

Key findings 04

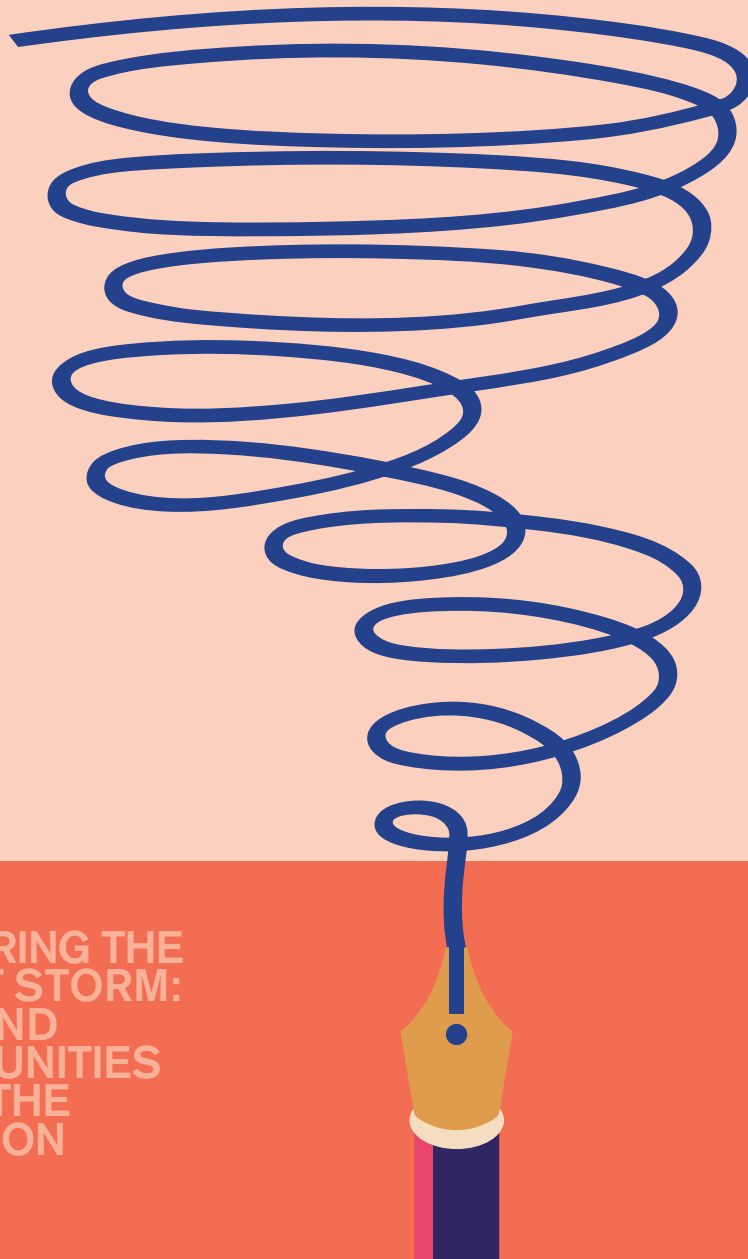
Shining a light on mental health 06

Focusing on increasing pressures 12

Switching on to digital education 18

Navigating a changing landscape 22

THE EDUCATION BAROMETER



WEATHERING THE
PERFECT STORM:
RISKS AND
OPPORTUNITIES
FACING THE
EDUCATION
SECTOR

**WE, AS A SOCIETY,
NEED TO EXPLORE
THE PURPOSE
THAT EDUCATION
PLAYS AND HOW
IT CAN SUPPORT
SOCIAL MOBILITY**

WELCOME

Britain has an internationally renowned school system, full of committed and passionate individuals but it is currently in the eye of the perfect storm. Increasing pressure on school staff and pupils to achieve the right grades is resulting in mental health and wellbeing challenges, against a backdrop of huge political and economic uncertainty. Moreover, they're being faced with ever-increasing and complex compliance and duties.

There's a real sense that we, as a society, need to explore the purpose that education plays and how it can support social mobility and capitalise on the technological revolution we're currently undergoing.

These issues have all led to testing times for schools, which are facing increasingly high expectations but without the necessary support and funding needed.

With this report, we have had the opportunity to take a step back and consider more fully the risks and opportunities presented by the current environment that schools face now and in the future.

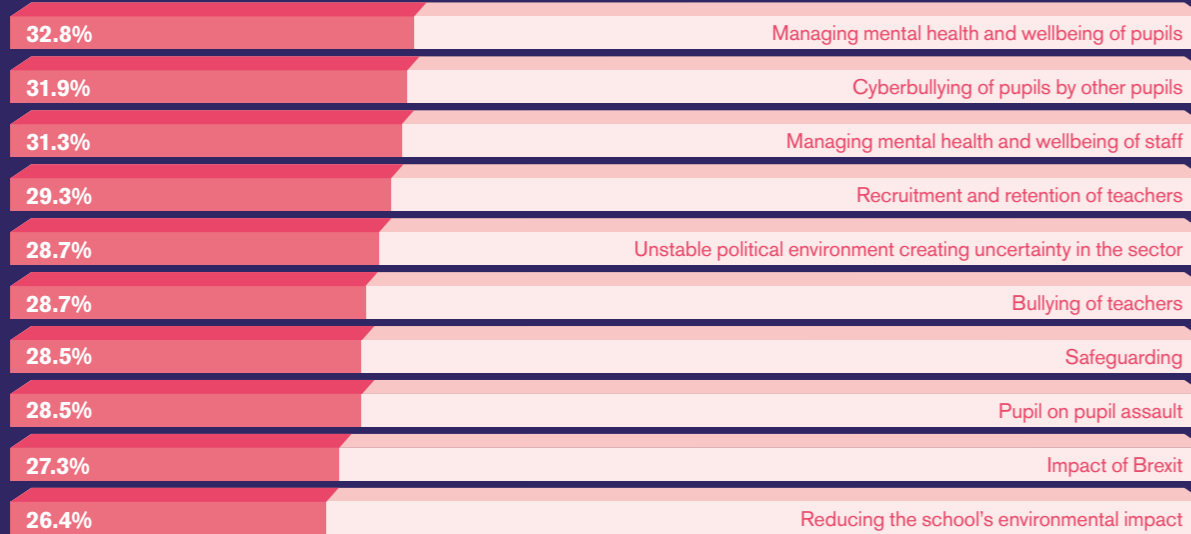
We're grateful that both the independent and state sector came together in a panel discussion to reflect upon current and future risks. What particularly struck me was how there were more similarities than differences between our schools in the types of risks they face.

We were able to take the themes from our panel discussion and conduct more in-depth research in order to form a clearer picture of the risks and the impact on UK schools.

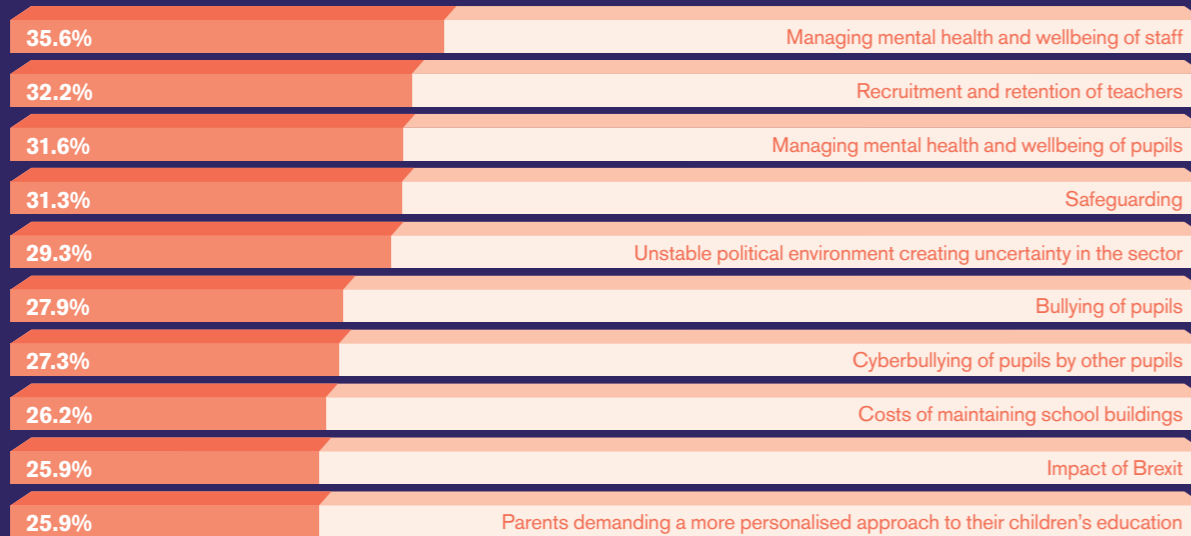
As one of the leading insurers of schools in the UK, Ecclesiastical is passionate about understanding our customers' challenges. We want to support them with risk and insurance solutions that are relevant to them and their world both today and in the future. We have been insuring schools for more than 55 years and remain as committed to the sector as ever. I hope this report serves the sector and its supporters well as they continue to navigate the lows and highs of providing a first-class education.

**Faith Kitchen, Education Director,
Ecclesiastical Insurance**

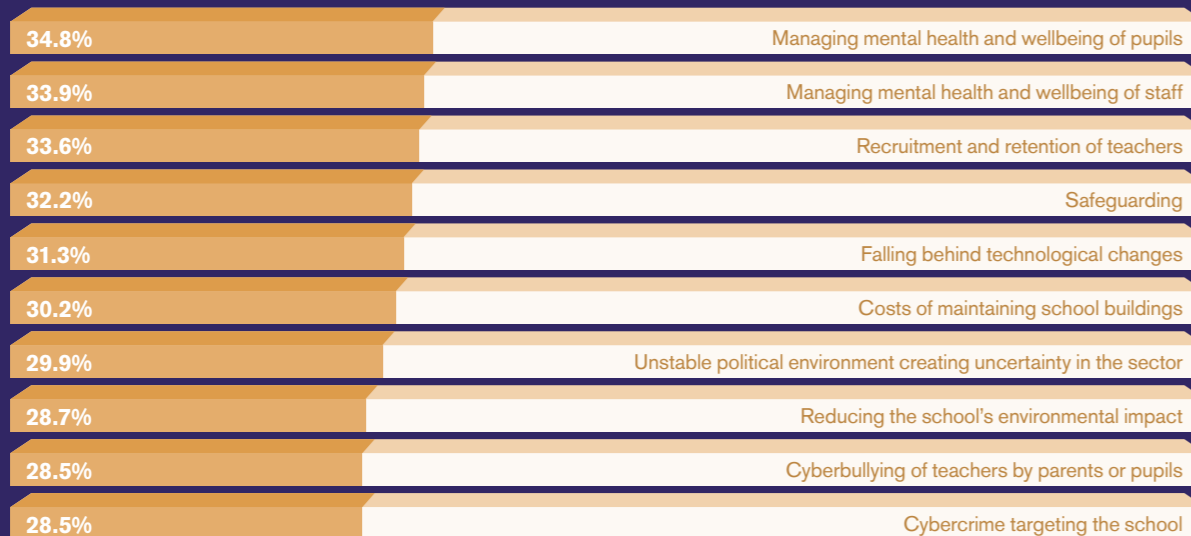
SHORT-TERM CONCERNS: 1 YEAR



MEDIUM-TERM CONCERNS: 3 YEARS



LONG-TERM CONCERNS: 5 YEARS



KEY FINDINGS

You don't have to look very hard these days to find alarmist headlines warning of an imploding education sector; head teachers paying for books from their own pockets, parental pressure changing the curriculum, and escalating mental health problems of staff and students.

We wanted to take a measured look at the risks really facing the sector, as well as identify which are short-term, medium-term and long-term. What are the biggest things affecting educators at the moment? What risks are changing? Which ones are perennial and does the sector have the skills and resources it needs to adapt?

To do this, we brought together representatives from across education to discuss the current and future risks. The insight contained in this report has been obtained from two sources – an advisory panel workshop with invited representatives which took place in June 2019, and a survey of 348 senior teachers working in UK primary and secondary schools (including 78 from independent/private schools), which took place in September and October 2019.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing matters to our sample. Managing mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff consistently came out among the top concerns for our sample in the short, medium and long term. Increasing expectations and growing pressures are taking a huge toll on the wellbeing of the school community with a direct impact on staff retention, quality of teaching and the behaviour of pupils. That's why it's one of the biggest risks facing schools now and in the future.

Recruitment and retention

Recruitment and retention is still a huge issue for our respondents, with a third (34%) citing it as the top long-term risk and many feeling that poor staff wellbeing is a contributory factor.

Political instability

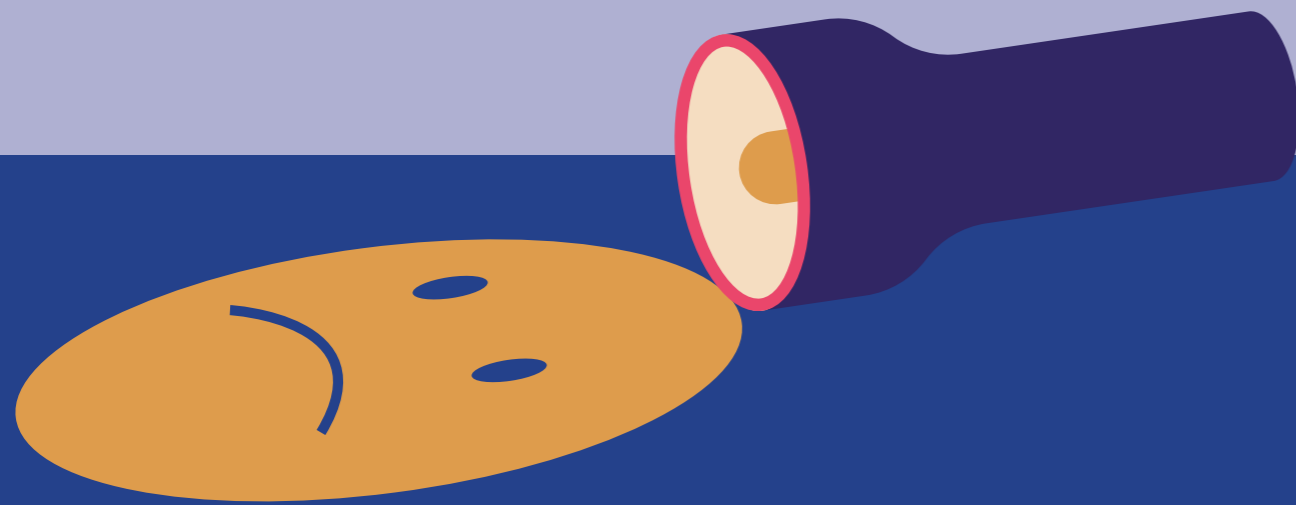
Unsurprisingly, politics emerged as a key risk. Some 29% of our sample agreed that an unstable political environment was a pressing short-term risk, and 27% said the impact of Brexit made them very concerned.

Technology

Falling behind technological changes was raised as a long-term concern. There were also concerns that schools are lagging when it comes to knowing how best to safeguard their pupils online. One in five (22%) thought cyberbullying was a contributing factor to poor pupil mental health, while one in four (25%) blamed unrealistic expectations fuelled by social media. Again, unsurprisingly, cyberbullying of pupils was a key theme, with 32% seeing it as a key short-term risk.

Some of these findings won't surprise. Wellbeing and mental health are high on the risk agenda. Expectations are high and support is perceived to be low. Teacher recruitment and retention is another expected worry, along with political upheaval and policy changes. Tech is considered both a boon and a risk, with teachers feeling the widening gap between technological innovation and training. Over the next few chapters, we will explore some of the key risks affecting the sector and our thoughts on possible solutions.

SHINING A LIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH



Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents to our survey agreed that parents are more inclined to criticise the school than they were five years ago and two-thirds (64%) agreed that the media presents a negative picture of the UK's education system. This external scrutiny, coupled with a perceived increase in expectations amongst parents, government, media and even the students themselves, is taking its toll.

'The model of schools has not changed for 150 years but the demands and pressures have – lunch and break times are shorter – everything is getting squeezed', said one panellist.

While we're loath to add to the slew of headlines proclaiming that teachers are cracking, our temperature check found that mental health and wellbeing is the biggest issue facing schools in the short, medium and long term.

At the moment, schools have no obligation to have a separate mental health policy. A 2018 government study¹ found that in a sample of 90 mainstream schools, only two primary schools and two secondary schools

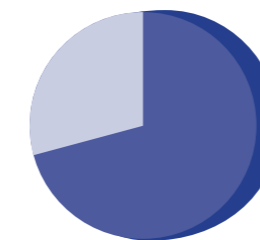
provided stand-alone and focused pupil mental health policies. There's no doubt that wellbeing matters. If nothing else, it affects teacher retention, academic performance and reputation. Poor wellbeing equals high risk.

Inconsistency and unrealistic expectations

In our research, a third (33%) of respondents cited managing mental health and wellbeing of pupils as the top short-term risk facing them, along with cyberbullying (32%) and managing mental health and wellbeing of staff (31%). Reasons given include management issues, inconsistency and unrealistic expectations.

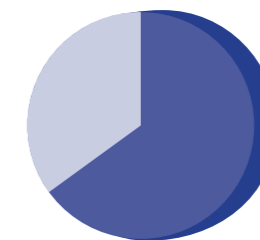
These wellbeing risks are not going away, with 35% citing mental health and wellbeing of pupils as the top long-term risk, followed by staff mental health (34%) and teacher recruitment and retention (33%). The good news is that schools are taking action. When we asked what help the schools were providing for pupils with mental health issues, 42% said their school provides a staff member with responsibility for counselling. This figure was higher in the state sector (44%) than the independent/private sector (37%). Schools with a dedicated

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?



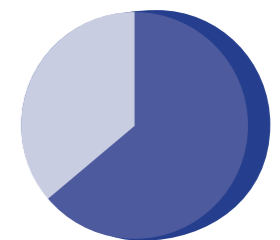
71% strongly agree or agree

Parents are more inclined to criticise the school than they were five years ago



65% strongly agree or agree

The media is more critical of the education system than it was five years ago



64% strongly agree or agree

Stories in the media present a negative picture of the UK education system

mental health professional came in at 42% in the state sector compared to just 36% in the independent/private sector. Schools in the state sector are also more likely to provide additional training for staff on identifying and supporting students with mental health issues (42%) compared with just 24% in the independent/private sector. There is some sense that the state and independent sectors have a different approach to pupil wellbeing, and this is perhaps why the stats have fallen as they have. Our panellists discussed the idea that many boarding schools are putting wellbeing at the heart of their approach, this may be because of the in-loco-parentis role of boarding school teachers.

Capacity and funding

Developing an effective mental health and wellbeing strategy is far from straightforward, warns John Olsen, communications consultant to a mental health charity and governor at a leading independent boarding school. 'A school is a very different beast culturally and structurally compared to say a normal medium-sized business,' he says, 'The range of constituents the strategy needs to cater for is very different and how they all interrelate is different. You're dealing with pupils, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents (and if they're fee-paying, they're customers too), carers and governors.'

The key, says Olsen, is understanding these different perspectives and engaging the various stakeholders in your strategy. An effective whole-school strategy for mental health and wellbeing requires proper expertise beyond just pastoral care and strong leadership and support from the top that is able to bring together the various interests of the school community. However lack of funding and capacity are still major barriers.

'If a school is struggling to put this in place, it's almost certainly not through lack of willing on the part of the head and the staff. It will likely be down to capacity and funding issues,' Olsen adds. Interestingly, our survey showed that respondents felt that the biggest risk to schools with children suffering from mental health issues was the impact on the mental health of its teaching staff.

Almost two-fifths (37%), cited this as the biggest risk and this increased to almost half (46%) for the private and independent school sector. Olsen states: 'With the primary focus of any school inevitably and rightly being on the pupils, it's easy to overlook the fact that you're unlikely to be able to look after pupils' mental health and wellbeing unless the staff are being properly supported first.'

Accountability and pressure

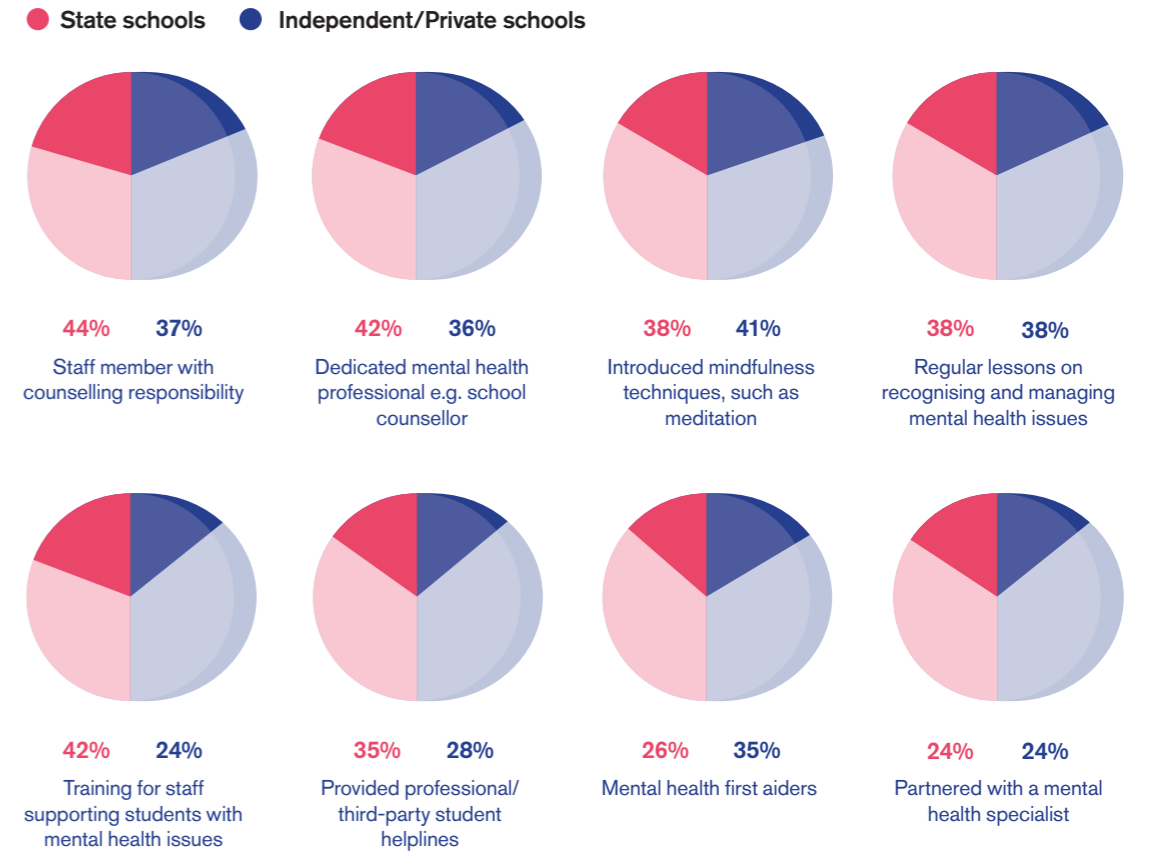
Staff wellbeing seems to be on the slide. Some participants in Ofsted's 2019 Teacher Wellbeing report² had left their teaching positions to become teaching assistants or left a full-time teaching job to become part-time teachers. Some had colleagues or staff who left the profession altogether. When asked about what led to those decisions, the Ofsted report's respondents cited excessive workload and lack of work-life balance, coupled with low pay or quality of leadership in some instances, as the main reasons.

Another problem, says Stephen Taylor, founding teacher of the Family School, London, is Ofsted itself. He says: 'Ofsted still focuses mostly on attainment and progress and is still the only show in town when it comes to accountability. The pressure felt by schools given the seriousness of Ofsted grades is intense. This pressure gets passed to teachers and children and young people feel that pressure too. Pressure is not about the individual child's wishes, progress or ambitions but about school accountability.'

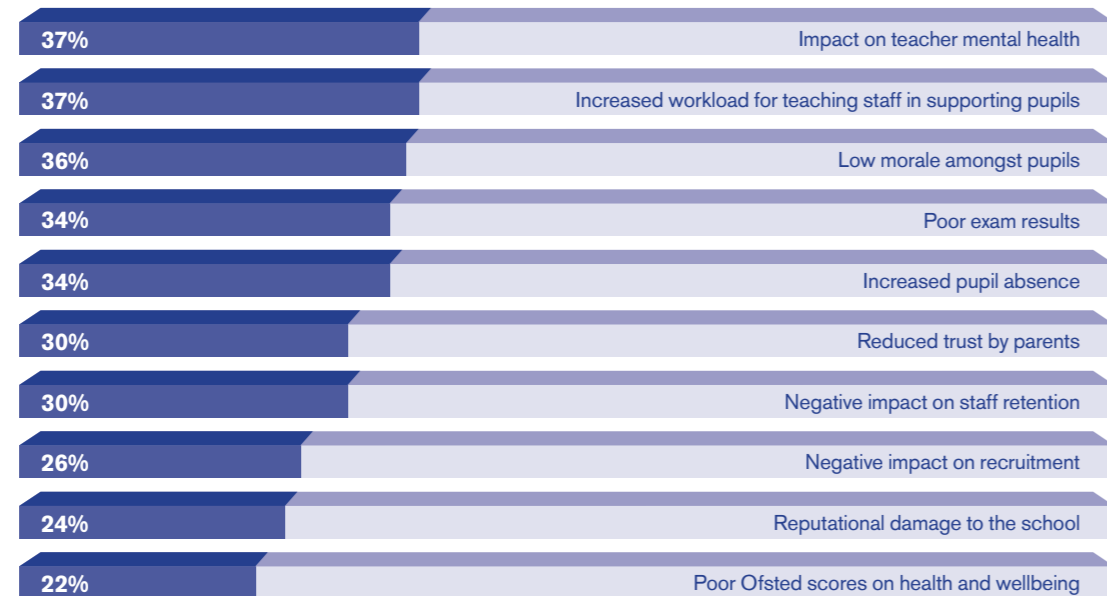
IT'S EASY TO OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT YOU'RE UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO LOOK AFTER PUPILS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING UNLESS THE STAFF ARE BEING PROPERLY SUPPORTED FIRST

JOHN OLSEN
COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT TO A MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY AND GOVERNOR AT A LEADING INDEPENDENT BOARDING SCHOOL

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: WHAT HELP IS YOUR SCHOOL PROVIDING FOR PUPILS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?



WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE BIGGEST RISKS TO YOUR ORGANISATION THAT COULD RESULT FROM POOR PUPIL MENTAL HEALTH AT YOUR SCHOOL?



Aside from the direct threat to the individuals and those they teach, poor staff wellbeing poses a significant threat to the sector. In 2017 for the first time, teachers in the UK were entering and leaving the profession at the same rate, according to Department of Education census data. This improved slightly³ last year but still worrying is the fact that the five-year retention rate has dropped to 67.7% for those who qualified in 2013, compared with 68.5% in the previous year. In November 2019, the Guardian reported⁴ that UK teachers were ‘fleeing overseas’ for smaller classes, more resources and a better work-life balance.

The cost of compliance

Compliance issues cover a huge range of legal and regulatory frameworks from accounting, safeguarding, Prevent, through HR, to Ofsted

and standards – much of which falls under the risk management banner. Indeed, our research revealed the additional burden that good risk management brings. While 79% agreed that risk management is key to creating a safe environment at their school, almost the same percentage (78%) believed that it significantly adds to teacher workloads.

‘Many of these areas are costly to serve,’ says Simon Foulkes, business consultant, ‘At the same time funding pressures are being tightened by the unfunded increases in commitments to teacher salaries and pensions.’ The result, says Foulkes, ‘is that cost-cutting measures bite first in the ‘extras’ in school life, such as music, arts, trips and other add-ons that do not raise the school’s profile in terms of grades or performance tables.’

However, he says: ‘There is increasing evidence that cost-cutting now extends far beyond this. A general reluctance to spend in high-cost areas such as SEND (special educational needs and disability) means the practice of off-rolling has been increasingly reported and evidenced. Yet these creative and socially supportive areas are often those that trickle through the whole school community, raising aspirations, encouraging imagination, and building flourishing human lives that can themselves be creative, and open new opportunities for their communities and the country’s future economy and life.’

With increasing awareness of wellbeing pressures, there is hope that things will change. The new Ofsted educational inspection framework takes into

teaching for a long time in their jobs, school leaders have to take wellbeing extremely seriously and not write it off as a woolly add-on,’ says former deputy head and education and wellbeing specialist Ross Morrison McGill. ‘Fortunately, there’s much more of a dialogue about teacher wellbeing than there was a decade ago, and much of the conversation is taking place online,’ he says. ‘By putting in place initiatives to support mental health, a school will attract and retain more good teachers than the school down the road that sweeps wellbeing under the carpet. It’s only a matter of time before the latter are outnumbered and find themselves isolated and struggling to recruit good, quality teachers.’

IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, ATTRACT NEW TEACHERS AND KEEP THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TEACHING FOR A LONG TIME IN THEIR JOBS, SCHOOL LEADERS HAVE TO TAKE WELLBEING EXTREMELY SERIOUSLY AND NOT WRITE IT OFF AS A WOOLLY ADD-ON

ROSS MORRISON MCGILL
FORMER DEPUTY HEAD AND EDUCATION AND WELLBEING SPECIALIST

account whether schools are encouraging pupils to ‘enjoy learning about how to stay healthy and about emotional and mental health and safe and positive relationships’. Now, to be outstanding, a school’s students must be able to ‘make informed choices about healthy eating, fitness and their emotional and mental wellbeing’.

‘If we are to maintain a high-quality education, attract new teachers and keep those who have been

FOCUSING ON INCREASING PRESSURES



The sector we write about in 2019 looks very different from the sector of 20 years ago. Fast-forward another ten years and it could be unrecognisable. At the time of writing, Brexit has yet to happen, the newly formed Conservative government is taking shape and even the most informed experts are struggling to predict the impact it will have. Governmental changes often mean educational overhauls, making planning for the future difficult.

And our respondents feel this pressure, with 29% citing an unstable political environment as a pressing short-term risk, and 27% saying the impact of Brexit made them very concerned.

Support and expectation

'High expectations and low support' is, sadly, a direct quote from one of the educators that attended our panel.

In our supplementary research, one in five of those surveyed said they feel unsupported by the government when it comes to implementing changes in education policy (22%) and the national curriculum (19%). Almost half (46%) say government expectations around exam results have increased and one in five (23%) has seen an increase in the expectation to support social mobility. Almost a quarter (24%) have felt an increase in expectation from the government to provide social care services.

There is pressure from parents too. Many of our respondents suggested that parents were taking a bigger role in the education system than ever before and were increasingly protective. Some believe that greater parental involvement has led to a slight risk reduction, as they are more aware of the school's activities.

In fact, even students are expecting more from the education system. Our research showed that almost two-fifths (39%) of respondents were seeing an increase in the expectations of students when it came to the availability of subjects, with even

more students expecting access to the latest technology (43%). This, coupled with a sense of diminishing trust (36% of our respondents said that trust from parents had decreased), could be a contributing factor behind the increase in parents seeking alternative educational options.

Personalisation and expectation

The demand for increased personalisation in education is a key concern for our respondents. Three quarters (74%) of those surveyed said parents and students are increasingly expecting a more personalised approach to education. Are we heading towards a diverse personalised educational landscape that meets the learning needs, lifestyles and life choices made by individuals, families and diverse communities? And if so, how can schools navigate this both in terms of technological maintenance and cultural behaviour?

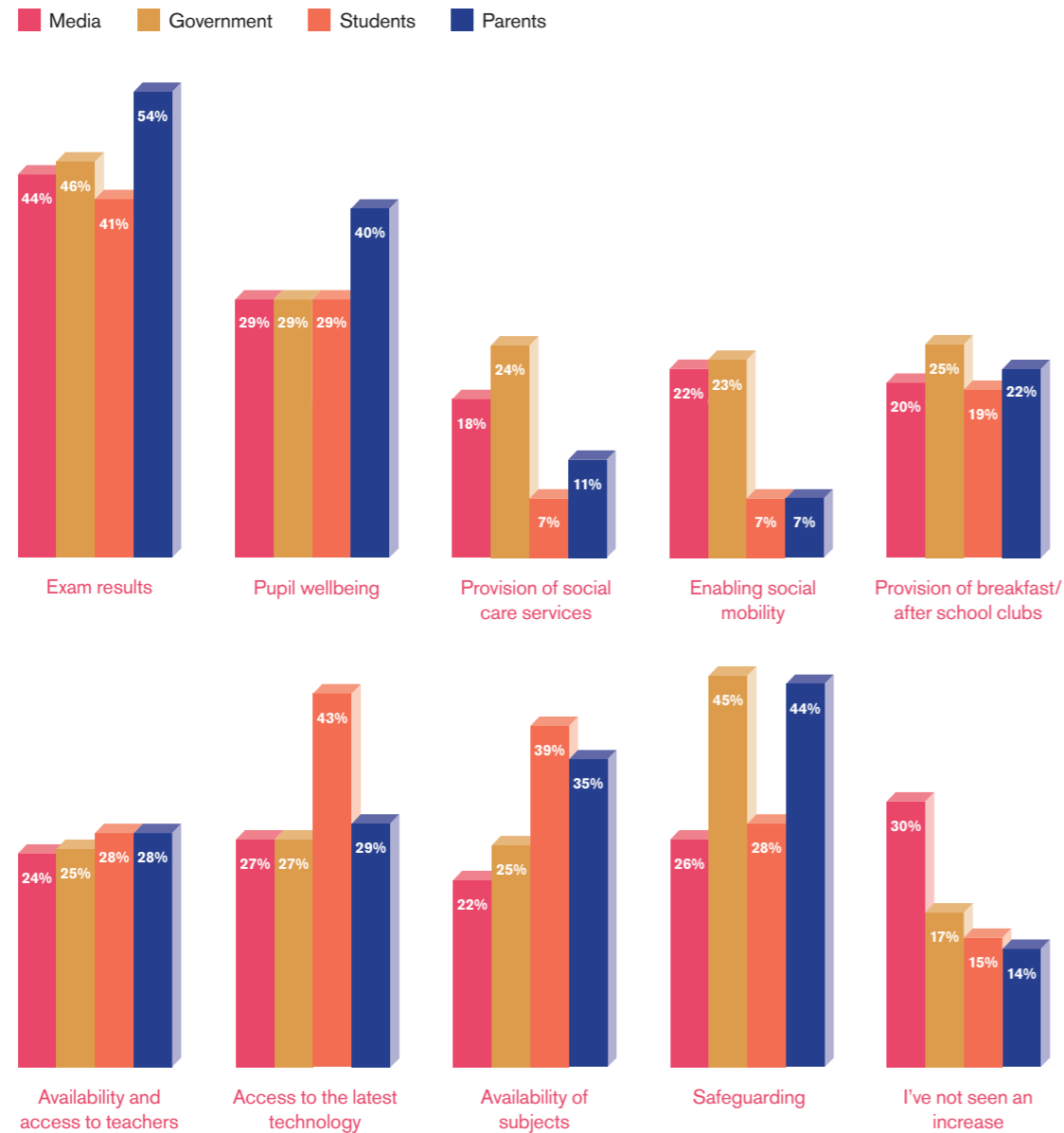
One respondent to our survey said: 'Now parents have various options on how to educate their children and they are smarter (technology wise), than parents in the 1990s used to be. So they are more inclined to opt for other options and do their research before taking major decisions.'

Exploring the alternatives

Against this backdrop, alternative education is on the rise. A government report⁵ suggests that as at autumn 2018, there were an estimated 58,000 children known to be educated at home, an increase of approximately 27% from the previous year. As much as 45% of our respondents say they expect an increase in parents seeking alternative education in the next five years.

Reasons for this include the desire for a greater involvement in their children's education, looking for a more personalised approach, dissatisfaction with mainstream education, a need for greater flexibility and concern over class sizes, and in some cases parents have been put under pressure to home school. In the last five years, teachers have seen the biggest increases in online schooling (39%),

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: IN WHAT AREAS HAVE YOU SEEN INCREASING EXPECTATIONS IN YOUR SCHOOL OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS?



home schooling (31%) and flexi schooling (27%). A quarter of respondents (25%) believe this move is a positive one, saying that schools will adapt to this greater choice for children. However, others believe that it, 'leads to an extraordinary and unnecessary rise in the expectations of students in mainstream schools'.

to medium-term risk for around a fifth of those we spoke to. In the long term, this jumps to more than a quarter (26%).

Whatever the next decade holds, politically and in policy terms, one thing remains certain; in the words of one of our respondents, 'parents will always look for the best for their children'. How the sector manages these relationships is crucial and entails good communication between schools and parents, a culture of trust and regular feedback and input from all stakeholders in the education process.

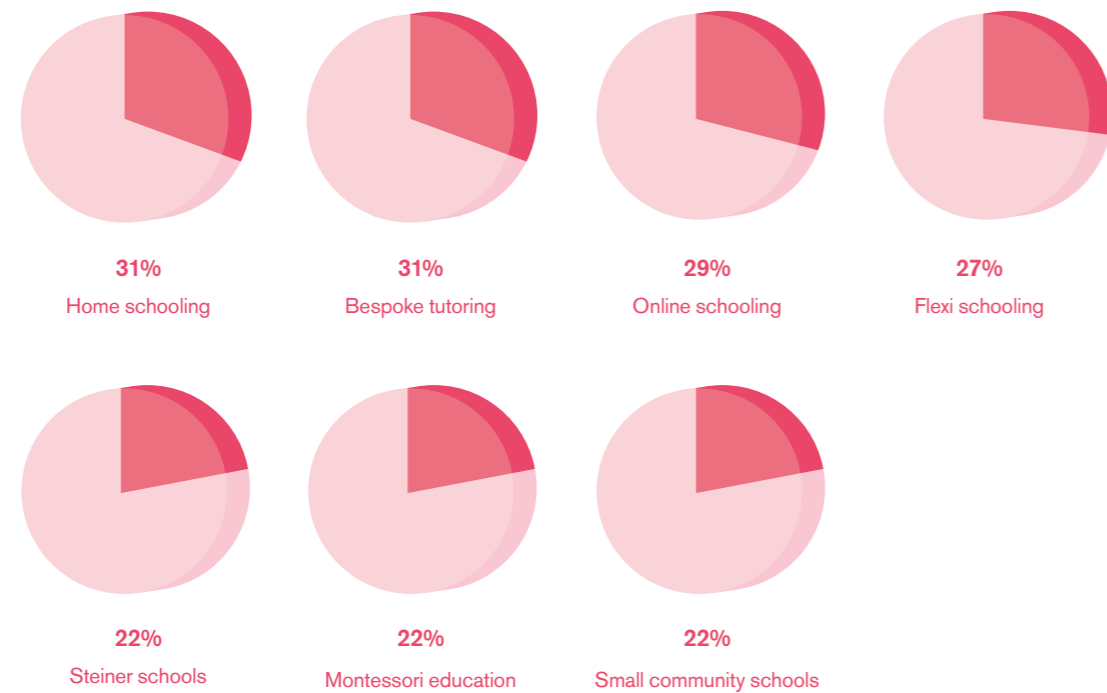
WITHDRAWING SEVEN OR EIGHT CHILDREN CAN PUT A SCHOOL INTO DEFICIT

MARK BROTHERTON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AT THE INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATION OF PREP SCHOOLS

Governance and accountability

This increased pressure is filtering down to the governor level, says Mark Brotherton, director of education at the Independent Association of Prep Schools. 'Governing bodies are increasingly accountable,' he says, 'which, of course in many ways is a good thing. Governors are beginning to realise the scale of accountability they have but this puts them in a slightly different position.' In small schools, says Brotherton, some governors are increasingly having to give in to pressure from parents. 'Withdrawing seven or eight children can put a school into deficit and governors are facing issues around whether to back parents or heads. I get a lot of phone calls from heads who feel they are under pressure and are undermined by governing bodies who themselves are under pressure in circumstances they're not prepared for.' In the independent sector, some of the schools are multi-million pound businesses and, says Brotherton, asking volunteers to give their time for training when they have their own lives is difficult. However, Brotherton adds, 'One poor decision can lead to a real erosion of trust.' This might explain why the recruitment and retention of school governors was a short-

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, HAVE YOU SEEN AN INCREASE IN PARENTS SEEKING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION? (% ANSWERING 'YES')



THE BOARDING SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

Public opinion

In the independent sector – particularly boarding schools – there are huge risks around changing market misperception, says Andrew Lewin, international director of the Boarding Schools Association (BSA), ‘the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is making it easier for the anti-boarding school lobby.’ Lewin says the BSA’s member schools are doing more than ever before to ensure that their young people are safe and the sector is fully behind anything that puts the welfare of its young people above everything else. However, he adds, the negative press plays into preconceptions of the sector.

‘There may well be a tipping point where there are more overseas boarders than UK boarders,’ says Lewin.

Recruiting risks

In November 2019, a report⁶ by the Times found that gangs were targeting the UK’s elite private schools and bringing children in on legitimate visas. All the children arrived in Britain on Tier 4 child visas, which are sponsored by schools and do not require an English language test. According to the report, at least 21 children had vanished from boarding schools and private colleges across Britain. The BSA responded to the news with guidance advising extreme caution when recruiting from Vietnam. ‘Safeguarding is of course a priority, and nobody is complaining about any of this,’ says Lewin, ‘but it’s all a drain on resources.’

Another threat for the sector is recruiting quality of staff to support boarding. ‘The job is ever-increasingly complex and with ever-growing mental health, emotional and cultural needs,’ says Lewin, ‘We have to be truly global.’

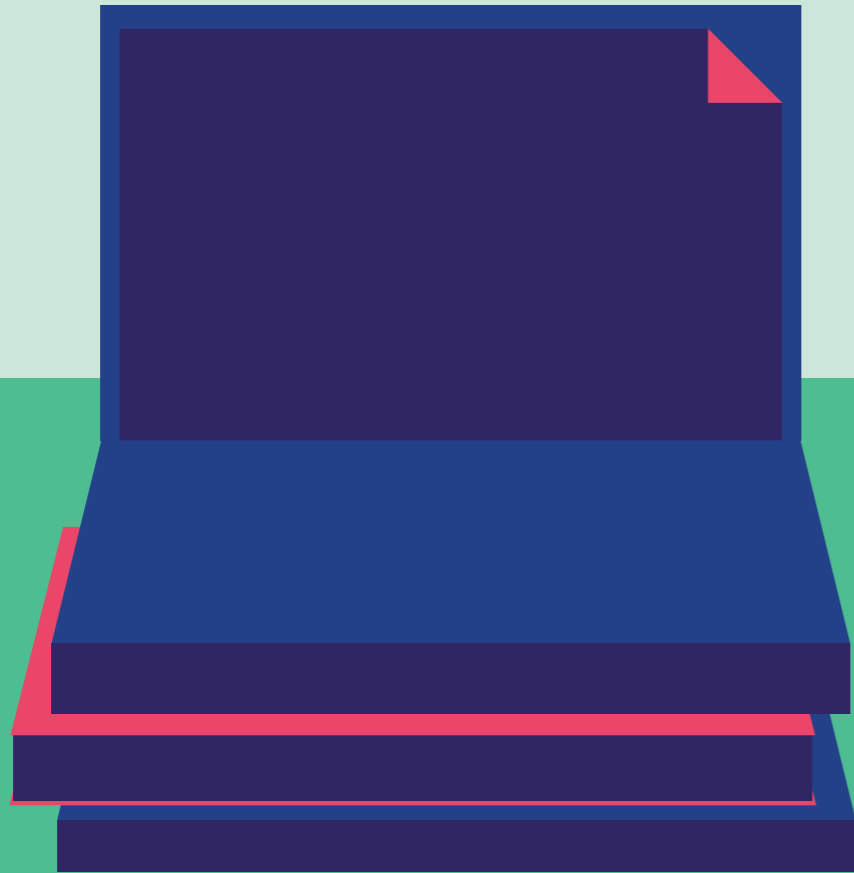
THE JOB IS EVER-INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND WITH EVER-GROWING MENTAL HEALTH, EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL NEEDS. WE HAVE TO BE TRULY GLOBAL

ANDREW LEWIN
INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE BOARDING SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

A numbers game

The next risk for boarding schools is numbers, says Lewin, ‘in particular the decline in UK boarders.’ According to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) census, there are now 28,910 overseas pupils, equating to 5.4% of all pupils. Among the 26,370 non-British pupils whose parents live in the UK, 45% come from EEA countries. Non-British pupils at ISC schools supported around £1.8 billion of GDP in the UK, supporting 39,310 jobs and generating £550 million in annual tax revenues.

SWITCHING ON TO DIGITAL EDUCATION



One key theme that emerged from the panel's early discussions was the idea that the model for schools and classrooms hasn't changed for the last 150 years but everything else has. One of the panellists pointed out: 'Essentially, we still have an industrial model of education in a technological era.'

Back in April 2019 the Government unveiled its £10 million Education Technology Strategy to support innovation in schools, colleges and universities across England. The strategy encourages schools and colleges to 'harness the power of technology to tackle common challenges, and to ensure those working in education are equipped with the necessary skills and tools to meet the needs of schools, colleges, and their pupils'. But what are these common challenges?

Digital risks

Our initial research showed there's a perception of a widening gap between technological innovation and the training provided. Falling behind technological changes is a key concern for our sample – particularly in the longer term.

Common issues raised included the sheer volume of digital information available. One panellist said: 'We think things are objectively measurable that weren't previously. There's now so much data that we're in danger of responding to the data not to the student.'

There is also a perception that the law is not keeping up adequately with advancing technology and a worry that schools are being left behind when it comes to knowing how best to safeguard their pupils. Harmful activities are happening under the radar and minor incidents are escalating. One in five (22%) thought cyberbullying was a contributing factor to poor pupil mental health, while one in four (25%) blamed unrealistic expectations fuelled by social media. The issue of cyberbullying was a key theme that ran throughout our preliminary discussions and in the main research, with cyberbullying of pupils by other pupils being cited as a key short-term risk by 32% of our sample. Interestingly, 29% of our

respondents said that cyberbullying of teachers by parents or pupils was also a key long-term risk.

Where's the money coming from?

Lack of funding in education technology is a huge barrier for schools (42%). This differs between sectors with lack of digital capability and skills amongst teachers being a bigger barrier (42%) in the private sector than in the state sector (32%). Lack of in-house knowledge about online safety, privacy and data security was a concern for 33% of respondents and was consistent across the sectors. While infrastructure issues such as slow internet, outdated internal network or devices was a bigger concern (33%) in the independent/private sectors than in the state sector (29%), with resistance to change being slightly higher in the former (27%) than the latter (24%).

Technology for good

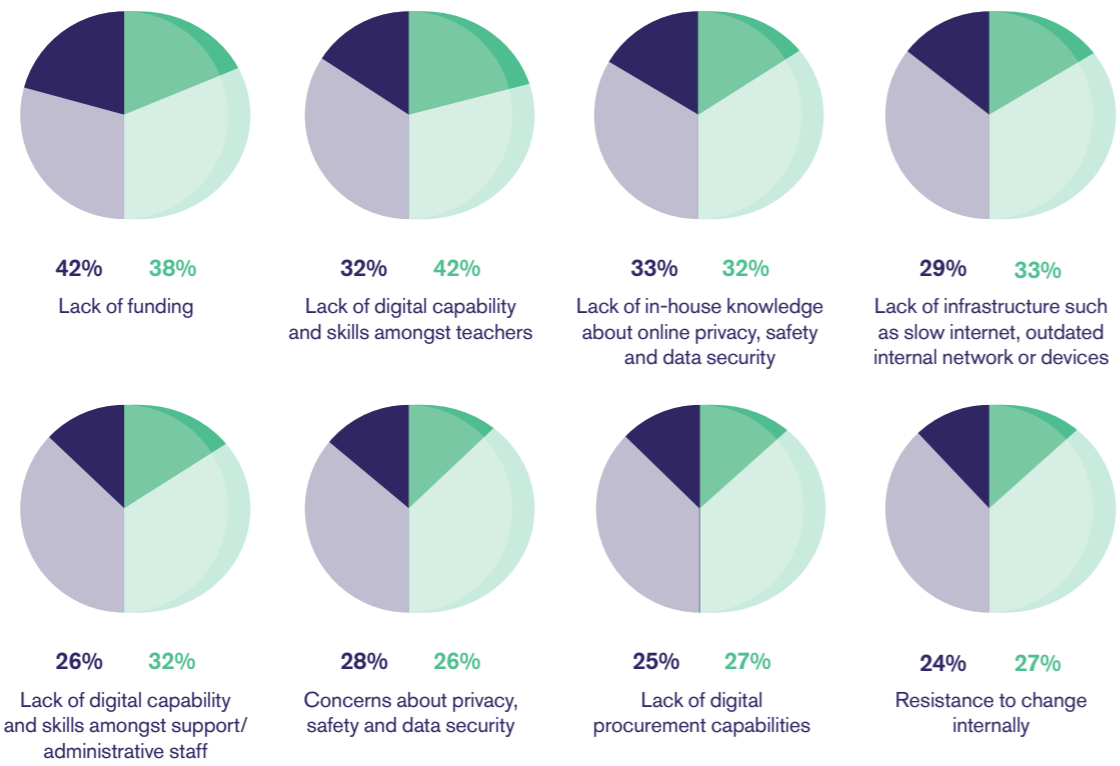
Despite these barriers, technology is still seen as a positive. In our sample, 33% believe that tech helps to reduce workload, compared with 54% in the independent/private sector. More than a quarter (29%) believe that tech also improves access for disadvantaged families, provides better analysis of pupil performance and offers the ability to deliver distance learning to reach a wider pupil base.

More than a quarter (29%) believed that education technology would enhance the digital learning experience in the next three years, with 42% in the independent/private sector, compared with 25% in the state sector believing it will make a positive difference in the next five years.

Currently schools are mostly (42%) using tech for administrative purposes (more so in the state sector – 44% against 32% in the independent/private sector). Growth areas include professional development (23%) and enhancing the learning experience (22%). The independent/private sector is most focused on using tech for professional development (36% versus 20% in the state sector) and placing more consideration on using tech for pupil assessment (26%), than the state sector (17%).

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS FOR USING EDTECH AT YOUR SCHOOL?

● State schools ● Independent/Private schools



'Schools generally don't keep up with tech very well,' says Mark Brotherton, 'but they're supposed to be preparing children for the future.' However, future tech is and can be very exciting: 'In the future AI will teach our children. In fact we've already seen the first lecture delivered by hologram.'

Schools need to do more forward planning says Brotherton. 'There are enormous positives to be gained from the advancement of tech but we need

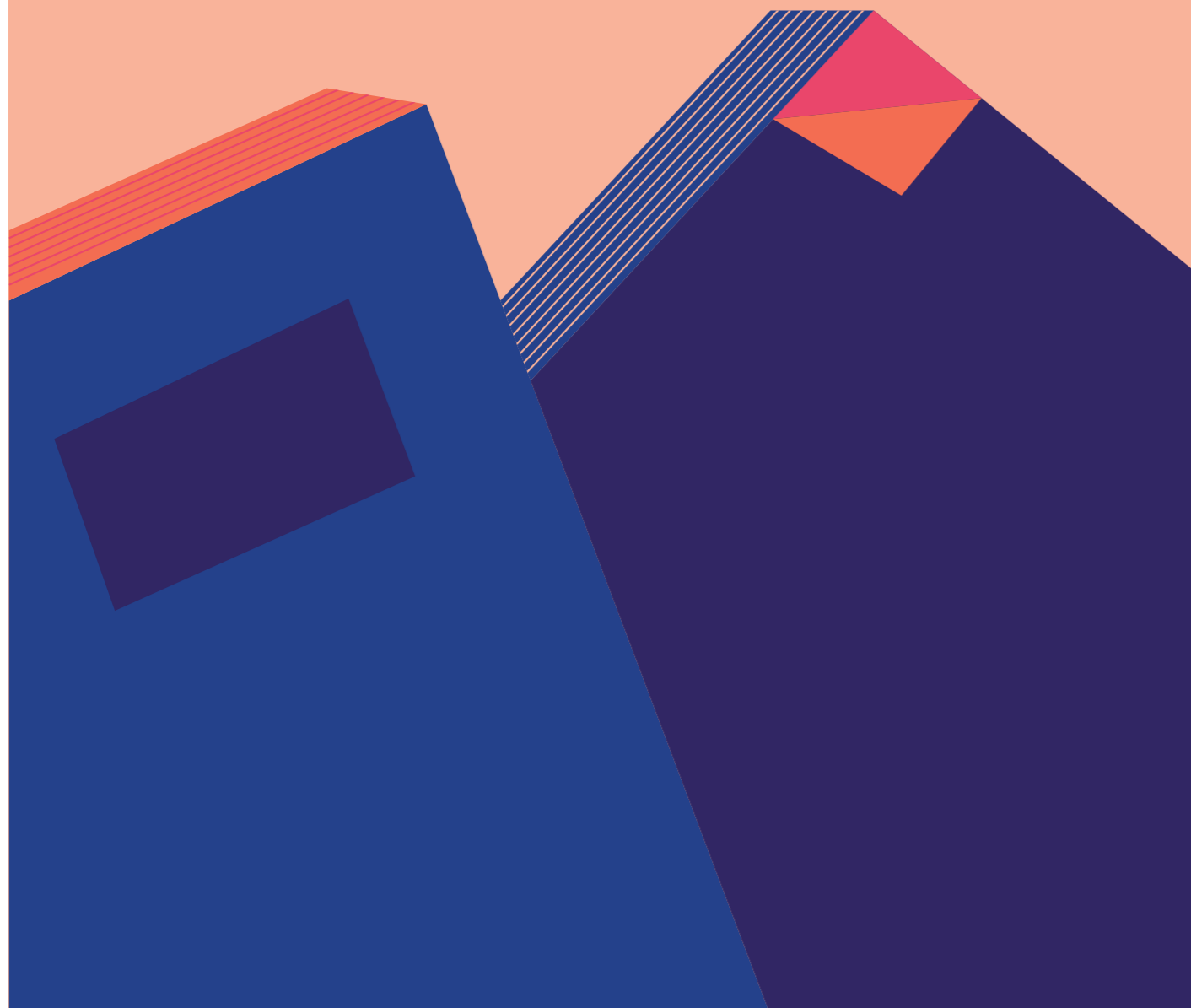
to look at the long-term consequences of this. In the future technology could take on the role of educator, which will leave teachers with more capacity to take a more pastoral role and focus on the mental health and wellbeing of students.' Whatever the case, Brotherton believes that schools, and the wider education sector need to start planning for a technologically driven future and added: 'We need to be having some serious ethical discussions on the subject of technology and we need to be doing this now.'

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS TO IMPLEMENTING EDTECH IN YOUR SCHOOL?

● State schools ● Independent/Private schools



NAVIGATING A CHANGING LANDSCAPE



Despite the challenges, the education sector continues to be an exciting place to work. Most of the people we spoke to were passionate about their work and, ultimately, want schools to be places where young people and their teachers can thrive, though what the school of the future looks like is a matter of great debate.

What's it all for?

In our panel discussions, there was much talk about why educators do it at all. What is the main purpose of a school? Our data shows there isn't a single, clear vision here and we've observed a mismatch between what educators believe the main purpose of education should be and how successfully they are delivering it. While a clear 50% believe the main purpose of a school is to help children achieve their full potential, only a depressing 20% believe the current education system is very successful in doing this.

An overwhelming 80% agree that the current system is too focused on measurement and targets and just 19% strongly agree that the system prepares children for working life. Nonetheless, most seem to agree that the importance of fulfilling

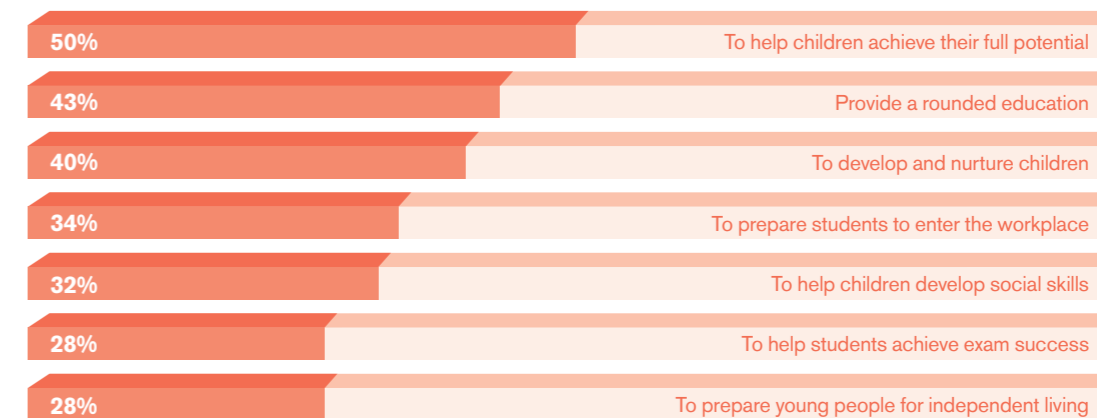
potential, and rounded pupils, is more important than results alone, and just 28% of our respondents believe the purpose of a school is to achieve exam success (though this rose to 35% in the independent/private sector).

Partner to succeed

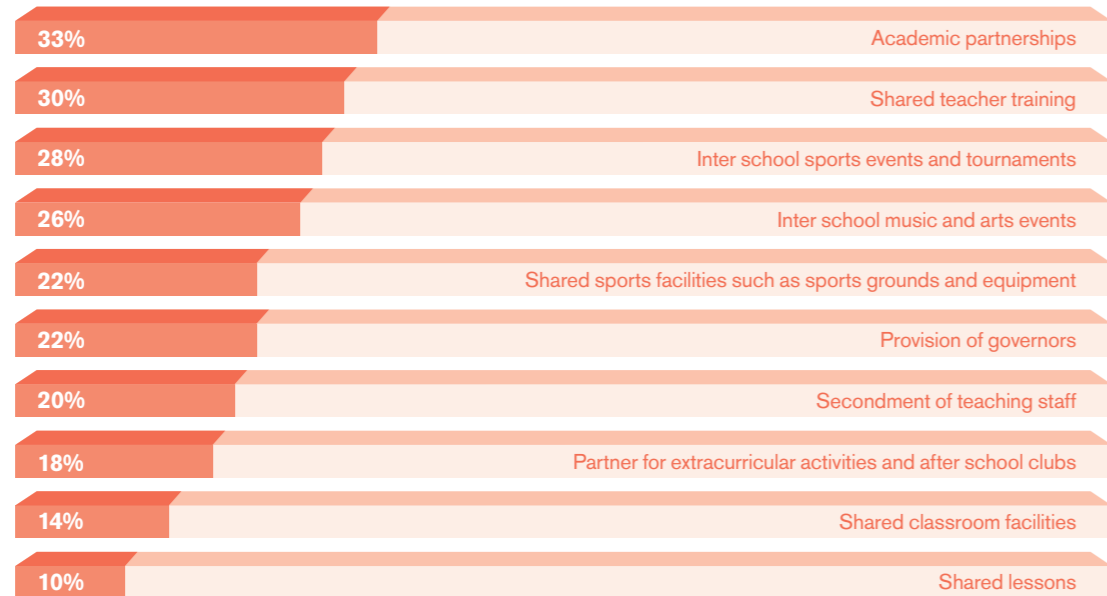
Collaboration could be key to success. A third (30%) of our sample are already collaborating, in partnership or working with another school, with 17% of independent/private schools reaching out to work with a school in another country. Collaborations and partnerships in independent/private schools are focused on inter-school music and arts events (52%), which is noteworthy given the perceived move away from these subjects and a third (33%) of the total sample partner for academic reasons.

Beyond academic reasons, many schools are working together to cut costs and share resources. Almost a third (30%) of those currently collaborating are sharing teacher training, with one in five (20%) using the partnership to second teachers from other schools. A similar proportion are also using their partnership to source school governors. Many agree that the benefits of collaboration are far reaching.

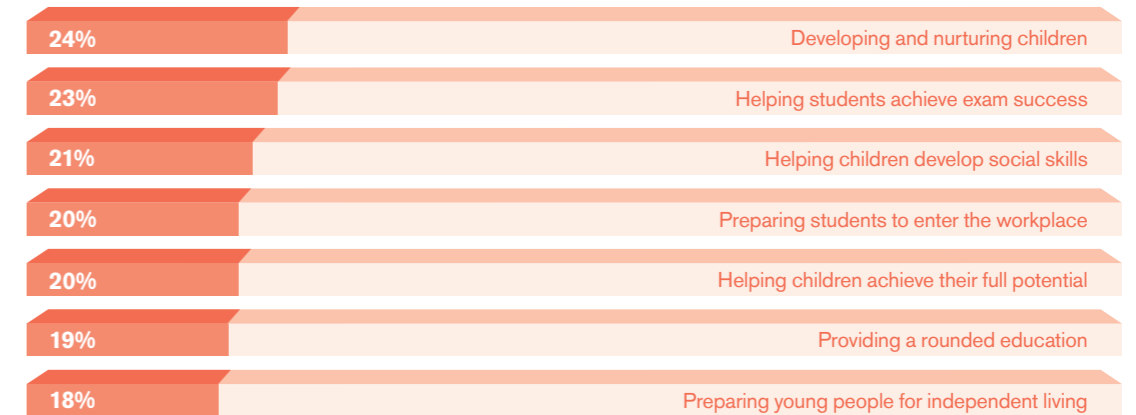
WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MAIN PURPOSE OF SCHOOLS SHOULD BE?



WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY COLLABORATING OR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL, WHAT DOES THAT PARTNERSHIP INVOLVE?



WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS: HOW SUCCESSFULLY DO YOU THINK THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IS DELIVERING THE FOLLOWING? (% 'VERY SUCCESSFULLY')



By collaborating, schools are able to share best practice (41%), improve the quality of teaching (39%) and share skills and experience (32%). There is also recognition that partnerships can help to bring different types of schools together and improve student outcomes (25%) as well as foster engagement and collaboration between pupils. Greater collaboration would be welcomed by the sector, with 68% agreeing that it would benefit the whole education system. More than half (56%) agreed that there is an opportunity to do so.

Reasons to celebrate

Our panellists and respondents still feel there is much to celebrate in our education sector, which is still considered to be world-class. 'Teachers care,' says Richard Tillett, head teacher at Queen's College London, 'and people go into the profession for the right reasons. It is far harder to get away with being a bad teacher now than it used to be. The public reputation of teaching has grown over the course of my career; nobody believes that we all stop work at 3pm anymore.' He adds: 'Pay and conditions, I think, are pretty good – though

I know a lot of people would disagree with me on that...!' 'Throughout the system there are huge numbers of people who are genuinely inspired by ideals of education and creativity, and who are willing to go many extra miles to serve those ideals,' says Simon Foulkes. However, he warns, 'the overarching culture of threat and compliance, measurability and accountability needs to be transformed into something that continues to include absolute commitment to high levels of achievement but which is also characterised by openness, human flourishing, and goodwill.'

Summary

We have seen a wide range of challenges and risks presented in our research, from political to technological, regulatory to parental pressure and everything in between. However, we have also been reassured that our schools are being run by dedicated and hard-working individuals who are doing their best to navigate a changing landscape. While there are many challenges and risks, there are also myriad opportunities and it's clear that the UK's schools are working hard to make the most of these.

Contributors

We would like to thank the following people for participating in our panel discussions and contributing to the report:

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Sources

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747709/Mental_health_and_wellbeing_provision_in_schools.pdf

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819314/Teacher_well-being_report_110719F.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2018>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/nov/13/why-british-teachers-fleeing-overseas-international-schools>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-moving-to-home-education-in-secondary-schools>

⁶ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/gangs-use-top-schools-to-traffic-asian-girls-p0vphbmx>

Useful links

Mental Health and Wellbeing Provision in Schools
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747709/Mental_health_and_wellbeing_provision_in_schools.pdf

Teacher well-being at work in schools and further education providers
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819314/Teacher_well-being_report_110719F.pdf

School workforce in England: November 2018
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2018>

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/>

Exploring moving to home education in secondary schools: research summary
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-moving-to-home-education-in-secondary-schools>

ISC Annual Census 2019
<https://www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census/>

OUR SCHOOLS
ARE BEING RUN
BY DEDICATED
AND HARD-WORKING
INDIVIDUALS WHO
ARE DOING THEIR
BEST TO NAVIGATE
A CHANGING
LANDSCAPE





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