive from the government. They are required to make a financial return to their local borough council at the end of the financial year who will scrutinise the way money is spent and check that public money is being spent wisely. They will do this, in part, by compiling a borough wide analysis of financial performance, using benchmarked data to compare how each school is performing. Academies and Free schools are set up with a funding agreement between the school and central government (the Department for Education) and report back to central government who scrutinise their accounts. These arrangements mean local borough councils have no say in the way Academies and Free Schools spend their money and have less local ability to scrutinise the public value for money. Some groups have argued that these changes to how some schools are held accountable for spending at a local level has reduced the ability of councillors to hold schools accountable and that this is having a negative impact.

14.1.2 When considering the importance of central government scrutinising the spending of schools, the findings for Academies (71%) and Free schools (72%) are comparable to the proportion who believe it is important for local councils to scrutinise their spending.

14.1.3 However, it is not consistent for Maintained schools; 67% of parents believe that it is important for central government to scrutinise the spending of Maintained schools, significantly lower than the proportion who believe it is important for local councils to be scrutinising their spending (81%). This finding is also consistent with 2016.

14.1.4 Five years on from when this survey was first conducted in 2013, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of London parents who believe that it is important for Maintained schools to have their spending scrutinised by central government, falling from 74% to 67%.

**Figure 16: Perceptions of the importance of different school types having their spending scrutinised by local and central government**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

14.1.5 Where parents feel it is important that local councils scrutinise the spending of Academies and Free schools, they are most likely to think this because they expect local councillors to be accountable for the use of public funds locally (55%). Half of parents in London also feel it is important that local councils scrutinise Academy and Free school spending because they want local officials to do this on behalf of taxpayers (53%) or that local borough councils should have more information to benchmark local school spending (49%).

*Ensuring responsible school spending*

14.1.6 When thinking about Academies and Free schools, London parents are most likely to feel that Governors (45%) should be ensuring that money is being spent in a responsible way. Subsequently, they believe that local borough councils should be ensuring this (40% and 42% respectively).

14.1.7 When considering Maintained schools, a majority of parents (55%) believe that local councils should be ensuring they spend their money in a responsible way, on par with 2016. They are significantly more likely to state this opinion for local councils than for any other group, with 43% believing this accountability should sit with Governors and 35% with the Department for Education.

**Figure 17: Views on who should ensure each type of school is spending its money in a responsible way**

	<b>Academies</b>	<b>Free schools</b>	<b>Maintained schools</b>
<b>Local borough councils</b>	40%	42%	55%
<b>Governors</b>	45%	45%	43%
<b>Department for Education</b>	37%	34%	35%
<b>Parents</b>	19%	22%	18%
<b>Central government</b>	20%	18%	18%
<b>Private accountants</b>	13%	13%	9%
<b>Other</b>	2%	1%	2%
<b>No one</b>	0%	1%	0%
<b>Don't know</b>	11%	10%	11%

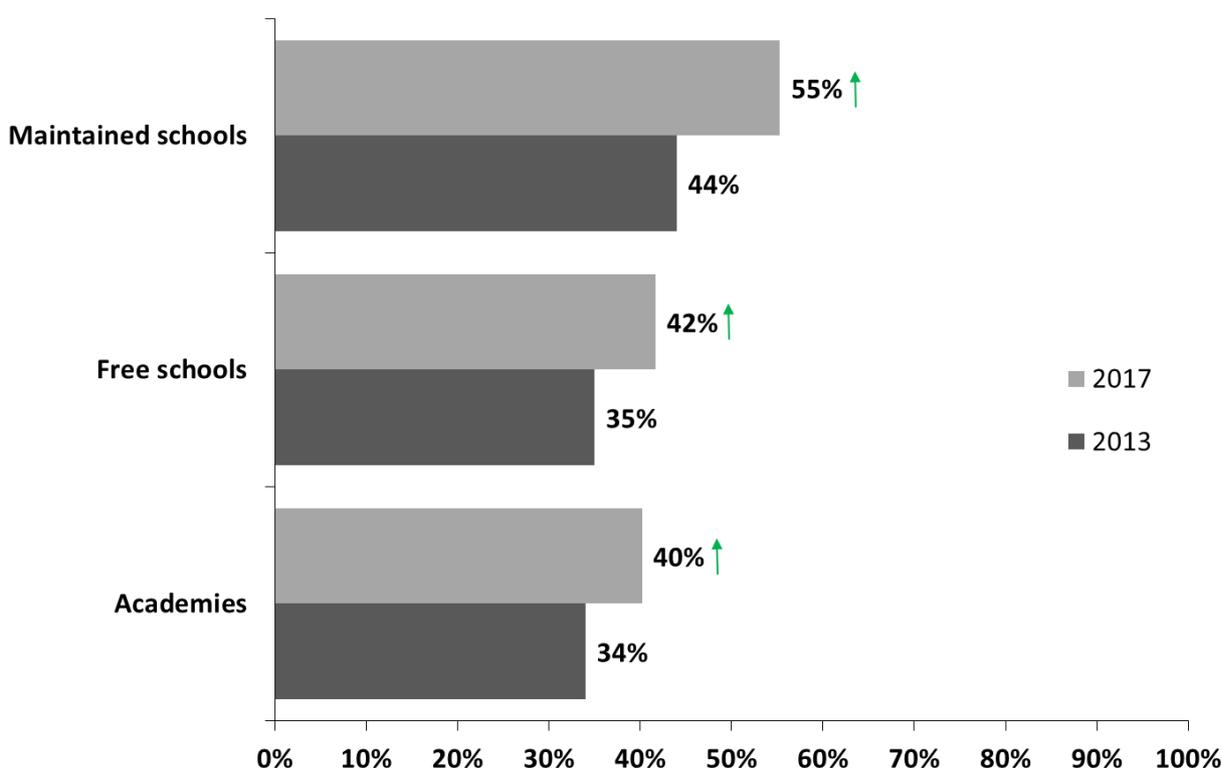
**Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)**

14.1.8 Five years on from the first wave of this research conducted in 2013, there have been some significant shifts in London parents' opinions on the role that local councils should play in monitoring the spending of schools.

14.1.9 Parents have become much more likely to believe that local councils should be ensuring Maintained schools are spending their money responsibly, rising from 44% in 2013 to 55% in 2017. In turn, parents are significantly less likely in 2017 to believe that the Department for Education should be ensuring the responsible spending of Maintained schools, with this figure decreasing from 42% to 35% over the last five years. Where there was only a 2% gap between local councils and the Department for Education in 2013, five years later this has grown to 20%.

14.1.10 In comparison with five years ago, London parents have also become more likely to think that local councils should be ensuring the responsible spending of Academies and Free schools. As shown in figure 18, while two in five report in 2017 that they feel local councils should have this role (40% and 42% respectively), these figures were recorded as 34% and 35%, respectively, in 2013.

**Figure 18: Proportion who think local councils should ensure each school type is spending money in a responsible way – 2013 vs. 2017**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2013 n=1019)

14.1.11 A broader trend can be observed throughout these findings in that over recent years parents appear to have become less inclined to believe that the Department for Education should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to schools or accountable for ensuring the responsible spending of Maintained schools. Instead, the emphasis has shifted in the direction of the local council. There has been an increase in the proportion of parents who feel the local council should be primarily responsible for allocating school funding, and they have become much more likely to believe that local councils should be ensuring Maintained schools are spending their money responsibly.

## 15 Funding pressures

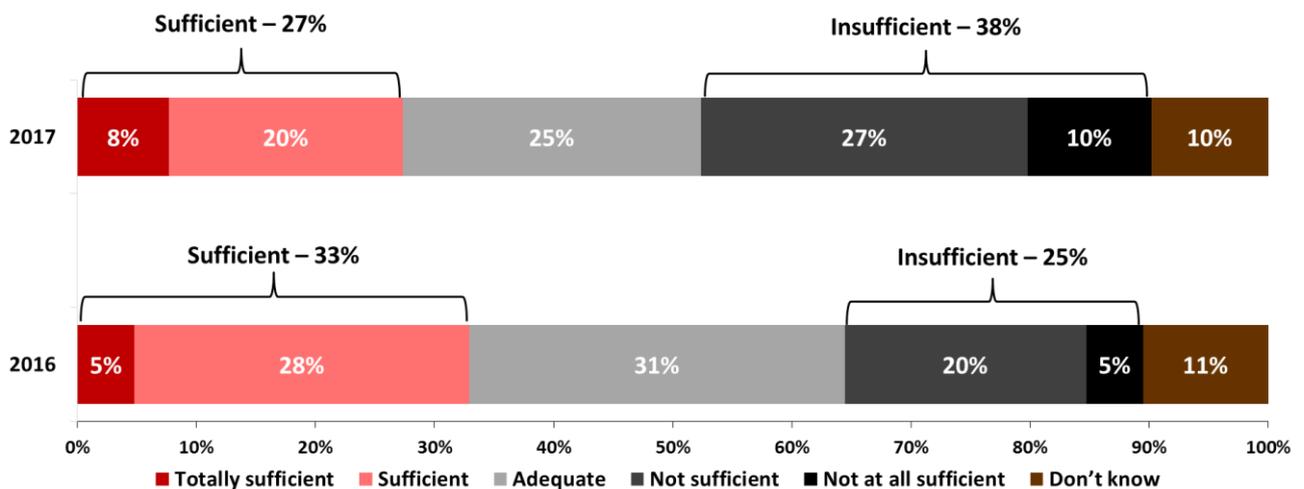
- 15.1.1 Four in ten (38%) parents in London feel that the current level of funding their child's school receives is insufficient. Higher than the one in four London parents (27%) who feel that the current level of funding/ resources their child's school receives is sufficient for what it needs to operate effectively, and a roughly equal proportion (25%) feel it is adequate.
- 15.1.2 Parents of children who attend a Free school (42%) are significantly more likely than those with children at Maintained schools (24%) or Academies (30%) to feel the level of funding is sufficient, as are parents who live in Inner London (33%) as opposed to Outer London (23%).
- 15.1.3 Notably, parents who believe the level of funding/ resources their child's school receives is not enough to operate effectively are more likely to live in one of the bottom five performing boroughs based on 2015/16 GCSE results<sup>11</sup> (48% compared with 34% among the top five<sup>12</sup>).
- 15.1.4 In comparison with 2016, there has been a significant increase in the overall proportion of London parents who feel their child's school does *not* receive sufficient funding/resources to operate effectively, rising sharply from 25% to 38%. Notably, the proportion within this group who say this funding is not at all sufficient has doubled over the past year, from 5% to 10%.
- 15.1.5 As a result, significantly smaller proportions of parents than in 2016 believe the funding their child's school receives is enough to operate effectively. While 27% feel it is sufficient and 25% that it is adequate, these figures have decreased from 33% and 31% respectively since last year.
- 15.1.6 In fact, this year there is now a larger share of parents who think the funding/resources their child's school receives is insufficient than those who believe it is sufficient.

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<sup>11</sup> The bottom five performing London boroughs in 2015/16 based on GCSE performance were: Brent, Croydon, Greenwich, Barking and Dagenham, and Lewisham.

<sup>12</sup> The top five performing London boroughs in 2015/16 based on GCSE performance were: Kingston upon Thames, Sutton, Kensington and Chelsea, Barnet, and Bromley.

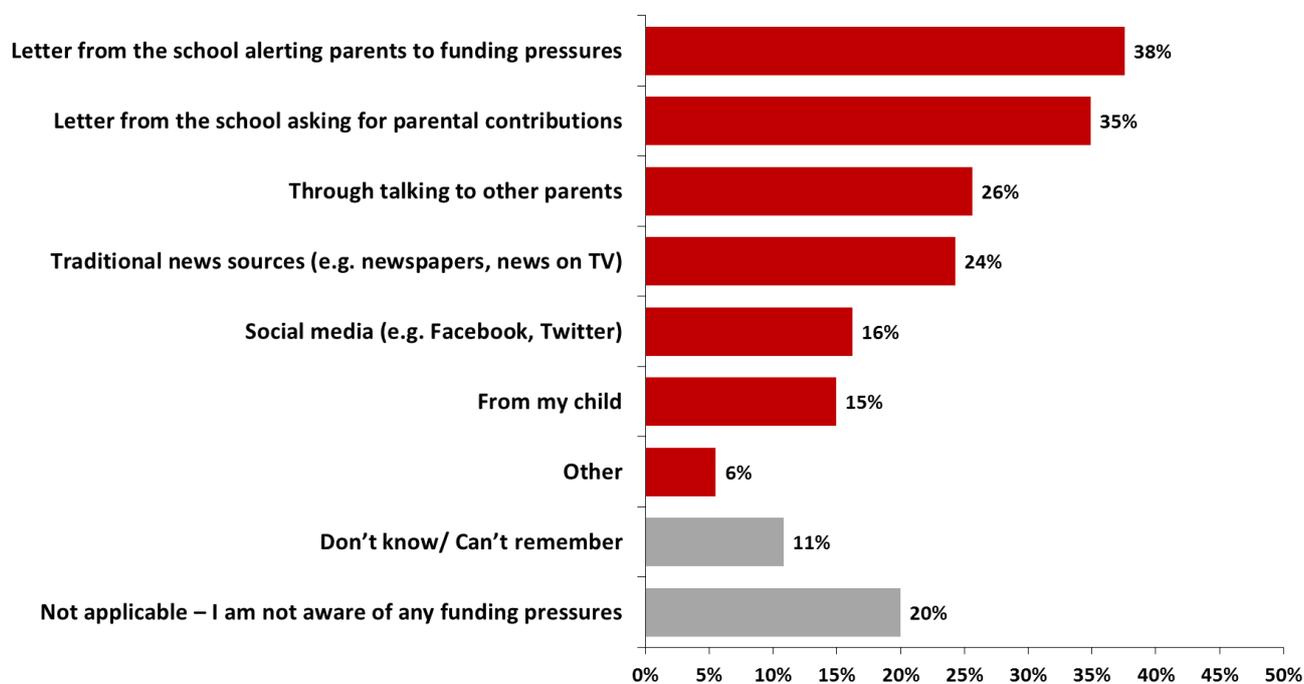
**Figure 19: Perception of whether or not the current level of funding/ resources their child's school receives is sufficient for what it needs to operate effectively**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2016 n=1022)

- 15.1.7 Awareness of funding pressures for London schools proves to be prevalent. Four in five London parents (80%) indicate that they are aware of funding pressures at their child's school.
- 15.1.8 Overall, parents with a child at a Maintained school (84%) are more likely than those with children at an Academy (78%) or Free school (74%) to report being aware of these pressures.
- 15.1.9 London parents were asked how, if at all, they have been made aware of funding pressures at their child's school. As shown in figure 21, more than a third of all parents have received a letter from the school alerting them of these pressures (38%) or asking for parental contributions (35%) – the most common way through which they are being notified. Among parents with a child at a Maintained school, these figures rise to 43% and 40% respectively.
- 15.1.10 A quarter of parents have also heard about funding pressures at their child's school through talking to other parents (26%) and news sources like newspaper and TV (24%).
- 15.1.11 Somewhat less commonly, London parents have been alerted to funding pressures through social media (16%) or by hearing the news from their child (15%).

**Figure 20: Ways through which parents have been made aware of funding pressures at their child's school**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

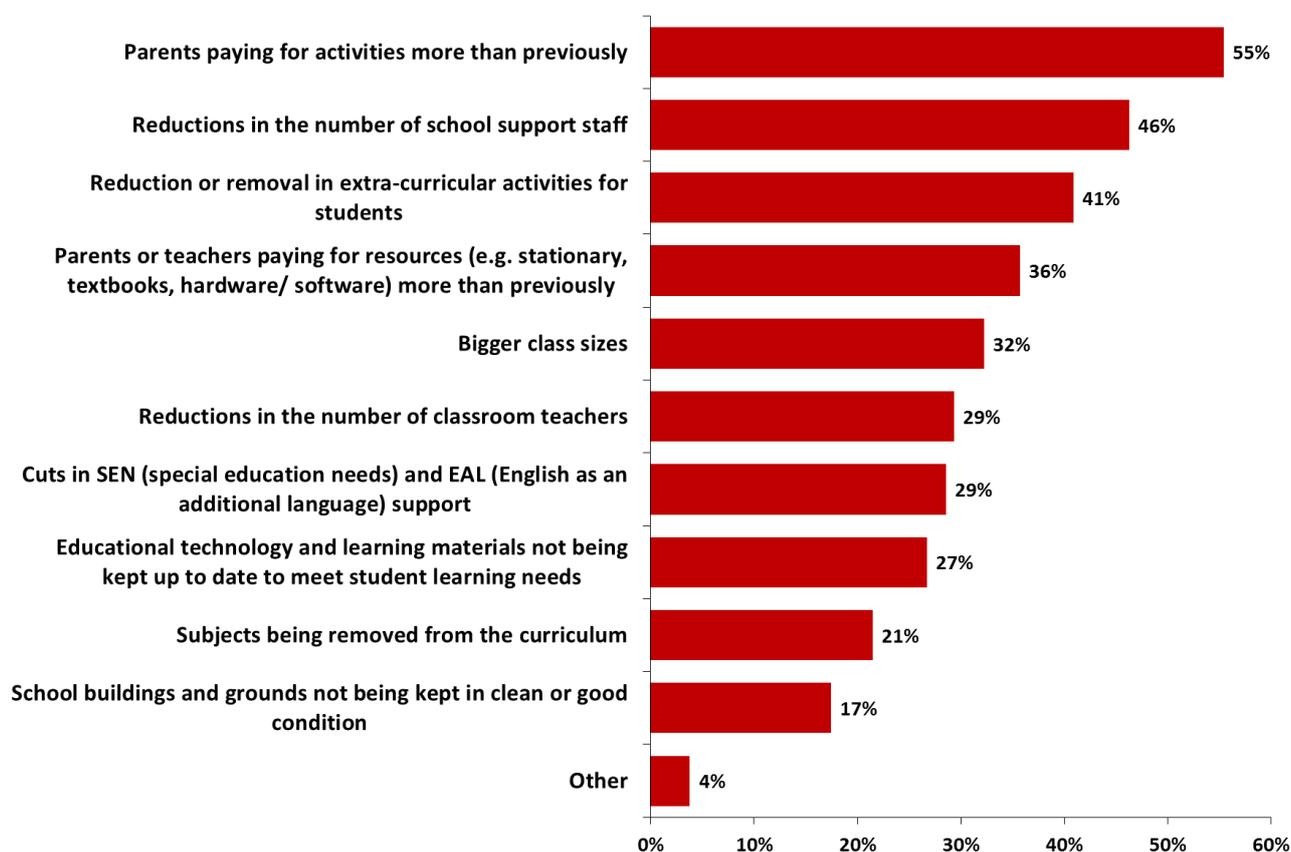
15.1.12 Parents aware of pressures on funding at their child's school were asked to think about the impacts they've seen at the school over the last three years as a result. Consistent with 2016, the impact identified most often is parents paying for activities more than previously, reported by more than half (55%) of London parents aware of pressures.

15.1.13 Other commonly mentioned impacts of funding pressures are reductions in the number of school support staff (46%), reductions in/ removal of extra-curricular activities for students (41%), and parents/teachers paying for resources (36%).

15.1.14 Notably, parents of children at Maintained schools (50%) and Academies (46%) are significantly more likely than those with children at Free schools (30%) to observe that school support staff have been reduced as a result of pressures on funding.

15.1.15 Relatively, parents are less likely to report subjects being removed from the curriculum (21%) and school buildings/grounds not being kept in good condition (17%) as impacts of funding pressures at their child's school.

**Figure 21: Parents’ perceptions of the impacts that pressures on funding are having on their child’s school**



Base: All London Parents who are aware of pressures on funding in their child’s school (2016 n=667)

15.1.16 In the context of all London parents, including those not aware of any funding pressures at their child’s school<sup>13</sup>, roughly a third (35%) believe that an impact of stress on funding has been parents paying for activities more than previously. Additionally, more than a quarter of all London parents associate reductions in the number of school support staff (29%) and reduction/removal of extra-curricular activities (26%) as impacts of pressures on funding at their child’s school.

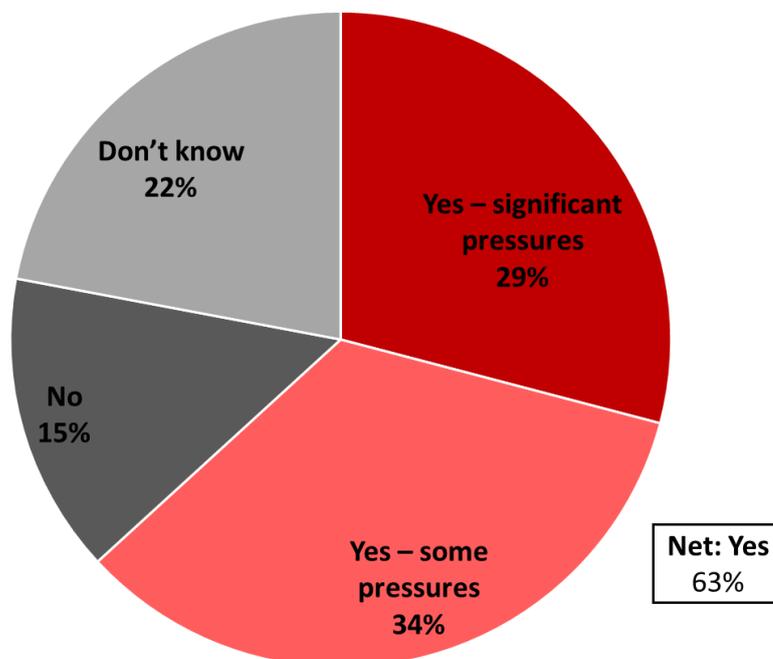
<sup>13</sup> This question was not asked to parents who are not aware of any funding pressures at their child’s school, so the data has been re-calculated to account for them

## 16 Future funding pressures

16.1.1 Looking into the future, nearly two thirds of London parents (63%) believe their child’s school is facing upcoming funding pressures. This is a perception particularly pronounced among parents with children in a Maintained school (70%), while somewhat less common among those with children in an Academy (62%) or Free school (54%).

16.1.2 A significant proportion of parents are unsure about whether or not their child’s school is facing upcoming funding pressures (22%). In fact, only 15% believe that the school is not facing these pressures.

**Figure 22: Parents’ awareness of whether their child’s school is facing future pressure on funding**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

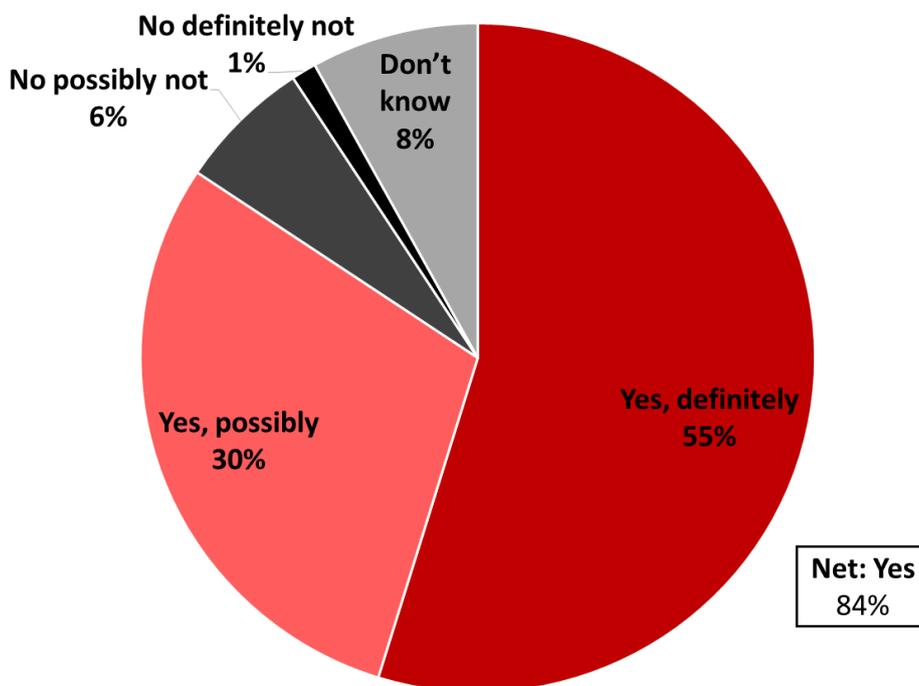
## 17 School budget reductions

17.1.1 The vast majority of parents (84%) believe that if their child’s school budget were to be reduced, it would have a negative impact on the quality of the education the school provides. Only a small proportion (7%) feel it would *not* have a negative impact. These findings are on par with 2016.

17.1.2 Parents of children in a Maintained school (60%) are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy (52%) or Free school (40%) to believe that a reduction in budget would definitely have a negative impact on the quality of the education.

17.1.3 Additionally, parents of a higher social grade are significantly more like than those of a lower social grade to believe that it would have a negative impact on the quality of the education (89%/88% among AB/C1 compared with 75%/78% among C2/DE).

**Figure 23: Perception of whether or not a reduction in their child’s school budget would have a negative impact on the quality of the education the school provides**

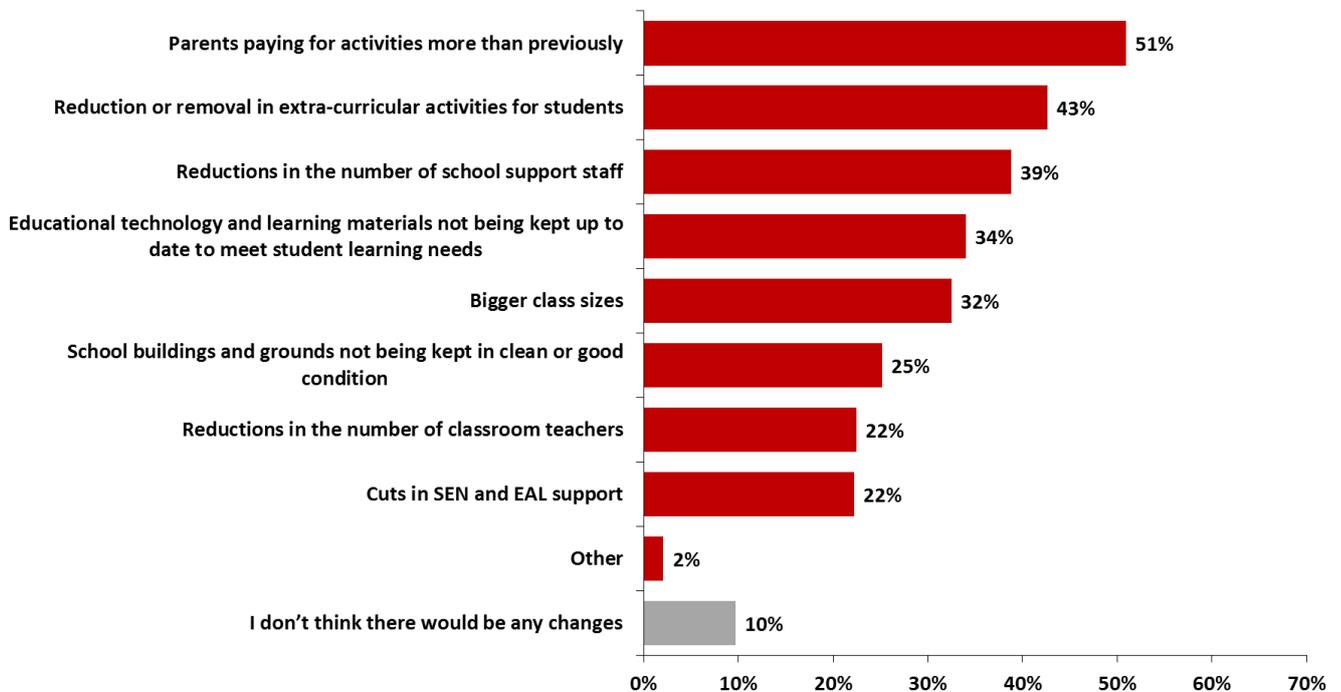


Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1030)

17.1.4 One-in-two parents (52%) believe that if there were to be a reduction in the level of funding their child’s school receives, an outcome would be parents paying for activities more than previously. Consistent with 2016, it is the response stated most often. This finding mirrors the top impact of funding pressures reported by parents aware of these issues at their child’s school.

- 17.1.5 The second most commonly perceived impact of a potential reduction in funding is reductions in the number of school support staff (45%). Notably, since 2016 there has been an increase in the proportion of parents expecting this possible outcome, rising from 39%.
- 17.1.6 Parents also often suggest that parents/teachers paying for resources (42%) and the reduction in/removal of extra-curricular activities (39%) could be likely outcomes of a reduction in the level of funding their child's school receives.
- 17.1.7 Parents of children at Maintained schools are significantly more likely than those with children at Academies and Free schools to view several outcomes as likely in the event of a reduction in school funding, including educational technology and learning materials not being kept up to date, cuts in SEN and EAL support, and school buildings/grounds not being kept in good condition.
- 17.1.8 Consistent with 2016, one-in-ten parents (10%) do not think there would be any changes if there was to be a reduction in their child's school funding. Parents of children at Free schools (17%) are most likely to report this.

**Figure 24: Perceptions of where changes could be made if there was to be a reduction in the level of funding their child’s school receives**



Base: All London Parents, excluding those who said 'Don't know' (2017 n=854)

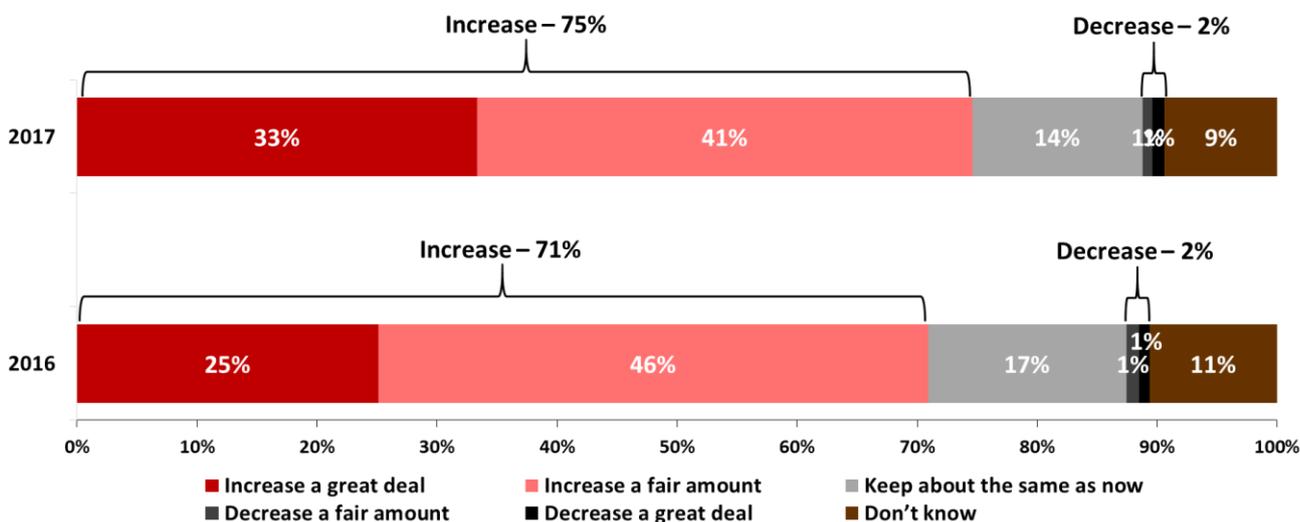
## 18 Perceptions of government spending on education

18.1.1 The vast majority of London parents (75%) feel that the UK government should increase the amount of money it spends on education and schools. A third (33%) believe it should increase by a great deal and 41% by a fair amount.

18.1.2 As shown in figure 26, since last year there has been a slight rise in the proportion of London parents who believe that the government should increase spending on education and schools, from 71% to 75%. Looking within these attitudes there has also been a strengthening of opinion with a third of parents (33%) now reporting that the government should increase a great deal the amount it spends on education and schools – an increase from the quarter (25%) who felt that way in 2016.

18.1.3 Only a very small proportion (2%) believe the UK government should decrease the amount of money it spends. The remainder feel it should be kept the same as now (14%) or are unsure (9%). These findings are on par with 2016.

**Figure 25: Opinion on whether the UK government should increase, decrease, or maintain the amount of money it spends on education and schools**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2016 n=1022)

18.1.4 Parents with children in a Maintained school (79%) are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy (72%) or Free school (67%) to feel that the UK government should increase its spending on education. This tells a story that is consistent with earlier findings indicating that parents of children in Maintained schools more commonly believe the level of funding/ resources their child’s school receives is not enough to operate effectively.

## 19 Sponsorship of inadequate Maintained schools

19.1.1 Parents were provided with an introduction<sup>14</sup> explaining that the Department for Education can force a Maintained school to convert to an Academy if it has been rated inadequate by Ofsted, and that a sponsor needs to be identified in order to do this.

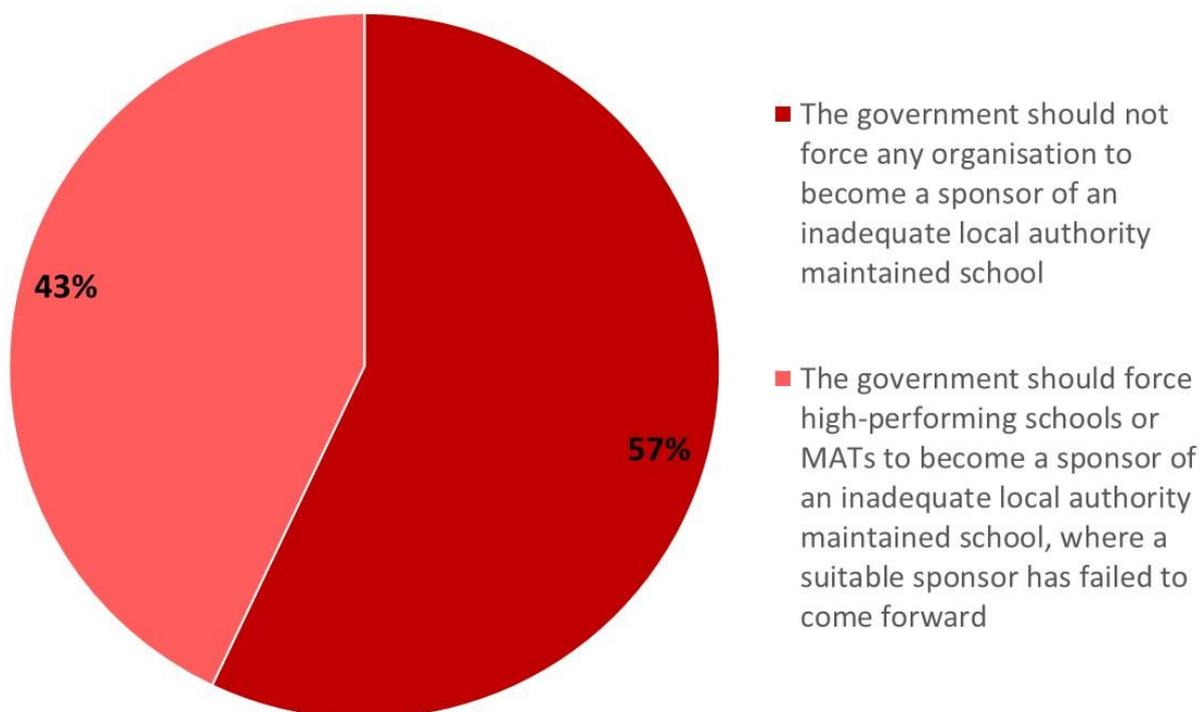
<sup>14</sup> Where a local authority maintained school has been rated as inadequate by Ofsted, the Department for Education can force it to convert to an academy. In order to do this a sponsor needs to be identified. A sponsor is an organisation or person responsible for the performance and finances of the school, recruiting the head teacher, and selecting the governing body. Often academy sponsors are responsible for a number of schools and these are called Multi Academy Trusts. Many high-performing schools and Multi Academy Trusts have taken on sponsorship of failing schools, but currently the government does not force organisations to become sponsors for a school and instead waits for a willing volunteer. Sometimes it is hard to find a volunteer sponsor because there is a concern that taking on a failing school will damage the reputation of an organisation or individual. This means that some schools are left for long periods of time without a sponsor, which can result in a lack of oversight, governance and leadership.

19.1.2 When asked their stance on whether or not the government should force an organisation to become a sponsor of an inadequate Maintained school, the most common response was that it should not. However, a significant proportion were also unsure.

19.1.3 When looking only at those who agreed or disagreed that the government should force high-performing schools or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to become a sponsor, the dominant sentiment is that no organisation should be forced to sponsor an inadequate Maintained school. Just over half (57%) state this belief, in comparison with 43% who think high-performing schools or MATs should step in.

19.1.4 In this scenario, parents of children at Maintained schools are not significantly more or less likely than those of children at Academies or Free schools to support one argument or the other.

**Figure 26: Parents views on whether the government should force an organisation to become a sponsor of an inadequate school**



**Base: All London Parents, excluding those who selected another organisation or were unsure (2017 n=683)**

## **Section 4: Perspectives on the control of the education system in England**

The fourth section of the report delves into London parents' perspectives on control in the education system.

### **20 How centralised or localised is the education system?**

20.1.1 After working through the survey, parents were asked to what extent they believe the education system is under central or local control, in line with the deliberative method used throughout the research.

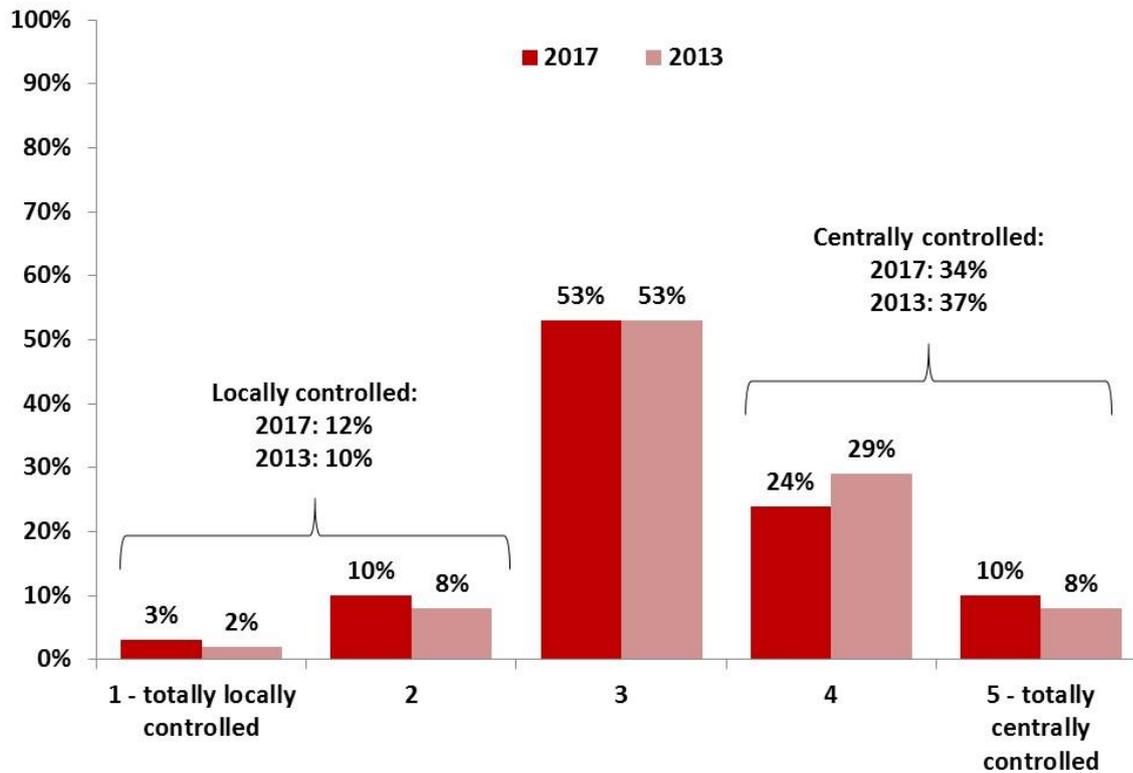
20.1.2 As figure 28 shows, parents are more likely to feel that the education system is more centrally controlled (34%) than locally controlled (12%). When compared to the first year of this research (2013) we find that five years on views remain fairly consistent with a small decrease in the proportion of parents who feel that the education system is under central control.

20.1.3 Although, just over half of parents in London (53%), when asked at the end of the survey, are in the middle ground on whether the English education system is centrally or locally controlled<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Respondents were presented with the following introduction before answering this question: Some people feel that with the introduction of Academies and Free schools the education system in England is now more centralised as the extent of local borough councils' control over these schools in its area has been diminished and the Secretary of State is directly responsible for individual schools. Others feel that Academies and Free schools give more control to local people in the decisions made over the education the children receive.

**Figure 27: Thinking of the education system in England, how centralised (i.e. under central government control) or localised (i.e. under local control) do you think the system currently is? – asked at end of the survey**



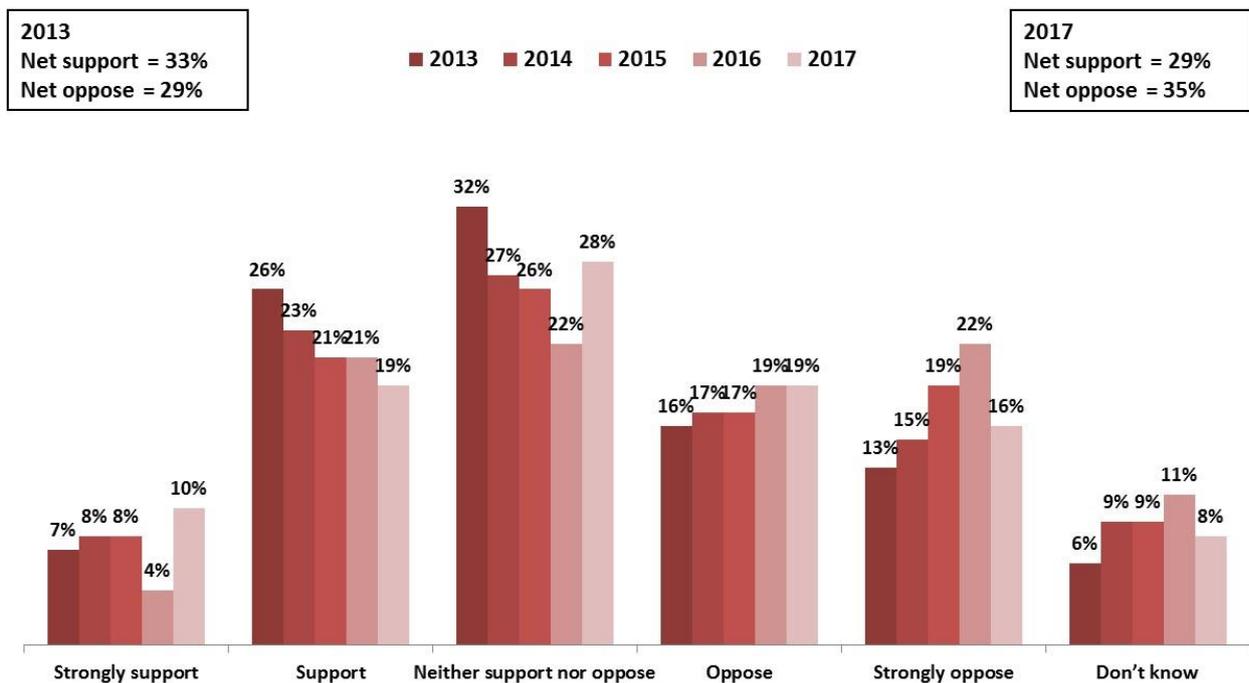
Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030, 2013 n=1019)

## 21 London parents' support for Academies and Free schools

21.1.1 Opposition from parents in London to the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools has increased over the past five years. The proportion of parents opposing the growth in Academy and Free schools has increased by six percentage points from the 2013 survey, with opposition now standing at 35%.

21.1.2 Currently, three out of ten (29%) support the growth of Academies and Free schools and a similar proportion (28%) neither support nor oppose. The proportion who neither support nor oppose has increased by six percentage points from 2016, so there is still a large amount of uncertainty on the growth of Academies and Free schools.

**Figure 28: To what extent do you support or oppose the idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools?**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030; 2016 n=1022; 2015 n= 1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

Note change from 2013 to 2016 shown in brackets.

21.1.3 Opposition to the idea of more Academies and Free schools remains higher from those from a higher social grade, with 41% of those from an AB social grade in opposition to the idea of more Academies and Free schools compared with 22% of those from a DE social grade. Opposition from parents is also higher for those living in a London Borough in the bottom 5% performers for attainment (45%) than from those who live in the top 5% performing boroughs (30%).

21.1.4 By school type we also find that parents with a child in a Maintained school remain significantly more likely to oppose more Academies and Free schools than those parents with a child in an Academy or Free school. As can be seen below:

- Maintained schools – 22% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 46% oppose
- Academy schools – 36% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 27% oppose
- Free schools – 44% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 16% oppose

## Section 5: Careers and vocational education

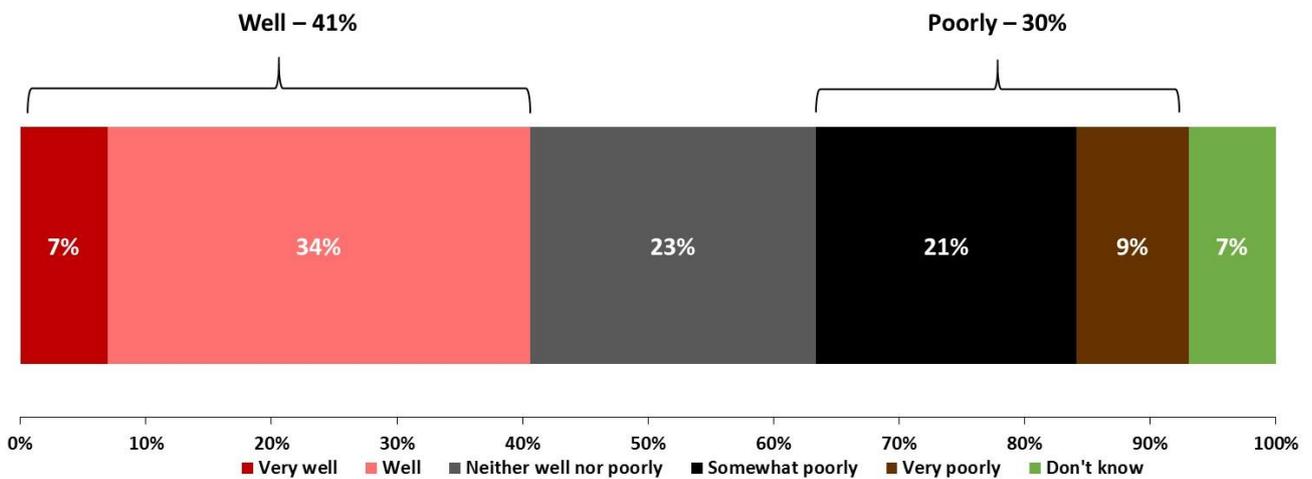
The fifth and final section of this report examines parents' views on the relationship between the education system and the world of work.

### Perceptions of careers advice and work experience

21.1.5 Parents in London provide no majority consensus as to whether the education system prepares children well for the world of work. Four out of ten parents (41%) report that they think the system does prepare children well for the world of work and three out of ten (30%) feel that they system prepares children poorly. It should be noted that a further three out of ten (30%) have no opinion either way or do not know.

21.1.6 There are no differences in the views of parents with a child at primary school and those with a child at secondary school as to how well or poorly the education system prepares children for the world of work.

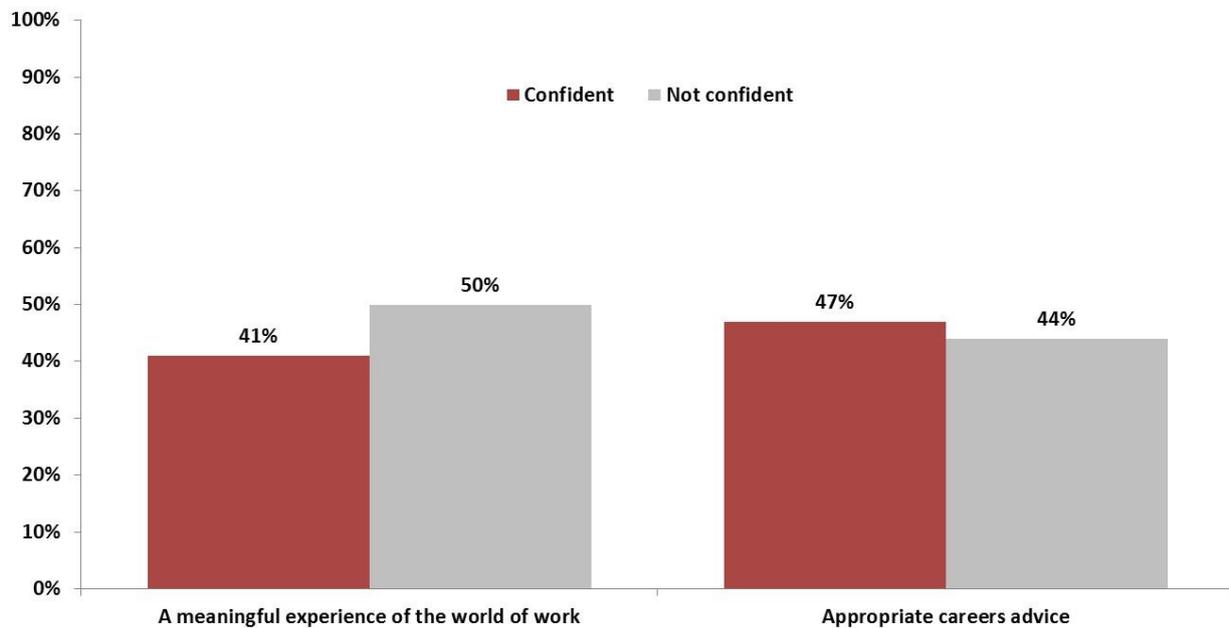
**Figure 29: Opinion on whether the education system up to the age of 18 prepares children well or poorly for the world of work**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

- 21.1.7 Parental views on how well the education system prepares children for the world of work are broadly consistent across the type of school that parents have children in. However, younger parents aged 25-34 (53%) are significantly more likely than those aged 35-44 (37%), 45-54 (39%) and 55+ (35%) to feel that the education system prepares children well for the world of work – possibly reflecting young parents’ more recent and better experience of the education system.
- 21.1.8 As figure 31 shows, parents in London were also asked to comment on how confident they are that their child will receive appropriate careers advice and a meaningful experience of the world of work before leaving education or training at the age of 18.
- 21.1.9 There are concerns from some parents that their child will not receive a meaningful experience of the world of work, with half (50%) of parents not confident that this will happen before their child leaves education.
- 21.1.10 Views on careers advice are divided, with 47% confident their child will receive appropriate careers advice and 44% not confident that this will happen before their child leaves education at the age of 18. Parents with a child in secondary school are more confident than parents with a child in primary school that their child will receive adequate careers advice – with 52% reporting this compared with 46%.

**Figure 30: Parents confidence that their child will receive appropriate careers advice and a meaningful experience of the world of work before leaving education or training at the age of 18**



Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

21.1.11 There are some differences by demographics in whether parents are confident that their child will receive appropriate careers advice and a meaningful experience of the world of work.

- Child will receive appropriate careers advice
  - Fathers (53%) are more confident than mothers (43%)
  - Parents in inner London (53%) are more confident than those in outer London (43%)
  - Parents with a child at a Free School (62%) are more confident than those with children at LA maintained (46%) and Academy (51%) schools
- Child will receive a meaningful experience of the world of work
  - Fathers (49%) are more confident than mothers (37%)
  - Parents aged 25-34 (59%) are more confident than those aged 35-44 (37%), 45-54 (37%) and 55+ (36%)
  - Parents in inner London (47%) are more confident than those in outer London (37%)

- Parents from a BME background (53%) are more confident than those from a white background (36%)
- Parents with a child at a Free School (60%) are more confident than those with children at LA maintained (38%) and Academy (45%) schools

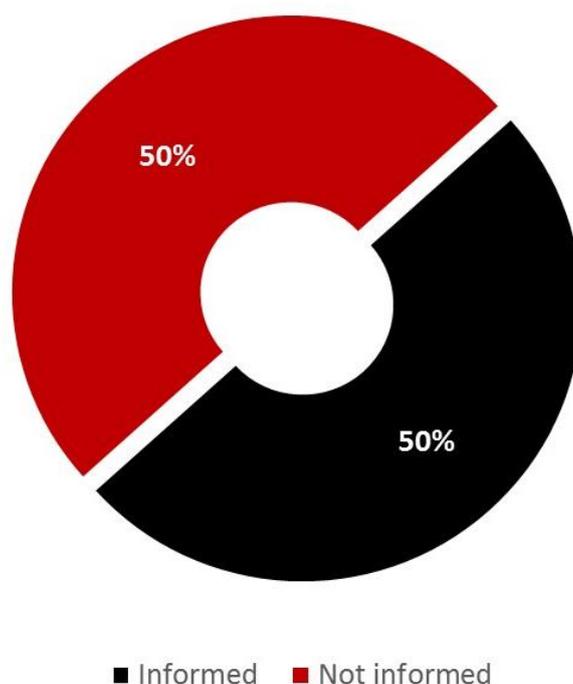
### *Advising children on good career choices*

21.1.12 Thinking about how informed parents in London are about London's labour market in the context of supporting their child in making good career choices, parents are evenly split between feeling informed (50%) and not informed (50%).

21.1.13 Parents from a higher social grade (AB) are significantly more likely to feel informed about London's labour market than those parents from a lower social grade – with 59% of those from a AB group feeling informed compared with those from a C1 (47%), C2 (44%) and DE (39%) social grade.

21.1.14 Following the trend in this chapter on careers and work experience, fathers (59%), those aged 25-34 (60%), those living in inner London (60%) and those with a child in a Free school (62%) feel most informed about London's labour market.

**Figure 31: How well informed parents are about London's labour market in the context of supporting their child in making good career choices**



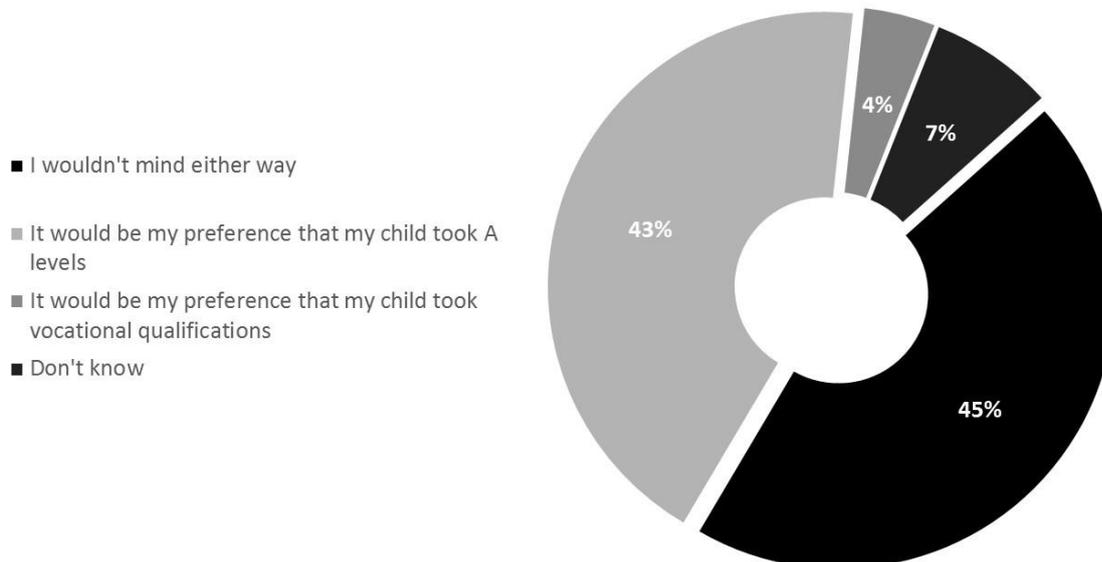
Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

#### Choice between A levels and vocational qualifications

21.1.15 Parents were asked how they would feel if their child chose to work towards vocational qualifications rather than A levels. A very small minority of parents (4%) report that it would be their preference that their child took vocational qualifications. Four out of ten (43%) parents would prefer that their child took A levels but a similar proportion (45%) would not mind if their child took vocational qualifications or A levels.

21.1.16 There are no differences between the views of parents with a child in primary school and those with a child in secondary school as to whether they have a preference for their child to study A levels or vocational qualifications.

**Figure 32: Sentiment on their child choosing whether to take A Levels or vocational qualifications**

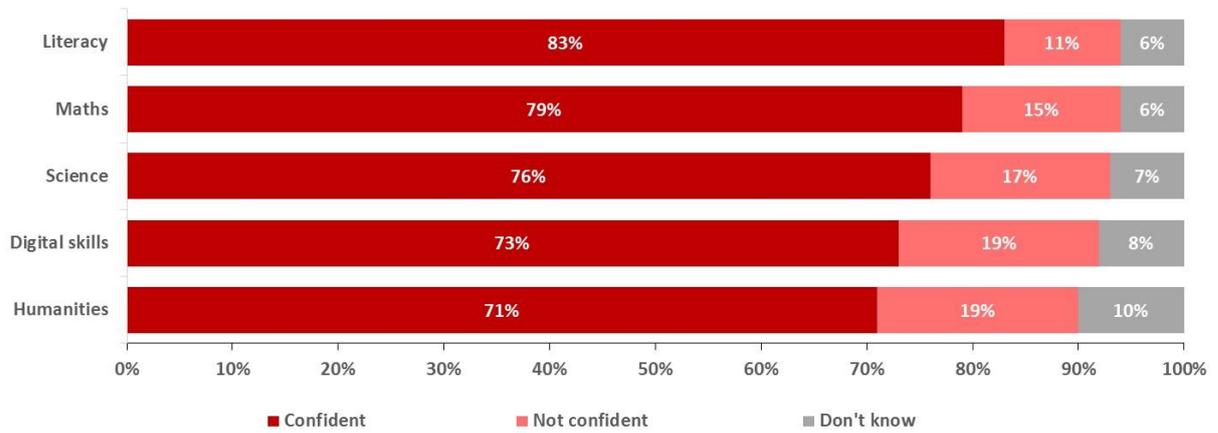


Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)

### Confidence in schools providing knowledge to children

21.1.17 As figure 34 shows, overall a majority parents are confident that their child's school is providing their child with an adequate level of knowledge across a range of subjects. Parents are most confident that their school is providing an adequate level of knowledge in literacy. While in a minority, a fifth (19%), of parents are not confident their school is providing their child with an adequate level of knowledge in digital skills and humanities.

**Figure 33: Parent's confidence that their child's school is providing a level of knowledge appropriate to your child in each of the following subject areas**



**Base: All London Parents (2017 n=1030)**