

# Teachers' wellbeing and workload during Covid-19 lockdown



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## Acknowledgements

This is the second of a series of reports that focus on how schools and colleges in England are responding to the current coronavirus pandemic. The first report looked at how schools and teachers respond to the school reopening strategy. This second report explores teachers' wellbeing and workload during the lockdown, and how well prepared they were for the new ways of engaging students.

The surveys on which these reports are based were developed in collaboration with Schoolzone. We would like to thank Philip Collie at Schoolzone for his patience and support, without whom these surveys would not have been possible.

Most of all we would like to thank all of the teachers who gave their time to complete the survey under such strange and unprecedented circumstances. The second survey was launched in May 2020 while schools were still in lockdown.

When these surveys were first conceived, we were not sure if we would get many responses. We wondered if teachers, under pressure and stress, would even respond. This second survey generated close to 3,500 responses from teachers and lecturers, and there was a considerable outpouring of emotions. Some respondents were just glad to be asked how they were coping and most took the opportunity to express their emotions. This report should be read in that context. Although it is a considerable representation by school type and region, we are conscious that it may not cover the full spectrum of response. But we are glad that we conducted this survey, giving teachers the chance for their voices to be heard.

These responses have given us an insight into what matters to teachers and pupils and what concerns them most. They will be valuable in informing future policy decisions on support and provisions for schools, teachers and children. We are very grateful for the time given to completing the survey, without which we could not have published the findings in this series of reports.

## Executive Summary

This report is the second in a series of reports looking at how teachers have responded to the current coronavirus pandemic. The first focused on teachers' thoughts about the government's reopening strategy and how they felt about returning to school. This second report considers workload, wellbeing and the use of educational technology (edtech).

The findings in this report are based on a survey conducted 10 weeks into lockdown, which received 3404 responses. Our intention was to find out more about levels of wellbeing during the closures and gradual reopening of educational institutions, and to see what practical teaching strategies were being used along the way. The Spring term of 2020 may have seen the biggest test of the use of distance learning for mass education we have; these findings could be useful for education policy and teacher training.

### Key findings

The findings from this survey show that some teachers have experienced increased workloads since March. Moreover, the findings suggest that teachers had little prior experience of online teaching, and live online lessons were not common. Our findings cover five issues.

#### 1. Workload

- Teachers were spending an average of 13 hours per week on administrative tasks and 11.5 hours on planning and preparation of lessons.
- On average primary teachers seem to be most affected, spending more hours on each of the activities than secondary and tertiary teachers.
- Of the "other" activities, marking (including assessment and feedback) accounted for a lot of teachers' time. On average, teachers spent 15 hours a week on marking during the lockdown.
- Teachers with school-age children reported having to juggle with school teaching and home schooling their own children, as well as other regular household routines.

## **2. Wellbeing**

- Overall, teachers were generally happy and cheerful. 46% said they felt cheerful and happy often, while only 17% said they did not often feel this way.
- Crucially, teachers felt that what they were doing was important and worthwhile. 58% said they felt this way often.
- There are slight variations among teachers in different phases, with secondary teachers showing the highest level of wellbeing.
- Comparing education staff by their job role, teaching staff were the most likely to report feeling happy and cheerful, and calm and relaxed. On the other hand, school leaders were the least happy and relaxed.

## **3. Teachers' experience in delivering online lessons**

- 66% of teachers reported having little or no previous experience in online teaching.
- Only a third said they felt confident in delivering lessons online.
- 54% of teachers found online teaching stressful and only 44% felt adequately provided for online teaching
- Primary teachers were the least likely to have previous experience in delivering lessons online, and least confident in delivering lessons online. Teachers in tertiary education have rather more experience in online teaching.

## **4. Communication with students**

- The most common means of communication with students is via emails. 58% of teachers said they used emails frequently.
- Teachers also used virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Sky to communicate with students, but this is rare.
- Primary teachers were more likely to communicate directly with parents.

## **5. Common concerns regarding the use of technology**

- Students with no IT resources
- Teachers with no proper technological infrastructure
- Safeguarding concerns

Teachers provided lots of interesting anecdotes about their experience as well as those of their students. For example, on delivering live lessons:

*“Work was always very hard and time consuming with long hours but remote teaching has been a real struggle with brand new set of skills needed involving ICT usage without proper guidance, e.g. Zoom, Google Drive, Microsoft meeting etc etc. Students also emailing work directly via email and feedback response required same day.”*

*“It’s like singing on a stage with a blindfold and earmuffs and not knowing how empty or full venue is.”*

Teachers also expressed various concerns about technology:

*“Many of my students are working from their mobile phone, with no access to a printer or larger screen. Some have poor internet connections or are sharing a computer with siblings.”*

*“I live in a very rural area and cannot access internet from home this has meant that I come to school everyday to carryout tasks.’*

*“I am using my own laptop. Concerns about confidentiality and safeguarding.”*

We received an overwhelming response from teachers but could only present some of them here and throughout this report. However, we will be publishing the open text comments from teachers all verbatim separately in a future report.

## Introduction

When the UK government announced a national lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, all normal daily activities were disrupted and the education of a whole generation of young people interrupted. Schools were left with little time to prepare. This report, the second in our series of reports on teachers' response to the coronavirus pandemic, focuses on three key areas: teachers' workload, wellbeing, and the use of educational technology (edtech).

Teachers' workload has become of increasing concern in education in many developed countries where there is a stiff competition for a highly qualified workforce. In 2014, the DfE launched the Workload Strategy to understand and address 'unnecessary' tasks that teachers undertake in the course of their duty. The aim was to support teachers' wellbeing. As a result of the strategy a set of 'action plans', resources and reports for school leaders were published. In 2019, the Teacher Workload Survey carried out in 2019 in England by the Department for Education (DfE) showed a reduction in teachers' reported working hours since 2016, but the majority of teachers (73% of primary and 87% of secondary) continued to report that their workload was either a 'very' or 'fairly' serious problem. We envisage that the school closure amid the coronavirus pandemic, and the need to ensure that students continue to receive lessons but without the usual tools and resources available in school, will have some impact on teachers' workload.

Related to teachers' workload is their wellbeing. The nationwide lockdown is an unprecedented event. So far, we do not have data on how teachers are coping under such circumstances.

Many teachers have turned to the use of education technology during the pandemic. Edtech companies have reported soaring demand for online and home learning resources. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers have been relying on social media such as Twitter and Facebook for information and on adapting their current learning resources for distance learning. As well as considering what online platforms to use, schools needed to consider the safeguarding implications associated with them.

Concerns were immediately raised about the lack of access to online learning for our poorest children. There are clear reasons for these concerns. A [Teacher Tapp](#) survey found that only 3% of teachers in the most deprived schools had hosted an online class, and only 4% had

audio/video calls with a student. Moreover, the [Sutton Trust](#) suggest while 60% of private schools in the richest areas already have an online platform in place, the figure was 23% for the most deprived schools.

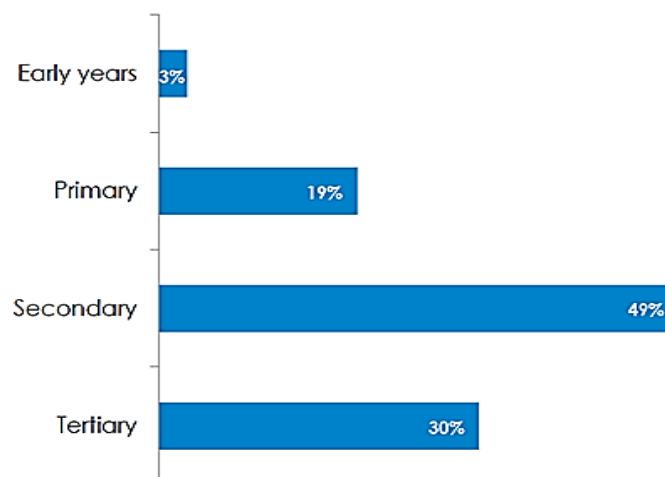
The Office for National Statistics survey data published in 2019 tells us that around 60,000 children aged 11 to 18 in the UK do not have internet connectivity in their home, and around 700,000 do not have a computer, laptop, tablet or iPad at home. These children have not been able to benefit from online lessons or resources.

To find out more about how teachers' workload, wellbeing and use of technology has changed since March 2020, we conducted a survey which was distributed in May 2020, ten weeks after lockdown. In total, 3401 teachers responded to the survey. More on the profile of respondents and the survey itself can be found in the next two sections of this report. Our findings section then goes into detail on these three areas of interest, before we make some conclusions which may be of interest to those working in the education sector and to policy makers. All information is anonymised, and the full text comments will be made available online in a further report.

## Profile of respondents

This survey was launched 10 weeks into the lockdown. A panel of teachers in education were emailed an invitation to take part in the online survey. The survey was sent just once and we collected a total of 3,404 responses.

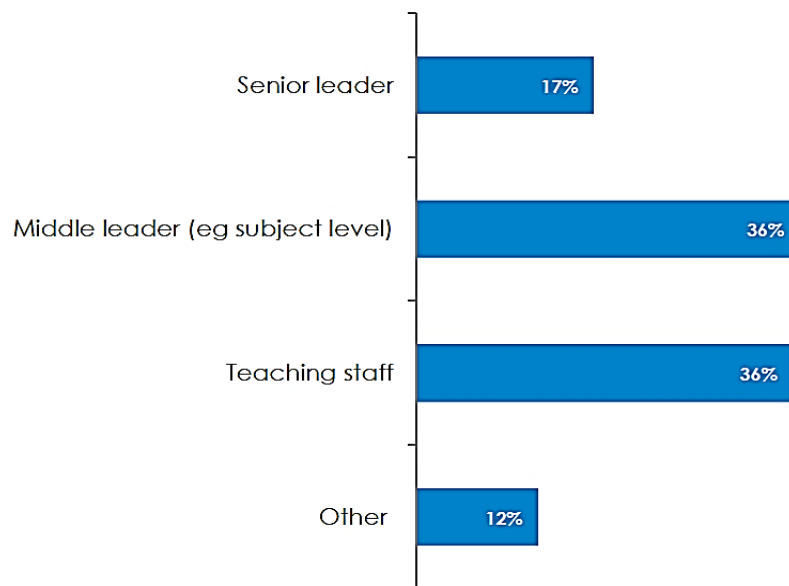
**Please tell us which phase of education you primarily work in (n=3401)**





Close to half of respondents were secondary school teachers, with tertiary teachers making up 30% and 19% of respondents were primary teachers. A very small minority were early years teachers (3%). Of these, 36% were middle managers and another 36% were teaching staff. Senior leaders made up 12% of the respondents. A full profile of respondents' schools can be found in the Appendix.

**Would you describe your role as: (n=3377)**



## Method

The survey is structured in four sections:

### Section 1: Teachers' workload

We asked teachers to tell us approximately how many hours they spent on each of the following school-related activities in their most recent full working week. These activities include:

- teaching/lecturing
- planning and preparation of teaching or learning activities
- participation in management activities

- general administrative work (including paperwork, work emails and other clerical duties)
- communication with parents/carers (including, emails, letters or phone calls)

This question was adapted from the ones used by the Department for Education in their workload survey and the OECD Teaching and Learning Survey of Teachers.

## Section 2: Teachers' wellbeing

We asked teachers how often they had the following feelings or thoughts on a scale of 0 (never) to 10 (all the time):

I feel happy and cheerful
I feel calm and relaxed
I feel full of energy
I like myself a lot
I feel highly effective at what I do
I feel optimistic and hopeful
I feel that what I do is important and worthwhile
I feel close and connected with people around me
I feel completely engaged and involved in what I do

The 11-point scale is used so that the responses can be treated as real numbers for measuring effect sizes in estimating differences between groups. These items were adapted from the validated well-being questionnaire Scales of General Well-Being (SGWB), which has been tested in three different studies to assess the content adequacy, its dimensionality and internal test and re-test reliability on 1,661 North American adults (Longo, Coyne & Joseph 2017). For this survey, we selected one item that strongly measures each of the indicators of wellbeing: happiness, vitality, calmness, optimism, self-worth, competence, purpose, significance, and connection. Recent evidence suggests that just using one item, for example “how satisfied are you with your life ?” had similar patterns with other related variables as using the rest of the scale, and this single item alone might be sufficient to capture a quick picture of life satisfaction. (see Cheung, & Lucas, 2014; Hussey & Lehan, 2015).

### Section 3: Teachers' experience during lockdown

There are 6 items in this section where teachers were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree on a scale on 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree) with each of the following:

I have no previous experience in online teaching.
I am confident in using edtech to deliver lessons online.
I have better interactions with my students online.
Teaching online is stressful.
I am well-supported with adequate resources for online teaching.
I would not use online teaching if I can help it.

In an open-ended question, we asked teachers to tell us about their experiences with online teaching.

### Section 4: Communication with students

Maintaining contact and interactions with students during the prolonged period of school closure is crucial. This question is to find out how teachers have kept in contact with students. Teachers were asked how often they used the following ways to communicate with their students:

- email
- class blog
- school website
- virtual meeting platforms, e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Google Hangout
- chat rooms and forums
- other

We did not ask for teachers' sensitive biographical data such as their age, gender and ethnicity because of GDPR.

## A note of potential bias

No incentives were used in the survey. The responses may be biased towards those who were using the survey to express their dissatisfaction as a result of the Covid lockdown. The findings should therefore be seen in this context. For this reason we have not tried to categorise the open-text responses and will be publishing the comments in full in a further report.

## Findings

The findings from our survey are presented below in three sections: workload, wellbeing and use of edtech.

### Workload

To gauge how teachers' workload may have changed we asked teachers about their working hours during the lockdown. This survey was conducted in May 2020, before schools began to extend their opening from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. Another survey will be conducted when schools return.

#### Teachers' reported workload during school closure

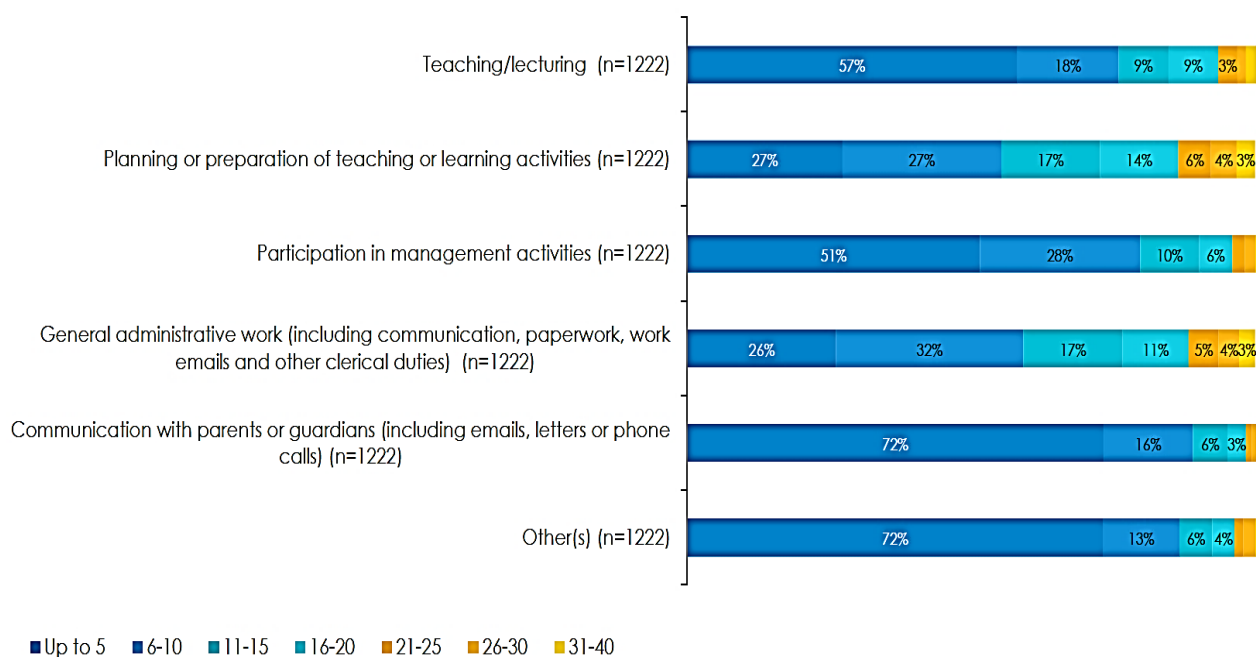
Teachers seemed to be mostly engaged in **administrative activities** during the lockdown, spending on average 13 hours per week on this (see Table 1), although with quite a wide range among respondents (SD 10 hours). Around 60% of teachers were spending less than 5 hours a week teaching online or otherwise (Figure 1), while 72% of teachers were spending up to five hours a week communicating with parents (mean score 5.67). From teachers' responses regarding online delivery (see section below), it is easy to see why there is little direct teaching going on.

**Table 1: Time teachers spent on each of the activities (N = 3404)**

Hours	Teaching	Planning	Management activities	Admin duties	Comm with parents	Others
Up to 5	2026	1190	1988	898	2412	2383
6 - 10	567	844	644	966	519	455
11 - 15	287	494	283	554	190	207
16 – 20	222	358	185	420	115	139
21 – 25	136	187	98	193	52	59
26 – 30	71	158	87	152	41	68
30+	95	173	119	221	75	93
Mean	7.43	11.54	7.84	13.01	5.67	5.86
SD	8.84	10.16	9.23	10.08	7.83	8.56

**Figure 1: Hours worked per activity**

In your most recent full working week, approximately how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities?



### Comparing workload by phase of education

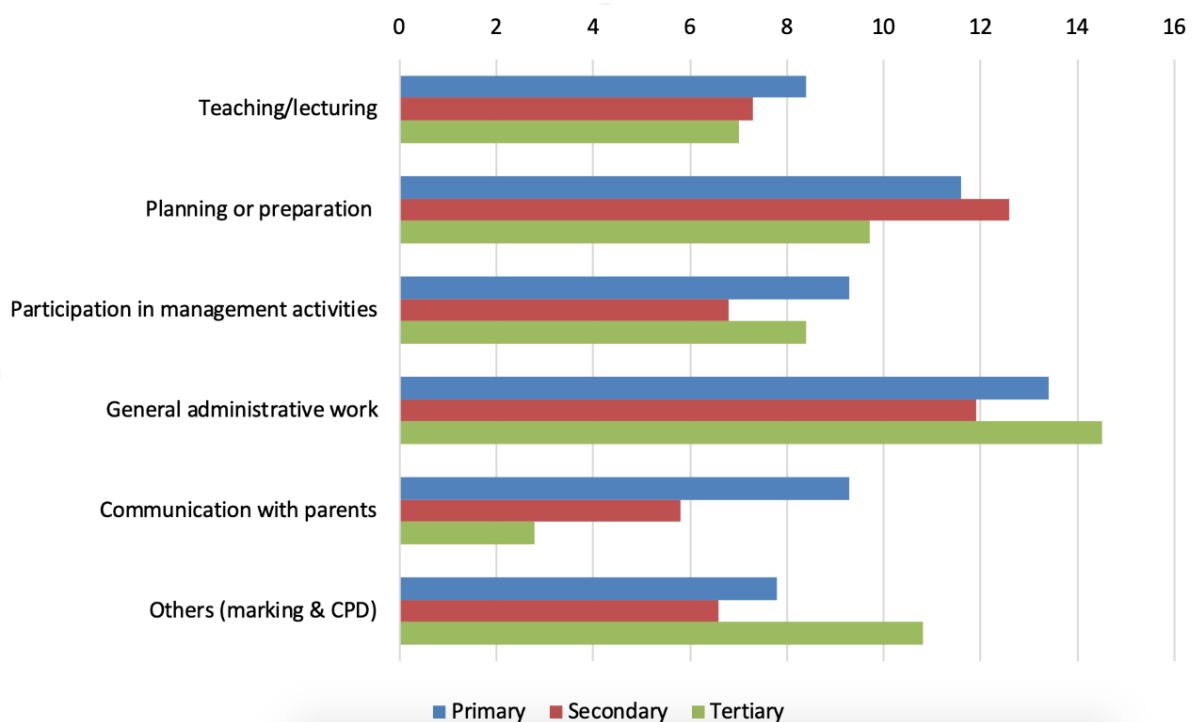
During lockdown, **planning and preparation** of lessons was occupying a mean of 11.5 hours per week (SD 10 hours). Interestingly, teachers were spending more time on administrative work and preparation than on actual teaching. Preparation of lessons here includes sourcing for suitable teaching resources for remote teaching and setting up appropriate platforms for delivery.

**Table 2: Mean number of hours worked in a week by phase of education**

Activities	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Teaching/lecturing	8.4	7.3	7.0
Planning or preparation	11.6	12.6	9.7
Participation in management activities	9.3	6.8	8.4
General administrative work	13.4	11.9	14.5
Communication with parents	9.3	5.8	2.8
Other (research, CPD, marking, home schooling own children)	7.8	6.6	10.8

There is very little variation between primary and secondary teachers, with **secondary** teachers spending a mean of one hour more in **planning** and one hour less on administrative activities than their primary counterparts (Table 2 and Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Teachers' workload by phases of education (average hours per week)**



As might be expected, senior leaders were spending more time on managerial activities, with an average of 17.6 hours per week (SD 12 hours) and an average of 16 hours per week (SD 11 hours) on administrative activities. **Primary senior leaders** were spending around two hours per week **more** than secondary leaders on each of these activities.

Of the “other” activities, marking and assessment, CPD and meetings were the most commonly mentioned for school staff, while at HE, many were spending a lot of time engaged in research and writing reports. For marking and assessment (feedback), teachers on average were spending 15 hours a week marking/feedback during the lockdown. There is quite a wide variation ranging from 1 hour to 50 hours a week.

Average time spent on marking for primary teachers: 14 hours
Average time spent on marking for secondary teachers: 14 hours
Average time spent on marking for tertiary (HE & FE): 16 hours

### **Excerpts of teachers’ written comments about workload**

As part of the survey, we invited teachers to give written comments on their workload. Below is just a very small selection of teachers’ written comments about workload. These comments are not necessarily representative views of all teachers, but they do give us an insight into what some teachers are experiencing. As aforementioned, the full open-text responses will be published separately.

*I feel we are working just as hard as we would be at school. We have had to create a timetable in order to get things done and now we are teaching five lessons (which I think are really important to be doing). It’s got even harder to juggle. We find ourselves in a position where if nursery opens, even if we aren’t back at home full time, then we will need to send our daughter back in order to manage our workload. A hard decision.*

*Work-family balance with two young children very challenging. Trying to be full-time teacher and educator [...] is stressful at times and difficult balance to juggle, feel over connected with colleagues and pupils via video and impacts on home life.*

## **Wellbeing**

In this study, we asked teachers to rate how often they had certain feelings and thoughts on a scale of 0 (never) to 10 (all the time), with scores from 7 to 10 as often and 0 to 3 as not often.

Overall, the mean scores for each of the feelings is middling but generally positive (Table 3) What stood out is that teachers were generally happy and cheerful (mean score 6.98). 46% said they felt **happy and cheerful** often (7 to 10), while only 17% said they did not feel this way often (scored 0 to 3).

**Table 3: Teachers' feelings during lockdown**

	Happy and cheerful	Calm and relaxed	Full of energy	Like myself a lot	Highly effective at what I do
Never	23	55	74	57	66
1	51	116	152	115	145
2	154	307	321	249	274
3	294	399	465	314	352
4	278	374	404	346	360
5	507	464	567	562	466
6	514	467	464	436	488
7	650	497	433	466	497
8	606	427	331	454	403
9	230	202	104	249	228
All the time	83	84	72	136	112
Mean	6.98	6.34	5.95	6.57	6.403
SD	2.12	2.38	2.31	2.42	2.44

(Table 3 continued)

	Optimistic and hopeful	What I do is important and worthwhile	Close and connected with young people	Completely engaged and involved
Never	60	35	73	43
1	162	78	203	149
2	287	128	282	222
3	370	192	284	327
4	384	216	264	319
5	526	356	423	477
6	489	401	425	455
7	429	515	401	473
8	367	645	494	437
9	213	491	336	297
All the time	103	334	196	195
Mean	6.26	7.63	6.64	6.71
SD	2.42	2.41	2.68	2.50

\*scores ranged from 0 (never) to 10 (all the time)

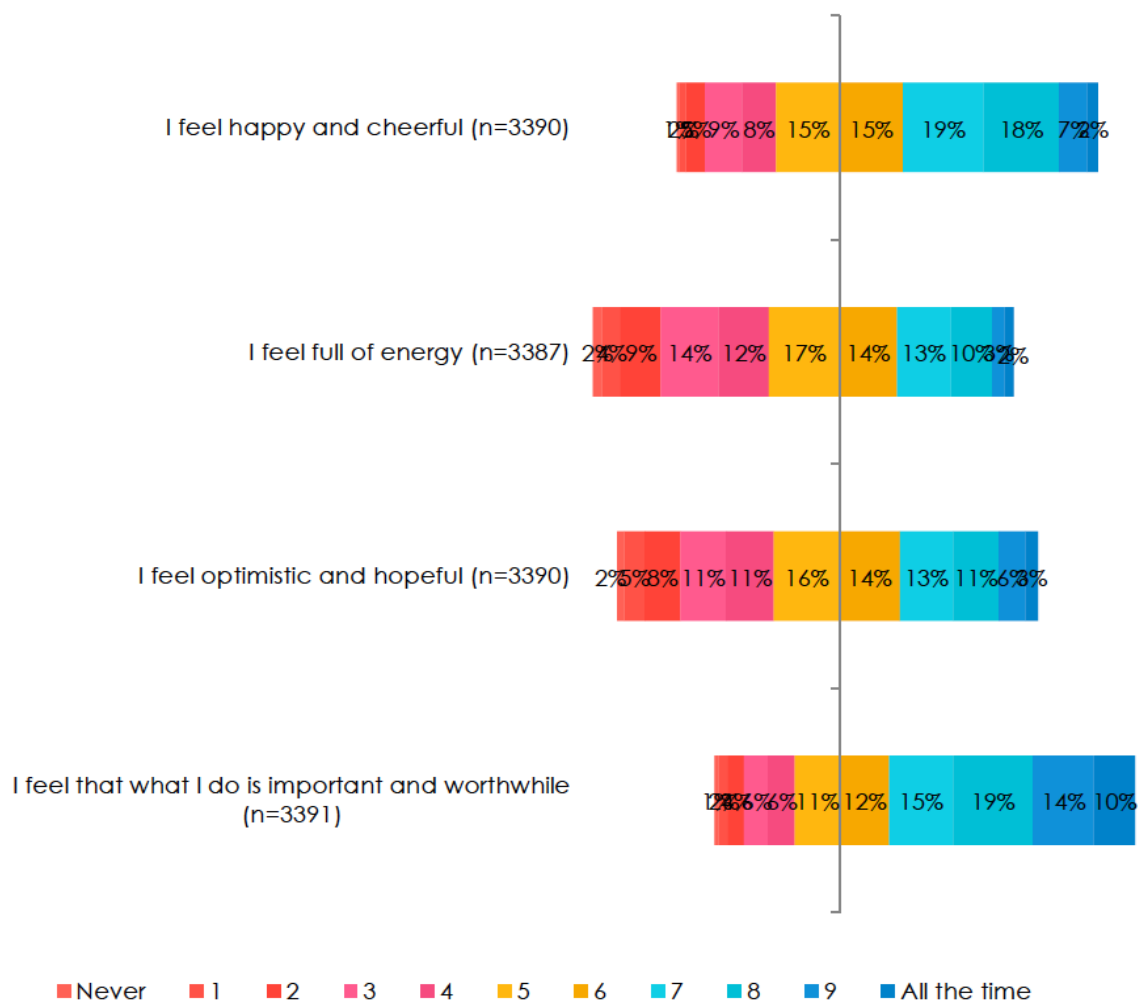


Crucially, while teachers may be overwhelmed with the enormity of the challenges, they felt that **what they were doing was important and worthwhile** (mean score 7.63), with 58% saying that they felt this often (scored 7 to 10).

However, while some of the findings have been more positive, results are variable. Teachers generally **do not feel very energetic** (mean score 5.95). This indicator of wellbeing received the lowest rating. Only slightly over a quarter (28%) of teachers said they felt energetic often. The data are also represented in graphical format in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: How teachers felt during lockdown**

**In the last month since the lockdown, how often have you had the following feelings or thoughts?**



The written responses we received also suggest that some teachers were finding it hard during the lockdown; teachers mentioned loss of contacts and interactions with family, colleagues and students and reported experience of confusion, fear and anxiety. As stated earlier, the complete open text comments in verbatim will be made available.

### Teachers' wellbeing by phase of education

Comparing teachers' wellbeing by phase of education, overall secondary teachers show the highest level of wellbeing compared to their primary and tertiary counterparts (Table 4), while tertiary teachers seem to report the lowest level of wellbeing. Secondary teachers were also the most optimistic and hopeful, while tertiary teachers were the least optimistic.

**Table 4: Teachers' wellbeing by phase of education (mean scores)**

	Early years/ Primary (n=722)		Secondary (n=1653)		Tertiary (n=1016)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I feel happy and cheerful	6.84	2.14	7.21	1.96	6.70	2.32
I feel calm and relaxed	5.96	2.45	6.65	2.24	6.10	2.49
I feel full of energy	5.69	2.24	6.22	2.19	5.68	2.49
I like myself a lot	6.40	2.41	6.75	2.34	6.41	2.53
I feel highly effective at what I do	6.29	2.40	6.55	2.35	6.25	2.60
I feel optimistic and hopeful	6.12	2.44	6.51	2.26	5.95	2.60
I feel that what I do is important and worthwhile	7.77	2.44	7.77	2.27	7.31	2.58
I feel close and connected with people around me	6.76	2.72	6.79	2.59	6.43	2.78
I feel completely engaged and involved in what I do	6.81	2.49	6.84	2.37	6.45	2.69
Overall wellbeing	6.52	2.41	6.81	2.29	6.35	2.57

Comparing primary and secondary teachers, secondary teachers (Table 5) were happier and more cheerful (ES = +0.18) and felt more calm and relaxed (ES = +0.31). There is only a small difference between primary and tertiary teachers' wellbeing with primary teachers marginally feeling better than tertiary teachers. However, there was a bigger difference with primary teachers more likely to feel what they were doing was important and worthwhile (ES = +0.18).

**Table 5: Comparing differences in wellbeing of primary and secondary teachers (effect size)**

	Early Years/Primary	Secondary	Effect size
I feel happy and cheerful	6.84 (2.14)	7.21 (1.96)	+0.18
I feel calm and relaxed	5.96 (2.24)	6.65 (2.24)	+0.31
I feel optimistic and hopeful	6.12 (2.44)	6.51 (2.26)	+0.12
Overall wellbeing	6.52 (2.41)	6.81 (2.29)	+0.12

### Teachers' wellbeing by job role

In general, teaching staff seemed to have the highest levels of wellbeing (average score of 7.20). They were more likely to report feeling happy and cheerful, calm and relaxed (Table 6). An overwhelming majority felt that what they were doing was important and worthwhile (average score of 8.50) and strong connection with people around them.

**Table 6: Teachers' wellbeing by job role (mean rating)**

	Senior Leader	Middle manager e.g. subject lead	Teaching staff	Other
I feel happy and cheerful	6.31	6.35	7.19	7.00
I feel calm and relaxed	5.44	5.85	6.77	5.88
I feel full of energy	5.38	5.50	6.35	5.75
I like myself a lot	6.13	6.31	6.88	5.38
I feel highly effective at what I do	6.00	6.77	7.46	6.00
I feel that what I do is important and worthwhile	7.81	7.73	8.50	7.75
I feel optimistic and hopeful	5.66	5.77	6.85	5.88
I feel close and connected with people around me	6.03	6.77	7.81	6.00
I feel completely engaged and involved in what I do	6.53	6.73	7.00	7.13
Overall average	6.14	6.42	7.20	6.31

Conversely, school leaders had the lowest levels of wellbeing (average score of 6.14), reporting lowest levels of happiness and feeling calm. They were the least likely to feel

effective at their job and were least optimistic and hopeful. The “other” group had the second lowest overall wellbeing. It is not clear who these are, but from the open responses, they are likely to be IT technicians and administrative staff.

### **How did teachers feel during the last few weeks before schools reopened?**

To give education staff scope to express their emotions, we asked them to tell us about how they were feeling in the month of May (two months into the lockdown), prior to the start of school reopening. Emotions which were expressed in response included anxiety, uncertainty, anger, confusion and frustration. Those with children had the added responsibility of home schooling their own children; those without wanted to do more as a result. Some near retirement or with medical conditions were fearful for their health and almost all respondents were feeling the burden of a much higher workload - some described triple the normal amount. Some had found the extra non-teaching time valuable and developed strategies for coping with isolation. A combination of struggling to cope with current situation and anxiety about the alternatives seem to be generating a lot of very negative emotion.

Some of the saddest comments perhaps were from respondents who said that we were the first people to ask them, 10 weeks in, how they were coping. To reflect this, we decided that we would publish all the comments gathered verbatim, as this report will only be able to summarise some of the responses; this will be available in a separate report. What follows below are some of the points which we did find; they are not necessarily representative of the full response we received but were interesting to us in light of the questions we asked.

Some teachers were feeling more positive during the lockdown:

*I am enjoying the peace. My skin and hair have healed and I am eating and sleeping better than in a usual term time- my brain is less chaotic and I am better at looking after myself and taking time to enjoy my own art.*

Some were having a mixed experience:

*A lot of fluctuation. We have had a fairly intensive work experience as we are using iPads to deliver live lessons. I have however felt less stressed and have a lot more time for hobbies, cooking, spending time with my husband.*

Some were just thankful that we asked about how they were doing:

*This is actually the first survey I have received asking me how I am, I wish it could have come from my own school/academy trust first.*

Teachers keenly felt the lack of interaction. Moreover, they wanted to do their best for their students and were anxious that they were missing out. This was something that online teaching was not compensating for. A change in the mode of interaction with colleagues was also an issue.

*It's like singing on a stage with a blindfold and ear muffs and not knowing how empty or full venue is.*

*Generally things are emotionally easier, but work-wise I've started to feel very bored of this way of working, really missing student interactions and struggling to stay motivated, particularly as the gaps between students who are and aren't able to engage with school work continues to widen, I worry about how we will come back in a way that fully supports all of them.*

*A lot of meetings and communications have been perfectly adequate online and it has been easy to use this method of communication but the social communication has been a challenge. The lack of meeting round a coffee table to chat and share things that work or don't has been severely missing and it's a struggle to do those little bits of professional learning that aren't quantified. In addition, spending my time replying to emails of 'how do I access xxxxx again?' and sorting out silly little problems is ultimately quite soul destroying. Every word has to be scrutinised in communications and explanations are a real struggle to do well, especially for Maths, over emails. My time is taken up with a lot of small things.*

Loneliness was also more generally an emotion expressed by some teachers:

*Overwhelming loneliness*

*I have tons of friends and close family, we're always in touch but in the quieter weekend moments, I often get hit by a wave of grief that I'm alone. Going out by myself for a walk or cycle ride has become really hard because it reinforces I'm alone. I think it's really helpful to be honest with myself about this but it's also pretty bleak because I don't see how it's going to change in the near future...I can't wait to get a dog!*

Sadly, some teachers were feeling very despondent, and that a negative opinion of teachers from outside the profession was not helping:

*Whatever I am doing, I feel that I ought to be doing something else.*

*Trying my best to juggle family and work, but always feeling like whatever I do isn't good enough. Especially now the media are back to criticising teachers again.*

*Finding myself working harder than ever and more anxious as can't speak to anyone face-to-face in a professional manner.*

*Feel as if I am working really hard but that most people think that I am on holiday.*

Fears for their health on a prospective return to school were expressed by some teachers:

*I am extremely worried about possibly and almost certainly dying if I return to school. I am 66 yrs old and have had 5 3-day fevers since November and been seriously ill when at school but feeling I could be forced to go back. I had a talk with my Deputy Head and she was saying we will be likely expected to return with 10 per class. I am petrified as I thought I was so ill prior to leaving school I could die and even made my will. This is not something to be taken lightly with us older teachers but we could be threatened by school to return, she said.*

Teachers also found working from home difficult, for a variety of reasons including practical workspaces, homeschooling their own children and insecurity:

*Very difficult teaching situation, didn't have the right work area and equipment. No contact from Head Teacher, and then the school went into administration. A few days later it closed due to insolvency and we were all made redundant. Just great!*

*Hugely distracted in many ways leading to a loss of focus, concentration and attention - due to e.g., securing food and supplies, old parent (and neighbour) capacity to cope- literally losing her mind in her isolation, immediate family security, home schooling/ health of teenage children, ideas about the future, blocks on current research plans, loss of liberty, plans for the summer lost.*

*Trying to remote teach from a corner of the dining room is having a significant impact on me - work load is huge, and my family - who need my attention but I can't always be available. Two children home educating, 5 people to feed twice a day - whilst trying to teach - on top of national concerns over the virus and family concerns over shielding / furlough & loss of income, the pressure is IMMENSE - thank God the sun is shining!*

Support and guidance for teachers, particularly from the government, was an issue expressed by some respondents:

*I have felt a great sense of confusion in regards to the guidelines in relationship to special educational needs school's and how they have been considered alongside mainstream.*

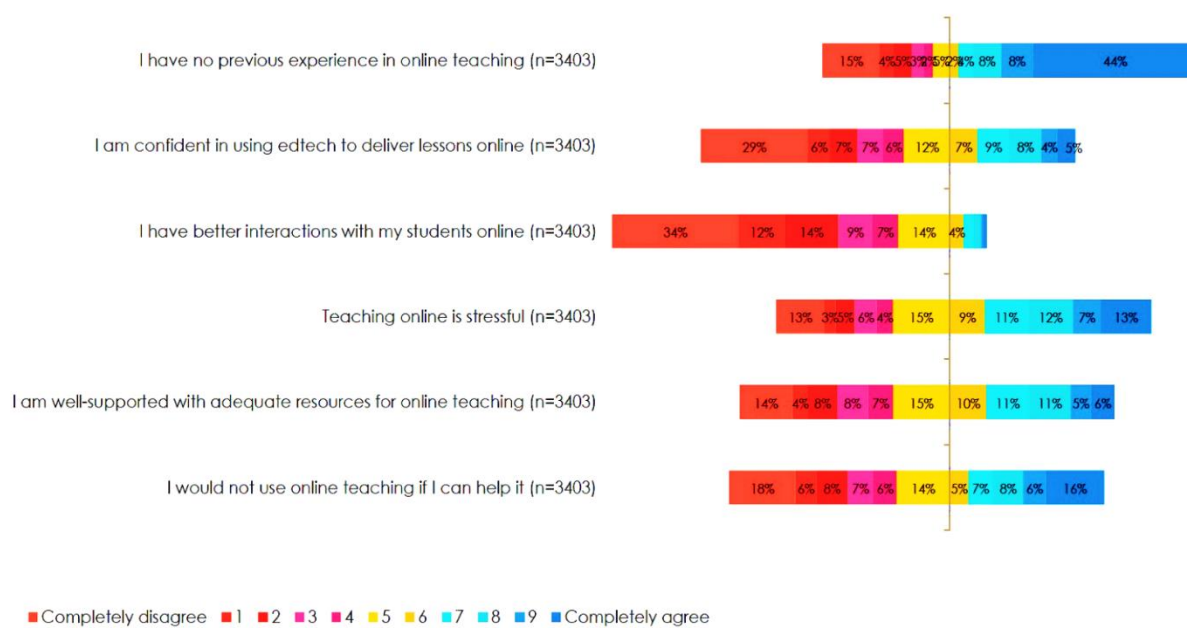
*I'm also feeling frustrated with the government's approach to schools, suggesting opening without any clear consultation with teachers, and therefore without a clear plan of how these things will work. It is confusing for us to have no idea about opening in the near future, the indecision must be even harder on students.*

*There has also been a discernible anger directed at the government due to their apparent inability to set and follow a practical strategy, to tell the truth, their regular exhortations not to criticise at this time and the ideological nature of their communications.*

## Use of edtech

The school closure and the rush to find alternative ways to deliver lessons led many to turn to education technological tools. To understand teachers' level of preparedness in the unprecedented event of prolonged school closure, we asked them about their experience with delivering lessons online. The questions were scored on a scale of 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree).

**Figure 4: Teachers' experience with online teaching (% by frequency of responses)**



The findings of our study are consistent with those of Teacher Tapp and Sutton Trust. In our survey of over 3,400 teachers, 66% of them reported having **very little or no previous experience in online teaching**. Moreover, **only a third of respondents (33%)** said they felt **confident** to any extent in using edtech to deliver lessons online.



**Over half (54%) of teachers found online teaching stressful** and only a tiny proportion said they had better interactions with their students online. Only **44% of teachers felt adequately provided** for online teaching, but a similar proportion said they would not use online teaching if they could help it.

When comparing teachers' experiences by phase, teachers in tertiary education were more likely to have previous experience in delivering (Table 7) than primary and secondary teachers. Only 53% of tertiary teachers had little or no experience, compared to 70% of secondary and primary teachers. On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is completely disagree and 10 is completely agree), the mean score for primary teachers is 8.09, for secondary teachers it is 8.24 and for tertiary teachers the score is 6.59. The effect size between secondary and tertiary teachers is 0.43.

**Table 7: Teachers' experience in delivering lessons online**

	Early Years/ Primary (n=724)		Secondary (n=1658)		Tertiary (n=1021)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No previous experience in online teaching	8.09	3.94	8.24	3.69	6.59	3.98
Confidence in delivering online lessons	3.98	3.22	4.95	3.25	5.24	3.29
Better interactions with students online	2.77	2.20	3.30	2.37	3.89	2.54
Teaching online is stressful	6.29	3.43	6.64	3.14	6.67	3.14
Well supported with resources for online teaching	5.48	3.25	6.16	2.99	5.63	2.94
Would not use online if possible	5.91	3.54	6.03	3.51	5.63	3.47

Primary teachers were the least confident in using edtech to deliver lessons. Only one in five (20%) said they were confident whereas over a quarter (28%) of secondary teachers compared to 40% of secondary teachers said they were confident in delivering online lessons. While primary teachers do not feel that online teaching is any more or less stressful than teachers in other phases, they are less likely to say that they have better interactions with their students online. This is perhaps not surprising.

What is clear is that most teachers do not have confidence in delivering lessons online, and only under 50% of teachers said they were well supported with adequate resources for online teaching.

One teacher's comment describes the impact that adapting to online teaching was having on her work day:

*Work was always very hard and time consuming with long hours but remote teaching has been a real struggle with brand new set of skills needed involving ICT usage without proper guidance, e.g. Zoom, Google Drive, Microsoft meeting etc etc. Students also emailing work directly via email and feedback response required same day. This is on top of regular day to day emails such as staff updates on strategies and professional development courses via email weekly. We also have subject based tasks set too.*

It seems unlikely that, with so little preparation and such low levels of confidence that online teaching was ever going to be widespread during such events leading to sudden closure of schools. Perhaps this is an area worth serious consideration in the immediate future investment, in terms of initial teacher training, CPD and government investment in digital infrastructure.

### **Communication with students**

We asked teachers what forms of communication they were using to connect with their students. Note that here scores of 7 - 10 are considered as frequent and scores of 0 - 3 are infrequent.

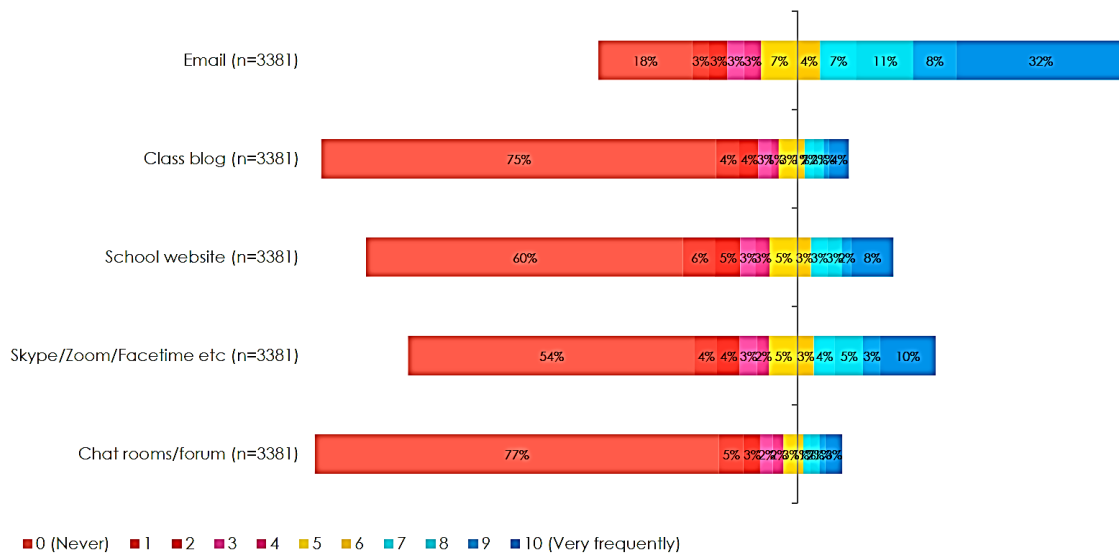
**Table 8: Communication with students (n=3382)**

	Email	Class blog	School website	Skype/ Zoom/ Facetime etc	Chat rooms/ forums	Other
0 (Never)	602	2531	2032	1840	2590	2621
1	112	150	209	142	158	49
2	117	122	157	145	109	56
3	106	85	101	111	80	51
4	110	45	88	79	70	55
5	231	118	177	179	87	82
6	147	47	90	107	41	31
7	233	63	103	133	46	38
8	365	60	94	184	59	68
9	274	33	59	107	34	54
10 (very frequently)	1085	128	272	355	108	277
Mean	7.21	2.24	3.17	3.82	2.11	2.54
SD	3.82	2.66	3.35	3.72	2.52	3.22

Teachers reported that the most common mode of communication with students was via emails (mean score 7.21, SD 3.82). 58% of teachers said they used emails frequently. This was followed by virtual meeting platforms via Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams (mean score 3.82), but this was still rare. Interestingly, class blogs and the school website, mediums which may have already been in place, were less likely to be used than these virtual meeting platforms. Teachers were least likely to use chat rooms/forums understandably because of children safeguarding concerns.

**Figure 5: Communication with students (% by frequency of response)**

How often do you use the following for communication with your students?



There are variations in the way teachers communicate with students in different phases of education (Table 9). While email is the most common way teachers communicate with students across all phases, primary teachers are less likely to communicate directly with their pupils. This is not surprising as primary school teachers are more likely to communicate with parents rather than directly with children. But even so, email is still the main means of communication among primary school teachers. Almost as widely used though among primary teachers is the school website. The use of virtual meeting platforms like Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams is confined to tertiary teachers where there is less concern about safeguarding issues.

**Table 9: Communication with students by phase of education**

	Early years/ Primary (n = 717)		Secondary (n = 1649)		Tertiary	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Email	4.38	3.85	7.48	3.54	8.64	3.27
Class blog	2.87	3.37	2.14	2.603	1.91	2.04
School website	4.15	3.79	2.98	3.25	2.71	3.03
Virtual meeting platforms	2.69	3.24	2.95	3.35	5.95	3.73
Chat rooms/ forums	1.62	2.08	1.88	2.35	2.79	2.89

In the open comments, teachers expressed concerns about students who had home environments that were less supportive than ideal or where access to hardware or internet were barriers, but they also found communication to be generally difficult and demanding. Respondents left a number of written comments for us regarding access to learning:

*Parents not able to access work online causing a barrier*

*Parental lack of ability to help*

*Technology and children with no or very limited internet access*

*Students with no internet*

*Student's don't always have good internet connections. Students more shy about engaging. Attendance reduced but this is more related to pandemic than online teaching.*

*Pupils without IT resources Parental engagement in Early Years and KS1  
Parental knowledge on IT*

As described earlier, 72% teachers reported spending up to 5 hours a week communicating with parents. Where students do not have access to digital technology, teachers have reported that they had been delivering schoolwork to homes for their pupils by hand. Below are a number of examples of what teachers were doing to make sure schoolwork was accessible to children without access to technology:

*I have to print out learning resources for over half my class. They are not accessing any online teaching.*

*One of my Y8 KW students has Williams syndrome. She can sometimes access a laptop but mainly we communicate through emails which we've had to teach her how to do [it]. She has done work but then mostly doesn't save it properly*

*so she can't send it back. She really resists Mum supporting her. Currently she is just borrowing Mum's mobile to say hello each day as they're changing internet provider. Therefore the challenges are huge.*

*No online lessons are being taught. I am preparing work for children which they receive either by e mail or post every Monday with a range of different tasks for them to complete. The school has also sent workbooks to each child for them to complete and attempt at their own pace.*

*Weekly visits and paper work delivered.*

*Delivery of work packs to households with no internet access.*

*Not all pupils have access to IT and internet so this causes problems, and we are asked for paperwork to be printed in school and delivered to pupils so they can continue to learn.*

While some teachers did report that using alternative technological platforms helped make them feel more connected with families, communicating with parents and students at home brought up many issues for teachers. These concerns included workload, safety and their own family life:

*Communication with younger students who are not yet good readers. I am communicating with parents more than my pupils. Using tech at home is stressful when it goes wrong and when family life is going on simultaneously.*

*Emails and communication have increased hugely. Marking is much more onerous.*

*Personal safety, you don't know who is watching.*

## Conclusion

During the school closure, the use of edtech for teaching and communication with students and parents was widely adopted. Many have raised the issue of the digital divide and the widening of attainment gap between rich and the poor children, calling for increased government investments in technological infrastructure, internet connectivity and funding in schools to support the provision of digital devices for disadvantaged children.

Although the government announced a centralised package to support some of these children, provision of laptops and tablets as well as internet access was prioritised for children in care, children with a social worker and disadvantaged children in Year 10, and this only came a month into the lockdown.

As a reminder, such a programme is not new. The Computers for Pupils scheme (2006–2008), for instance, distributed funding of more than £60 million for pupils aged 11–16 in the most deprived areas of England, mainly focusing on the use of computers for homework and providing course materials online (Lynch et al. 2010). In 2008, the English government committed £300 million to the Home Access programme, which funded computers and internet access for pupils aged 8–19 in disadvantaged families (Becta 2009). The change of government in May 2010 led to the suspension of funding. Would things have turned out differently if the scheme had continued?

Our findings show that schools and teachers were not well-prepared for the transition to delivering lessons remotely. This is not surprising as such an event leading to the complete and sudden lockdown of a whole nation is highly unusual and unexpected. Teachers' experience reported here is also not unique of England. Similar stories have been reported all over the world. However, some teachers were seeing this as a chance to learn new skills, which would be useful and relevant to their teaching after the lockdown. One common comment from teachers was that the experience was a steep learning curve.

When this study started, we expected that teachers would be under huge pressure to cope with preparing, planning and delivering lessons, and that this would have an effect on their general wellbeing. We have seen from our results that this has certainly been the case for some. But we have also seen some positive results. Despite the enormity of the situation and

the colossal amount of challenges and difficulties, many teachers were still generally cheerful, happy and relaxed, and felt that what they were doing was important.

However, as we had expected, teachers also expressed many more negative emotions. In most surveys, respondents tend to leave the Any Other Comments question blank, but this survey was unusual. Practically every teacher had something to say. This reflects how deeply teachers felt about the issue. The saddest comment was from a teacher who said this was the first survey that actually asked how they were; they wished it had come from their own school first. Teachers were also reporting lower energy levels and struggling to homeschool their own children while working. While their job may not be getting as much notice as healthcare workers, teachers have been no less important in supporting key workers' children in school and families at home.

Overall, respondents to our survey gave very variable answers on wellbeing, which perhaps highlights the complexity of the situation that they are in and the solutions for barriers to learning, as well as how complex the topic of wellbeing and mental health is. Furthermore, while there are some positive findings for teaching staff, school leaders were clearly feeling far less optimistic. Being in lockdown has created a barrier in understanding how teachers are doing and what they are doing. This survey has given us a glimpse into the lives of teachers in those difficult months; we thank all of the teachers who shared this information with us.

### **Next steps**

There is currently a huge media and policy interest on the achievement gap between rich and poor children, perhaps made worse by effects of the Covid-19 outbreak. This survey shows that there are also particular challenges in engaging children with SEN remotely. However, we do not yet know if and to what extent this has affected children's education. Most of the evidence, so far, has been anecdotal and speculative. The next step would be to evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on children's education and their wellbeing.

This pandemic has also seen a rise in the number and range of education resources for home learning and distance teaching. Edtech companies have reported a deluge of requests for their products. For students who have no access to the internet and digital devices, teachers have gone out of their way to ensure that their students do not miss out. Some have personally delivered work packages to homes, and a large number have kept contact with their students via emails.



Results from this survey as well as other previous surveys from [Teacher Tapp](#) and [Sutton Trust](#) suggest that children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and schools in deprived areas are less likely to have access to digital technology. This study has shown that it is not only children, but some teachers do not have access to the necessary technological infrastructure and digital devices for working from home. These have been barriers to accessing teaching and learning during the pandemic.

The use of edtech has been adopted at short notice. Should this be more widely adopted in future? At present, there is [no evidence that online learning is effective](#), or indeed, that any of the edtech resources sent to parents or used by teachers has beneficial effects. Many of these resources have not been tested; some may be potentially harmful. Research on edtech tools has been largely conducted by the developers and mostly based on perceptions of users or based on single group pre-post designs. The next step is therefore to commission independent robust evaluations of the impact of some of the resources and platforms or approaches used for remote teaching.

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## Appendix - Respondent school profiling

### School type

The proportion of each school type in England represented by the data is (compared to gov.uk data):

	Sample %	National %
Academy 16-19 converter	0.3%	0.1%
Academy converter	46.3%	25.6%
Academy special converter	0.5%	1.2%
Community school	17.4%	29.7%
Foundation school	4.7%	3.4%
Free schools	2.2%	1.8%
Further education	2.0%	1.2%
Independent	13.3%	12.4%
Local authority nursery school	0.4%	1.8%
Non-maintained special school	1.9%	0.3%
Pupil referral unit	0.5%	1.0%
University technical college	0.7%	0.2%
Voluntary aided school	7.0%	13.5%
Voluntary controlled school	2.7%	8.1%

### Geographical spread of schools

The proportion of schools (inc academies) situated in each | represented by the data is:

Barking and Dagenham	9%
Barnet	14%
Barnsley	2%
Bath and North East Somerset	14%
Bedford	15%
Bexley	20%
Birmingham	13%
Blackburn with Darwen	5%

(Continued on next pages)

Blackpool	4%	Cheshire West and Chester	11%
Bolton	9%	City of London	20%
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	9%	Cornwall	10%
Bracknell Forest	22%	Coventry	10%
Bradford	5%	Croydon	19%
Brent	24%	Cumbria	6%
Brighton and Hove	46%	Darlington	13%
Bristol City of	28%	Derby	10%
Bromley	20%	Derbyshire	6%
Buckinghamshire	20%	Devon	10%
Bury	8%	Doncaster	2%
Calderdale	10%	Dorset	12%
Cambridgeshire	9%	Dudley	4%
Camden	25%	Durham	2%
Central Bedfordshire	11%	Ealing	5%
Cheshire East	10%	East Riding of Yorkshire	5%

East Sussex	24%	Hillingdon	10%
Enfield	10%	Hounslow	11%
Essex	13%	Isle of Wight	9%
Gateshead	5%	Islington	9%
Gloucestershire	14%	Kensington and Chelsea	13%
Greenwich	9%	Kent	17%
Hackney	3%	Kingston upon Hull City of	29%
Halton	1%	Kingston upon Thames	17%
Hammersmith and Fulham	66%	Kirklees	7%
Hampshire	10%	Lambeth	15%
Haringey	12%	Lancashire	7%
Harrow	12%	Leeds	36%
Hartlepool	7%	Leicester	7%
Havering	5%	Leicestershire	12%
Herefordshire	11%	Lewisham	24%
Hertfordshire	16%	Lincolnshire	7%

Liverpool	41%	North Yorkshire	6%
Luton	16%	Northamptonshire	11%
Manchester	29%	Northumberland	6%
Medway	3%	Nottingham	11%
Merton	8%	Nottinghamshire	6%
Middlesbrough	8%	Oldham	8%
Milton Keynes	15%	Oxfordshire	25%
Monmouthshire	7%	Pembrokeshire	8%
Newcastle upon Tyne	43%	Peterborough	6%
Newham	15%	Plymouth	13%
Newport	5%	Portsmouth	27%
Norfolk	5%	Reading	17%
North East Lincolnshire	5%	Redbridge	5%
North Lincolnshire	5%	Redcar and Cleveland	43%
North Somerset	13%	Richmond upon Thames	27%
North Tyneside	6%	Rochdale	7%
Rutland	18%	Suffolk	11%
Sefton	4%	Sunderland	4%
Sheffield	28%	Surrey	26%
Shropshire	2%	Sutton	29%
Slough	28%	Swindon	21%
Solihull	10%	Tameside	6%
Somerset	3%	Telford and Wrekin	8%
South Gloucestershire	5%	Thurrock	15%
South Tyneside	6%	Torbay	26%
Southampton	26%	Tower Hamlets	7%
Southwark	18%	Trafford	6%
St. Helens	3%	Wakefield	5%
Staffordshire	8%	Walsall	6%
Stockport	11%	Waltham Forest	11%
Stockton-on-Tees	9%	Wandsworth	21%
Stoke-on-Trent	26%	Warrington	5%