Education in the post-COVID world

Survey Report

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Introduction

Like the rest of the public sector, education was faced with a sudden and unprecedented challenge in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic led to the first national lockdown. Almost overnight, all education from primary school to university had to be delivered online to pupils and students in isolation in their own homes or halls of residence.

This change was only possible because of the digital revolution that has transformed all our lives, and which is based on the assumption of universal access to technology and the internet. Inevitably, the change from in-person to remote learning – and then back again – led to both positive outcomes and challenges for pupils and staff in terms of both learning and teaching, and the wider aspects of education such as peer interaction and social support.

Now, two years on from the start of the pandemic, iGov Survey has partnered with YPO to explore what impact the pandemic had and will continue to have on education and the role that procurement played, and can play, to shape and support education in the 'new normal' of a post-COVID world.

About our Survey Partner: YPO

YPO specialises in public procurement. With the public sector under immense pressure, schools, local authorities, and other public sector services, e.g., police forces, fire and rescue services, health and higher education providers, are delivering essential services with fewer resources and reduced budgets. YPO helps organisations buy efficiently, ensuring value for money and freeing up much-needed time and resources.

YPO is also a leading supplier of school products and stationery, from exercise books to glue sticks, school furniture, and facilities management contracts. It serves as a helping hand to schools navigating the time-intensive world of procurement and champions the needs of the education sector.

YPO®

Survey Methodologies and Respondents' Profile

The survey was conducted by iGov Survey in partnership with YPO. The project ran from Wednesday 15th September 2021 to Wednesday 20th October 2021.

163 individuals from 158 unique organisations participated in the survey, representing job roles across the education and local government sectors. These included: Assistant Principal, Bursar, Chief Financial Officer, Director of IT, Executive Headteacher, Headteacher, IT Manager, Office Administrator, Principal, Procurement Manager, School Business Manager and Vice Principal.

All survey participants have received a complimentary copy of the findings report. There was no inducement to take part in the survey, and YPO was not introduced as the survey partner.

Key Findings

Digital evolution in the education sector

As has been the case in almost every aspect of life, the COVID-19 pandemic created huge challenges and education professionals were required to adapt quickly to a new online education environment. It is encouraging to see that an overwhelming majority (98%) of survey participants felt their schools/organisations adapted either 'very well' or 'fairly well' to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 1: How well do you feel that your school/ organisation was able to adapt to the challenges created by COVID-19?

Very well 62%

Fairly well 36%

Not very well 2%
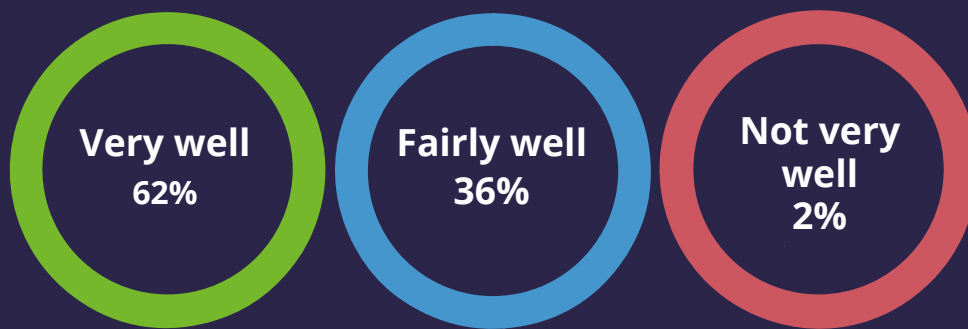
The adaptations required were far-reaching and, as the survey respondents revealed, extended well beyond the obvious online lesson delivery. While the introduction of the 'online classroom' was seen as the biggest change implemented during the pandemic by 76% of participants, establishing new remote collaboration practices with pupils, parents, and colleagues ran a close second at 73%. Unsurprisingly, the cultural shift to remote working was seen as a significant change by over half of the participants (53%).

FIGURE 2: The landscape for education has changed dramatically as schools adapted to the impact of COVID-19. In your opinion, what are the biggest changes that your school/ organisation has implemented during the pandemic?

Introduction of the 'online classroom'

Establishing new remote collaboration practices (e.g., the sharing of learning materials with parents and pupils/ students, commissioning external events and training for pupils/ students that are hosted online)

Cultural shift to working remotely

Establishing quicker procurement routes to enable response to COVID

Other – please specify

76%   73%   53%   16%   12%
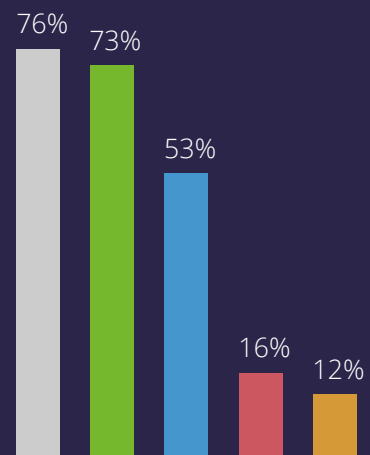
In their comments, participants also highlighted the challenges posed by supporting and managing the mental health of staff and pupils without the chance to see them face to face, supporting vulnerable famil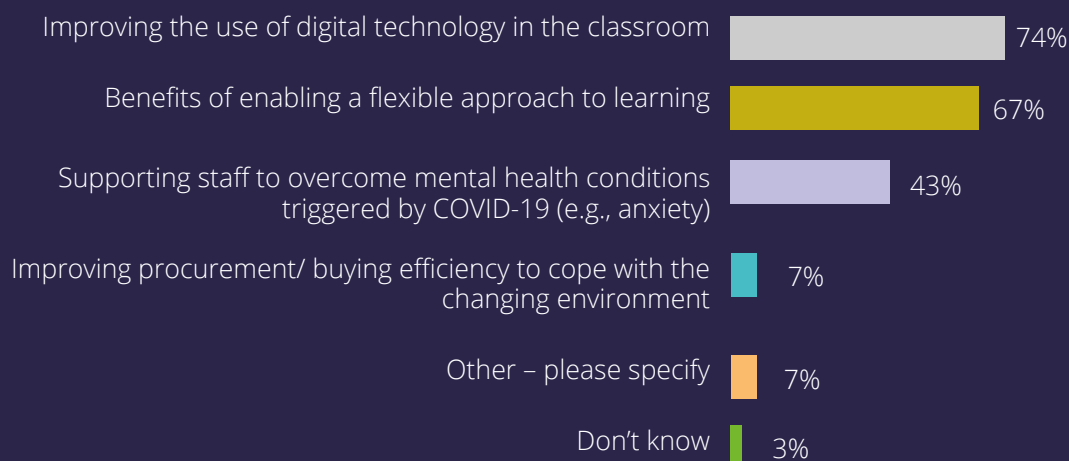ies with limited help from over-subscribed agencies, and getting pupils to engage with remote learning. As many schools remained open during lockdowns to provide education for the children of key workers and then reopened for pupils, staff also faced the challenges of responding to rapidly changing requirements, writing risk assessments at a moment's notice, and ensuring that the physical space in schools was as safe as possible by putting in place hygiene measures, social distancing, and the like.

When asked about the biggest lessons learnt over the course of the past year, 74% cited the improving use of digital technology in the classroom, while 67% saw the benefits of enabling a flexible approach to learning. The education sector demonstrated – and continues to demonstrate - how flexible and resilient it is by adopting new approaches to meet the challenges faced during these unprecedented times. Social awareness is prominent too – the third-ranking lesson learned was about supporting staff mental health.

FIGURE 3: What are the biggest lessons you feel your school/ organisation has learnt over the course of the past year?

Lesson	Percentage
Improving the use of digital technology in the classroom	74%
Benefits of enabling a flexible approach to learning	67%
Supporting staff to overcome mental health conditions triggered by COVID-19 (e.g., anxiety)	43%
Improving procurement/ buying efficiency to cope with the changing environment	7%
Other – please specify	7%
Don't know	3%

The pandemic highlighted that the process of digital evolution in education is not yet complete with participants commenting on the way that the pandemic revealed the "fallacy of the digital native" and the "lack of digital competence among our workforce and students". However, this wasn't an obstacle for everyone as people "learned new skills in how to use IT flexibly and effectively."

Looking at the ways in which schools/organisations used digital technology, our survey participants generally shared a positive experience. 84% either agreed or strongly agreed that they had the technology in place to be able to deliver the digital classroom effectively and – in good news for the procurement profession – 73% agreed that their organisation's procurement function was able to respond effectively to the increased demand and speed of change required due to the pandemic.

With this technology, 87% agreed that they were able to cater for different learning styles and provide the skills that students need for both their education and their future lives in the workforce. In addition, 89% believed that they were able to protect their data and implement child safeguarding measures, both of which are particularly important in an education setting.

While participants were generally very positive about the digital experience, it is worth noting that in every case the percentage of those who 'agreed' was over 50%

while, with the sole exception of data protection and safeguarding (37%), fewer than 30% 'strongly agreed' with any of the above statements.

In addition, other sources have highlighted the challenges that schools faced in shifting to digital. Initial problems included explaining the new technology to parents, especially those whose first language was not English and getting work back from pupils to teachers for feedback. Increasingly, schools gravitated to technology offered free by Google and Microsoft, which offers a variety of tools for setting and returning work and for conducting remote lessons – something supported by government, which provided free technical support and training on these tools – which has led some to have concerns about the infiltration of education by the big technology firms and 'privatisation by stealth'.[1]

Other concerns include data security – schools are ill equipped to protect pupils' data and survey participants raised concerns about cyber security risks. There is no guarantee that pupils will have cyber security of any kind on personal devices – particularly if, like many digitally disadvantaged young people, they are using mobile phones to try and complete their schoolwork.

Collectively, this suggests that there is still room for progress and improvement – that the digital evolution is ongoing.

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/23/after-covid-will-digital-learning-be-the-new-normal

Online learning: perceived challenges and opportunities

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, particularly during the extended periods of lockdown in the first year of the pandemic, has been widely discussed in the media. It has also been the subject of urgent research as the government and others endeavoured to quantify and analyse the impact of online education on pupils, in both the short term and long term.

As highlighted by Ofqual's Learning during the pandemic: review of the research from England [2] "experiences of teaching and learning during the pandemic were diverse, but disadvantage and deprivation appear to be most associated with less effective learning and overall learning losses."

This resonates with the experiences of our survey participants, who highlighted challenges often associated with economic deprivation such as engaging and supporting vulnerable pupils/students

(58%), ensuring digital inclusion (57%) and internet connectivity issues (52%) as well as challenges around implementing home-school (45%). Obviously, if a family is living on a low income, they are less likely to have unlimited broadband and digital devices. While this was acknowledged by the government, which set up a scheme to deliver laptops to disadvantaged pupils, the scheme had fallen short of target by the end of the 2020 academic year.[3] Perhaps this is reflected in the 34% of participants who felt that the distribution of hardware was a challenge. (See the next section for further discussion on this.)

According to the comments and additional feedback provided by some participants, schools responded in a variety of ways to the issues around connectivity and lack of access to devices. Some schools provided teaching materials on paper for those without adequate digital access, while others brought at risk children, including those at risk of educational disruption

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learning-during-the-pandemic/learning-during-the-pandemic-review-of-research-from-england)
[3] https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-fails-to-meet-target-of-delivering-230k-laptops-by-end-of-june/
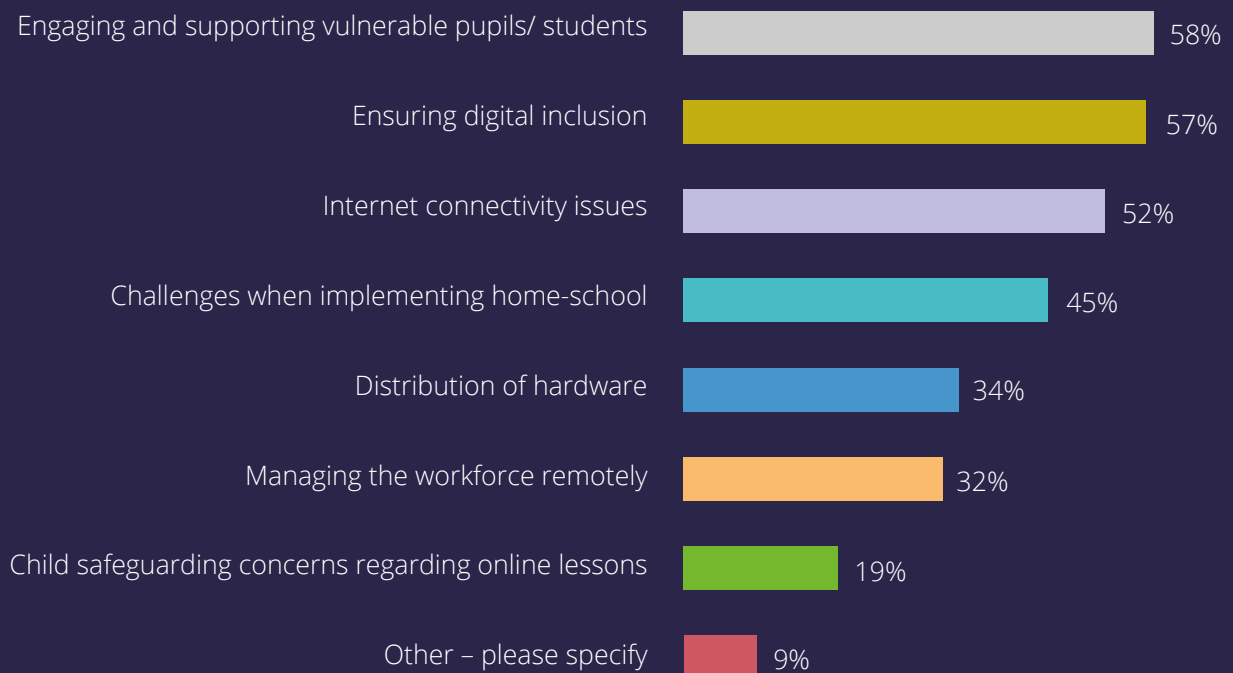
because of disadvantage, on site to join key workers' children. "Our vulnerable learners and those with EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plan) were all offered onsite provision, without this offer this group would have struggled significantly with online learning."

Overall, however, the pandemic revealed that digital disadvantage is as much part of poverty in the modern age as the more traditional ideas of insufficient food and warmth. It is an issue that also affects another often overlooked group – children living in remote and rural areas. While no one wants another lockdown, it is clear that tackling digital disadvantage is a priority if we want all children to achieve to their full capability – digital disadvantage affects homework and revision in the 'normal' school life of a child too.

As the pandemic - and our survey - showed, digital disadvantage is part of poverty in the twenty-first century. This is likely to be an ongoing issue as even more families feel the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis, which has seen not only steep rises (of over 50% in some cases) in fuel bills (electricity is essential for digital devices) but price rises across the board. In February 2022, before energy price rises took effect, inflation reached 6.2%, the highest since 1992.[4] With inflation not matched by wage increases, more families will be pushed into poverty and the associated educational disadvantage that comes from being cold, hungry, and without access to quality digital devices and the internet to keep up with schoolwork.

[4] https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/23/uk-inflation-highest-level-in-three-decades#:~:text=UK%20inflation%20has%20reached%20the%20highest%20level%20since%201992

FIGURE 4: What do you feel have been the biggest challenges experienced by your school/ organisation as you have adapted to the pandemic?

Challenge	Percentage
Engaging and supporting vulnerable pupils/ students	58%
Ensuring digital inclusion	57%
Internet connectivity issues	52%
Challenges when implementing home-school	45%
Distribution of hardware	34%
Managing the workforce remotely	32%
Child safeguarding concerns regarding online lessons	19%
Other – please specify	9%

Some of these digital challenges are perhaps reflected in the mixed feedback received by participants from students and parents about online learning, particularly the 76% of pupils who felt that home is not an ideal environment for learning while almost half suffered from having distractions or more responsibilities at home (43%). On a practical level, over half of students (58%) felt lost without a school routine – again, something that is unsurprising particularly with younger children – which was helped by the introduction of livestreamed lessons in some schools.
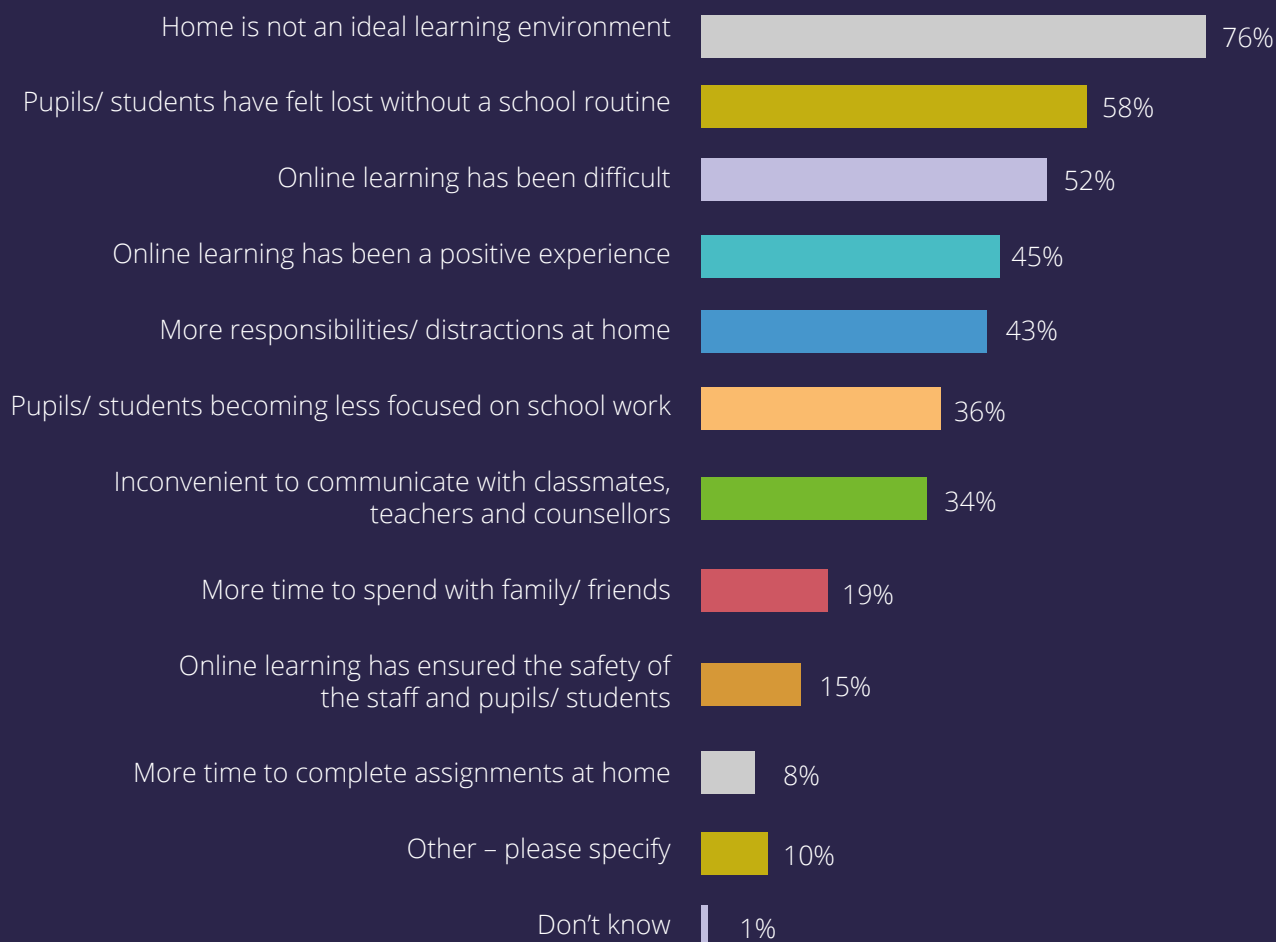
Participants stressed the difficulty of generalising about pupil experience, pointing out that the "difference between a 4-year-old and an 18-year-old as well as social and economic considerations make generalisations pointless." However, overall, some students found learning from home positive (45%) and engaged better, while others found it difficult (52%) and felt isolated. Pupils reported missing their peers and finding it hard to connect with them remotely while also missing the collaborative environment offered by being in school. This is illustrated by 86% of participants citing interaction with classmates/ friends as an important part of providing a better learning environment in the traditional classroom, while only 58% considered it important in an online classroom.

These figures for children and young people studying at home are less positive than those for adults – for instance, a report by YouGov in September 2021[5] stated that 60% of people would prefer to work remotely. This perhaps reflects the greater challenges faced by young people in terms of access to technology, learning to work alone for the first time, together with the social and economic difficulties outlined above. Most adult workers, for instance, either took their existing work laptop home or were supplied with a laptop by their employer.

[5] https://yougov.co.uk/topics/economy/articles-reports/2021/09/28/what-will-increased-remote-working-mean-britain

FIGURE 5: In your experience, what has been the feedback from your pupils/ students towards online learning?

Home is not an ideal learning environment	76%
Pupils/ students have felt lost without a school routine	58%
Online learning has been difficult	52%
Online learning has been a positive experience	45%
More responsibilities/ distractions at home	43%
Pupils/ students becoming less focused on school work	36%
Inconvenient to communicate with classmates, teachers and counsellors	34%
More time to spend with family/ friends	19%
Online learning has ensured the safety of the staff and pupils/ students	15%
More time to complete assignments at home	8%
Other – please specify	10%
Don't know	1%

Parents, similarly, had mixed feelings about online learning. Some felt that online learning worked better than expected (49%) and they appreciated all the efforts and preparation done by schools/teachers (48%). On the other hand, it was a challenge balancing working from home (64%), household responsibilities (58%) and teaching their children. Parents also worried about their child's mental health (64%) and wellbeing as remote learning increased isolation and anxiety.

A common theme running through pupils', parents' and schools' experiences of the pandemic is that of internet access. The centrality of internet to modern life was shown by the fact that, since March 2020, every home and business in the UK has had the legal right to "a decent, affordable broadband connection".[6] The fact that this is not a reality for many people, frequently because of cost, is something which will need to be addressed if modern society is to function effectively in any future pandemic or emergency.

Overall, many of the issues faced by pupils are very similar to those encountered by adults working from home – for instance isolation from peers, lack of opportunities for collaboration with peers and increased distractions and responsibilities – which suggests a potential overlap in solutions, should a similar situation ever arise again. One obvious solution from the workplace which is clearly here to stay is so-called hybrid working – a mix of home and workplace. This approach is now being adopted in schools, not as standard, but as a response to staff sickness during the latest COVID wave. For example, an East Ayrshire school made the news in March when several year groups were asked to work remotely for one day a week each due to staff shortages.[7]

Finally, communication with parents is a key part of education. It is interesting to note that 46% of respondents said that better communication with parents was one of the positives to come out of the 'new way of working' given the media presentation of overstretched parents working from home and simultaneously struggling to home-school their children. The survey interrogated how schools communicate with parents and discovered that email (93%) was the top channel followed by websites (78%) and social media/forum/blogs (68%). Interestingly, letters/printed materials (64%) were still used as one of the key communication channels. Perhaps this is a reflection of concern over digital disadvantage and the desire to include all parents in communications regardless of digital access.

[6] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/broadband-uso-need-to-know
[7] https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/ayrshire/ayrshire-secondary-school-moves-remote-26464282

Hybrid mode of teaching is the way forward

Inevitably, the COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly the move to online and home-based learning, caused education and education delivery to change abruptly and markedly. As society moves beyond the first, extreme stages of the pandemic and begins to settle into a 'new normal' way of living, it is inevitable that we should wonder whether the pandemic has changed education or whether the priority must be a return to education 2019-style.

When survey participants were asked whether the changes implemented in response to COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on education, over 80% thought that they would. 79% thought the changes will result in a hybrid approach to teaching with a mixture of new methods alongside traditional teaching methods.

FIGURE 6: To what extent do you believe that the changes implemented will result in a lasting impact on education?

It has completely overhauled the way in which we carry out our teaching strategies, and I don't believe we will ever return to previous methods

I believe it will result in a hybrid approach to teaching, in which some of the new methods are embraced and enabled alongside more traditional teaching methods

I feel that our school will return to traditional teaching methods, and the changes made to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on education will have no lasting impact

Other – please specify

Don't know
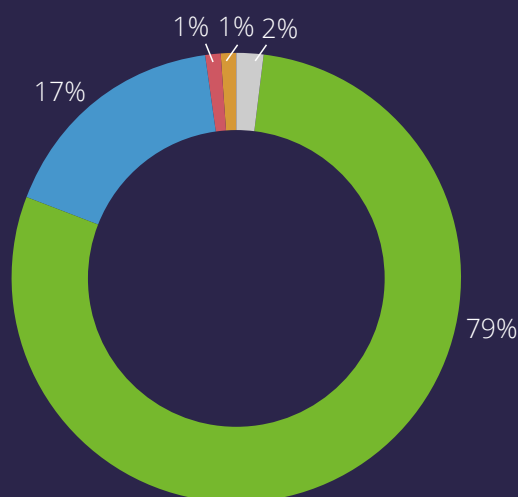
This perception perhaps arises from the chief 'lessons learned' from education in the pandemic. 74% of participants said that their key learning was about the need to improve the use of digital technology in the classroom while 67% spoke of the benefits of implementing a flexible approach to learning – something which is also easier when digital teaching materials are used.
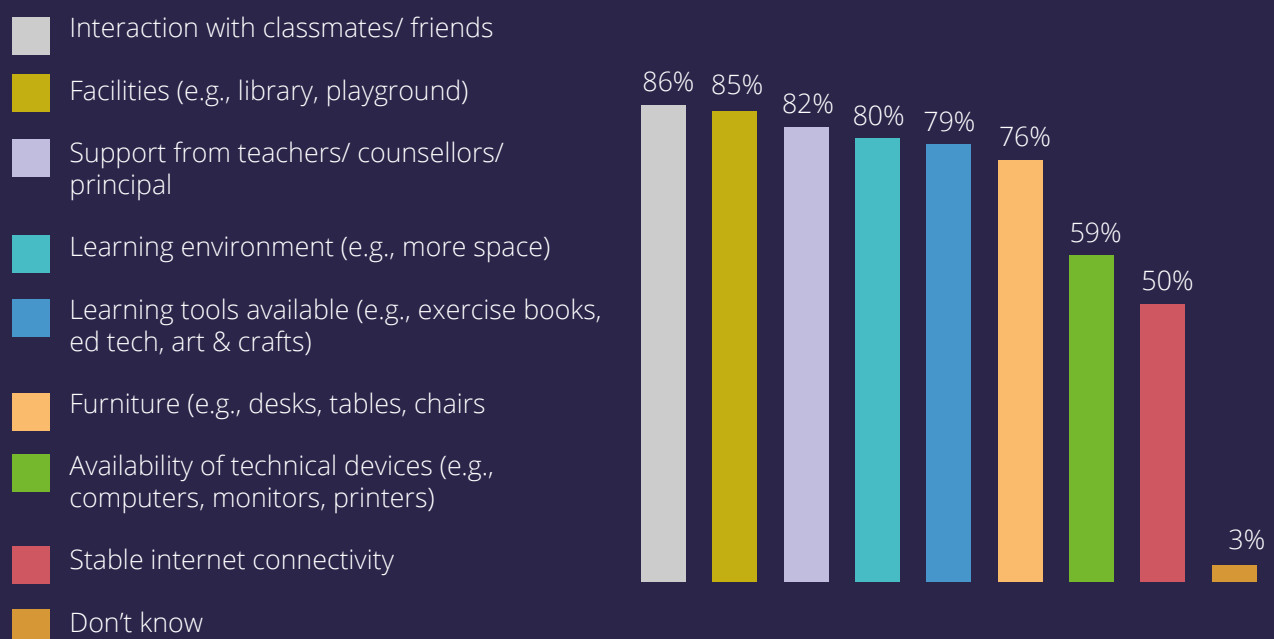
Individual comments suggested that there will be "an increased use of technology across all subjects of the curriculum" rather than – as has happened in many workplaces – the introduction of a hybrid of home and on-site learning. Others commented on the challenge of "how to engage children with more traditional classroom learning again". Again, the probability that technology will play a greater part in all areas of the curriculum brings up the issue of digital disadvantage and the need to ensure that pupils in all economic groups and in both rural and urban settings have access to efficient broadband and suitable devices. While smartphones are marvellous things, no one would want to write an essay on one.

The importance of these issues can be seen by the fact that, when asked what made for a better learning environment in an online classroom, 88% cited stable internet connectivity while 84% pointed to the availability of technical devices (e.g., computers, monitors, printers). "Digital infrastructure (Wi-Fi) in rural areas" was highlighted by one respondent as a challenge – rural Wi-Fi access is patchy and speeds are frequently slower than in towns and cities – while another participant commented that: "Lack of access to data for some and sharing of limited digital devices in families with multiple siblings made it very difficult for some learners to be able to attend lessons in real time."

When asked about important elements in the traditional classroom, a range of elements scored highly. Facilities (85%) and learning environment (80%) were rated of key importance alongside the missed social aspects, e.g., face to face interaction with classmate/friends (86%) and support from teachers/counsellors/principals (82%). In fact, one participant commented: "Children felt isolated and social skills have dropped significantly." The return of traditional teaching methods can certainly help to address this concern and perhaps some of the associated mental health concerns for both teachers and students/pupils.

FIGURE 7: In your opinion, which of the following are important elements in providing a better learning environment in the traditional classroom?

- Interaction with classmates/ friends
- Facilities (e.g., library, playground)
- Support from teachers/ counsellors/ principal
- Learning environment (e.g., more space)
- Learning tools available (e.g., exercise books, ed tech, art & crafts)
- Furniture (e.g., desks, tables, chairs
- Availability of technical devices (e.g., computers, monitors, printers)
- Stable internet connectivity
- Don't know

86% 85% 82% 80% 79% 76% 59% 50% 3%

Unlocking the potential of procurement in meeting schools' needs

With so many changes having occurred at speed during the COVID-19 pandemic, procurement is likely to have played a role in their implementation. Encouragingly, 87% of survey participants felt procurement was either 'very important' or 'fairly important' to their organisation's ability to adapt to the new way of working.

However, when asked about their current procurement approach, the picture was more mixed. Only 34% had a designated procurement services team in place for developing strategy and promoting good practice. A further 22% had a procurement team but participants struggled to get involved in procurement decisions, while a further 33% had no procurement team, with procurement being undertaken on an ad hoc basis.

When the group using 'ad hoc' procurement methods was analysed more closely, it turned out that 45% (20 out of 44 participants) were primary schools. Only nine secondary schools declared that they did not have a dedicated procurement function, while a further six were independent schools, which are not linked to the public sector and its procurement functions. While the sample size is small, it suggests that procurement may be taken more seriously in secondary schools, where the supplies and services required are perhaps more complex.

As schools adapt to the 'new normal' and potential hybrid mode of teaching, procurement has to work collaboratively with schools to ensure the sustainability of the digital hardware and services which are key to ensuring students can access classes and academic services remotely.

FIGURE 8: In your opinion, which of the following best represents your school/organisation's current procurement approach?

- We have a designated procurement services team responsible for developing our strategy and promoting good practice
- We have a procurement team, but it is difficult to gain a complete view or consistent involvement in all related decisions
- We don't have a dedicated procurement function; this is carried out on an ad hoc basis
- Other – please specify
- Don't know

6%
5%
34%
33%
22%
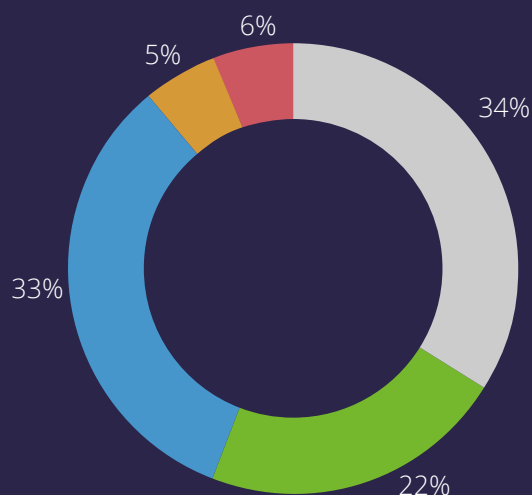
According to our survey participants, only 34% involve procurement at the scoping stage, with supplier identification (17%) and contracting (18%) the entry points with the next highest scores. This suggests that there is work to do to educate participants' organisations about the benefits of working with procurement professionals, particularly earlier in the procurement process – for instance at the scoping stage - when they might be able to point schools towards innovative solutions or opportunities to make efficiency savings.

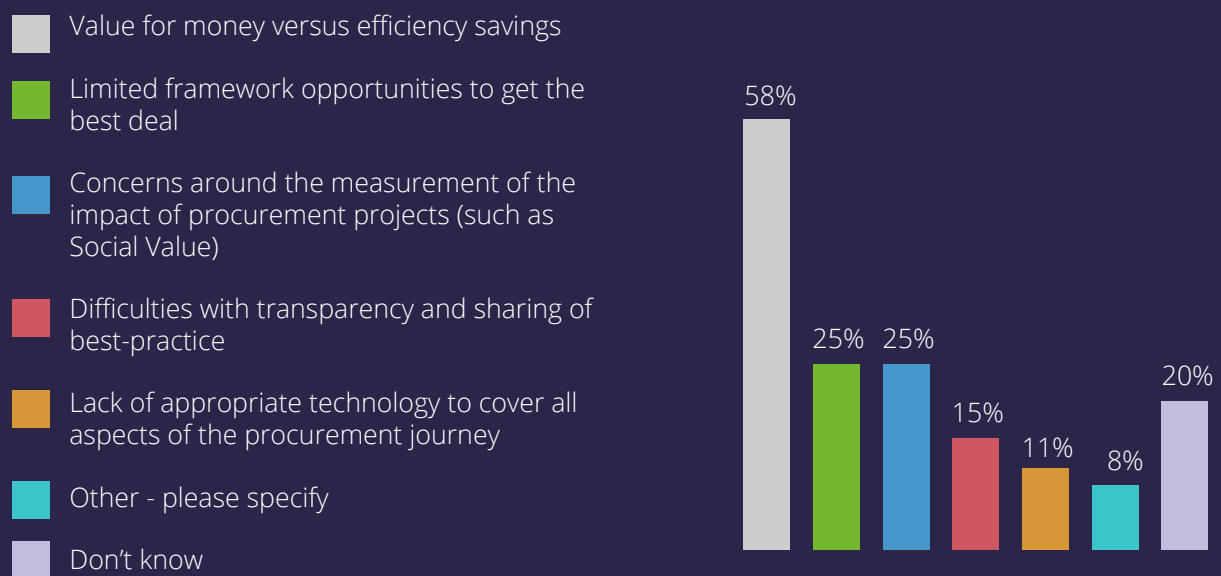## FIGURE 9: Which of the following do you believe are barriers to improved or successful procurement at your school/ organisation?

Legend:
- Value for money versus efficiency savings
- Limited framework opportunities to get the best deal
- Concerns around the measurement of the impact of procurement projects (such as Social Value)
- Difficulties with transparency and sharing of best-practice
- Lack of appropriate technology to cover all aspects of the procurement journey
- Other - please specify
- Don't know

Bar chart values: 58%, 25%, 25%, 15%, 11%, 8%, 20%

When asked about the barriers to improved or successful procurement, value for money versus efficiency savings scored over twice as highly (58%) as any other response. This is unsurprising given the pressure on school budgets in particular – according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies' Annual Report on education spending in England [8] published in November 2021, education spending per school pupil in England fell by 9% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2019-20.

The significant number of 'don't know' responses (20%) overlaps with the organisations which did not have a procurement function - 58% of the organisations saying 'don't know' also undertake procurement on an ad hoc basis - and also includes eight independent schools, which are not linked into the public procurement system.

In closing, the survey asked about the biggest areas of spend priority looking at the year ahead. 43% of participants saw facilities and estates as high priority, followed by training and recruitment (36%), while digital hardware and services each scored 26%. This reflects the fact that schools and colleges are almost entirely back to teaching on site, with the accompanying pressure to make the buildings as Covid safe as possible and, in some cases, catch up with a maintenance backlog. Training is again an area which had to take something of a back seat during the pressures of running schools both on site and online during lockdowns, so it is understandable that it is now seen as a priority, whereas digital received significant investment during lockdown and is perhaps now seen as less urgent, something confirmed by it being a middling priority for about half of survey participants.

8 https://ifs.org.uk/publications/15858

FIGURE 10: Looking at the year ahead, what do you feel will be the biggest areas of spend priority for your school/organisation?

Facilities and estates

| High priority 43% | Mid priority 33% | Low priority 16% | Don't know 8% |

Training and recruitment

| High priority 36% | Mid priority 42% | Low priority 15% | Don't know 7% |

Digital hardware

| High priority 26% | Mid priority 47% | Low priority 21% | Don't know 6% |

Digital services

| High priority 26% | Mid priority 50% | Low priority 17% | Don't know 7% |
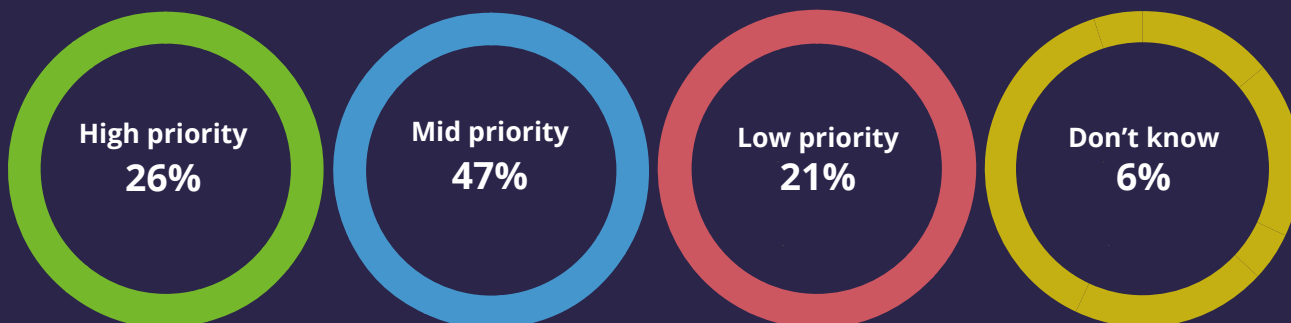
Looking at these findings overall, participants felt positive about the way education had responded to the pandemic, while acknowledging the challenges it posed. The key outcome was the realisation that digital disadvantage is now a serious issue that will continue to have implications for pupils even though schools and colleges are open once more.

Conclusion

Simon Hill, Managing Director at YPO

It is an understatement to say that we live in interesting times. Over the past two plus years, the COVID-19 pandemic and its knock-on effects, the ongoing climate crisis, and the rising cost of living - to name just a few issues - mean that we have all faced unexpected challenges.

While we're all impacted, young people who are growing up and trying to complete their education during these events are some of the most adversely affected. School children across the world have faced unprecedented disruption to their education since the start of the pandemic. While our research has found that many schools in the UK did an excellent job of adapting throughout the pandemic and consequent lockdowns, it also revealed that a significant portion of educators felt there was room for improvement, particularly when it came to supporting students who face additional challenges, such as economic deprivation and the fact that they may be living in 'digital deserts' where they do not have access to quality high speed broadband.

Due to these and other factors, these disadvantaged students are already at risk of not being as successful as their more advantaged peers, and the loss of learning time because of the pandemic has increased this risk. Our research has revealed that students in precarious economic situations were – and are – far less likely to have access to the technological devices and the reliable, high-speed internet necessary to make learning at home viable. Add to this the negative impact the pandemic and subsequent events have had on wellbeing for teachers and students alike – regardless of economic status – and there is very real danger that our most at risk young people will fall significantly behind their peers, which could have lifelong consequences.

It's encouraging to see that a number of these concerns have already been acknowledged by Government, with the recent schools White Paper, Opportunity for all – Strong schools with great teachers for your child, stating that in autumn 2021, the average primary school pupil had lost 1.9 months in maths and 0.8 in reading. For disadvantaged children, these figures were higher.

The Government has also acknowledged that schools have demonstrated their ability to experiment with and use new technology successfully, and that some pandemic-related innovations, like digital parents' evenings and setting homework assignments through digital platforms, are here to stay. Our own research

supports this, with 79% of our survey respondents saying they believed that the changes brought about by the pandemic will result in a hybrid approach to teaching, a mixture of new and traditional methods.

At YPO, we firmly believe that the support we provide to schools helps shape future generations, and we are optimistic about the commitments the Government has outlined in the White Paper to attract, develop, and retain teaching talent, and the ambition to identify at risk children and offer the right academic, pastoral, and specialist support.

As an organisation, we believe we can play an important role in addressing the specific challenges of narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers and ensuring that all students have access to the technology and digital tools that will set them up for success.

We can do this through championing the right tools for schools and students – tools that can address both academic and wellbeing needs, and by working directly with schools and local authorities to bridge the technology gap to help schools meet - or, even better, surpass - the Government's forthcoming digital and technological standards.

At YPO, our mission to overcome these challenges has already begun, and we look forward to supporting schools and young people on their journeys.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Question 1: The landscape for education has changed dramatically over the course of the past year, as schools adapted to the impact of COVID-19. In your opinion, what are the biggest changes that your school/ organisation has implemented during the pandemic? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Introduction of the 'online classroom'	76%
Establishing new remote collaboration practices (e.g., the sharing of learning materials with parents and pupils/ students, commissioning external events and training for pupils/ students that are hosted online)	73%
Cultural shift to working remotely	53%
Establishing quicker procurement routes to enable response to COVID	16%
Other – please specify	12%
Don't know	0%

Question 2: How well do you feel that your school/ organisation was able to adapt to the challenges created by COVID-19?

Answer	Percent
Very well	62%
Fairly well	36%
Not very well	2%
Not at all well	0%
Don't know	0%

Thinking about the way in which your school/ organisation uses digital technology, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Question 3i: Our school/ organisation has been able to cater to different learning styles effectively over the pandemic

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	23%
Agree	64%
Disagree	9%
Strongly disagree	3%
Don't know	1%

Question 3ii: The technology we use ensures we are able to provide our pupils/ students with the skills they will need in both their educational and working lives

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	25%
Agree	62%
Disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	2%
Don't know	3%

Question 3iii: I feel that we have the infrastructure and technology in place to be able to deliver the 'digital classroom' effectively

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	29%
Agree	55%
Disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	3%
Don't know	2%

Question 3iv: We are confident that we are able to protect our data and implement child safeguarding measures via digital and online platforms

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	37%
Agree	52%
Disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	1%
Don't know	5%

Question 3v: Our procurement function has been able to respond effectively to the increased demand and speed of change required due to the pandemic

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	17%
Agree	56%
Disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	5%
Don't know	7%

Question 4: What do you believe have been the most significant advantages/ opportunities that have arisen due to the 'new way of working'? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Increased collaboration between staff	49%
Increased collaboration between staff and pupils/ students	41%
Better engagement with parents	46%
Better engagement with pupils/ students	14%
Improved collaboration with the procurement function	5%
Faster procurement routes established	6%
Use of online learning tools/ platforms that benefit learning	84%
Other – please specify	5%
Don't know	1%

Question 5: In contrast, what do you feel have been the biggest challenges experienced by your school/ organisation as you have adapted to the pandemic? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Internet connectivity issues	52%
Child safeguarding concerns regarding online lessons	19%
Distribution of hardware	34%
Ensuring digital inclusion	57%
Engaging and supporting vulnerable pupils/ students	58%
Managing the workforce remotely	32%
Challenges when implementing home-school	45%
Other – please specify	9%
Don't know	0%

Question 6: What are the biggest lessons you feel your school/ organisation has learnt over the course of the past year? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Benefits of enabling a flexible approach to learning	67%
Improving the use of digital technology in the classroom	74%
Improving procurement/ buying efficiency to cope with the changing environment	7%
Supporting staff to overcome mental health conditions triggered by COVID-19 (e.g., anxiety)	43%
Other – please specify	7%
Don't know	3%

Question 7: To what extent do you believe that the changes implemented will result in a lasting impact on education?

Answer	Percent
It has completely overhauled the way in which we carry out our teaching strategies, and I don't believe we will ever return to previous methods	2%
I believe it will result in a hybrid approach to teaching, in which some of the new methods are embraced and enabled alongside more traditional teaching methods	79%
I feel that our school will return to traditional teaching methods, and the changes made to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on education will have no lasting impact	17%
Other – please specify	1%
Don't know	1%

Question 8: In your experience, what has been the feedback from your pupils/ students towards online learning? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Online learning has been a positive experience	45%
More time to complete assignments at home	8%
More time to spend with family/ friends	19%
Online learning has ensured the safety of the staff and pupils/ students	15%
Online learning has been difficult	52%
Pupils/ students becoming less focused on school work	36%
Pupils/ students have felt lost without a school routine	58%
Home is not an ideal learning environment	76%
Inconvenient to communicate with classmates, teachers and counsellors	34%
More responsibilities/ distractions at home	43%
Other – please specify	10%
Don't know	1%

Question 9: Similarly, what has been the feedback from parents? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Online learning worked better than expected	49%
Schools/ teachers were well prepared for remote learning	48%
Parents worried about data privacy issues (e.g., unauthorized access of online activities or unauthorized communication)	2%
Parents worried about the quality of education their child receives	36%
Access to reliable home internet	57%
Keeping their children focused on schoolwork (instead of other online activities)	64%
Challenge in balancing household responsibilities and teaching	58%
Challenge in balancing working from home and teaching	64%
Parents are unsupported with tech	21%
Parents worried about their child's mental health (e.g., anxiety, feeling isolated)	64%
Significant increase in stress, tension, and frustration for everyone in the family	46%
Other – please specify	4%
Don't know	8%

In your opinion, which of the following are important elements in providing better learning environment in the traditional classroom and an online classroom? Please tick all that apply per each column.

Question 10i: Traditional Classroom

Answer	Percent
Furniture (e.g., desks, tables, chairs)	76%
Facilities (e.g., library, playground)	85%
Learning environment (e.g., more space)	80%
Learning tools available (e.g., exercise books, ed tech, art & crafts)	79%
Interaction with classmates/ friends	86%
Support from teachers/ counsellors/ principal	82%
Stable internet connectivity	50%
Availability of technical devices (e.g., computers, monitors, printers)	59%
Don't know	3%

Question 10ii: Online Classroom

Answer	Percent
Furniture (e.g., desks, tables, chairs)	42%
Facilities (e.g., library, playground)	18%
Learning environment (e.g., more space)	43%
Learning tools available (e.g., exercise books, ed tech, art & crafts)	60%
Interaction with classmates/ friends	58%
Support from teachers/ counsellors/ principal	71%
Stable internet connectivity	88%
Availability of technical devices (e.g., computers, monitors, printers)	84%
Don't know	3%

Question 11: Which of the following channels does your school/ organisation currently use to communicate with parents? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Letters/ printed materials	64%
Email	93%
Instant messaging apps	58%
Video chat/ video conferencing	46%
Websites	78%
Social media, forum, blogs	68%
Mobile applications	37%
Webinars/ online events	35%
Other – please specify	6%
Don't know	2%

Question 12: How important do you feel procurement is to your school/ organisation's ability to adapt to the new way of working?

Answer	Percent
Very important	50%
Fairly important	37%
Somewhat important	7%
Not important	2%
Don't know	4%

Question 13: In your opinion, which of the following best represents your school/ organisation's current procurement approach?

Answer	Percent
We have a designated procurement services team responsible for developing our strategy and promoting good practice	34%
We have a procurement team, but it is difficult to gain a complete view or consistent involvement in all related decisions	22%
We don't have a dedicated procurement function; this is carried out on an adhoc basis	33%
Other – please specify	5%
Don't know	6%

Question 14: At what stage does procurement become involved when your school/ organisation procures new services?

Answer	Percent
Scoping	34%
Solution design	11%
Supplier identification	17%
Evaluation process	8%
Contracting	18%
Other – please specify	3%
Don't know	9%

Question 15: Which of the following do you believe are barriers to improved or successful procurement at your school/ organisation? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Difficulties with transparency and sharing of best-practice	15%
Limited framework opportunities to get the best deal	25%
Concerns around the measurement of the impact of procurement projects (such as Social Value)	25%
Value for money versus efficiency savings	58%
Lack of appropriate technology to cover all aspects of the procurement journey	11%
Other – please specify	8%
Don't know	20%

Grid: Looking at the year ahead, what do you feel will be the biggest areas of spend priority for your school/ organisation?

Question 16i: Digital hardware

Answer	Percent
High priority	26%
Mid priority	47%
Low priority	21%
Don't know	6%

Question 16ii: Digital services

Answer	Percent
High priority	26%
Mid priority	50%
Low priority	17%
Don't know	7%

Question 16iii: Training and recruitment

Answer	Percent
High priority	36%
Mid priority	42%
Low priority	15%
Don't know	7%

Question 16iv: Facilities and estates

Answer	Percent
High priority	43%
Mid priority	33%
Low priority	16%
Don't know	8%

Appendix 2: Participating Organisations

- Abbey Grange Church of England Academy
- Abbey Meads Community Primary School
- Arundel CofE Primary School
- Aston Business School
- Banister Primary School
- Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School
- Bedstone College
- Bishop Burton College
- Blackpool Council
- Blagdon Primary School
- Bolton Sixth Form College
- Bowness Primary School
- Bradley Primary School
- Bridgend College
- Bridgewater High School
- Brimscombe Church of England (VA) Primary School
- Bruton School for Girls
- Carwarden House Community School
- Cherry Tree Academy Trust Marham Junior
- City of York Council
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- Cookstown High School
- Criftins CofE Primary School
- Davenies School
- Dawn House School

- Delta Academies Trust
- Djanogly Learning Trust
- Downham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Eastrop Infant School
- Eastwood High School
- Ecclesfield School
- Eden District Council
- Edinburgh Napier University
- Edinburgh Primary School
- Emscote Infant School
- Epsom College
- Esher College
- Estcots Primary School
- Ferndown First School
- Firrhill High School
- Frensham Heights School
- Glasgow City Council
- Grainthorpe Junior School
- Greenfield Community College, A Specialist Arts and Science School
- Haberdashers Abraham Darby
- Hazelmere Junior School
- Heart Academies Trust
- Hereford College of Arts
- High Hazels Junior School
- Holbrook Primary School
- Holme Grange School

- Holy Souls Catholic Primary School
- Hull College
- Huntingtower Community Primary Academy
- Immanuel College
- King Edward VI School
- Kings Norton Junior and Infant School
- Kingsford Community School
- Kirklees College
- Leicester & Leicestershire LEP
- Lincewood Primary School
- Long Marston VA Church of England Primary School
- Lowbrook Academy
- Manor Green School
- Manor Lodge School
- Mayfield School
- Mission Grove Primary School
- Naseby Church of England Primary Academy
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Netherhall Learning Campus High School
- New City College Hackney
- New Seaham Academy
- Newbold Church of England Primary School
- Newbold College
- North Kent College

- Northampton High School
- Northfield Academy
- Oasis Community Learning
- Oriel High School
- Overleigh St Mary's CofE Primary School
- Paddox Primary School
- Paignton Academy
- Parley First School
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Peterborough Regional College
- Plymouth University
- Portsmouth High School
- President Kennedy School Academy
- Radnor House Sevenoaks School
- Rhosddu Primary School
- Rokesly Junior School
- Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance
- Saint Felix School
- Salford City Council
- Seaford College
- Shawlands Academy
- Shenstone Lodge School
- Shetland Islands Council
- Shrewsbury College
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- South and City College Birmingham
- Southampton Solent University
- Spring Common Academy
- Spring Meadow Primary School & School House Nursery

- St Aidan's Church of England Primary School
- St Anne's Church of England Primary School
- St Bart's Multi Academy Trust
- St George's Junior School Weybridge
- St John Wall Catholic School
- St Joseph's College
- St Joseph's RC Primary School
- St Paul's Girls' School
- St Peter's CofE Primary School
- St Swithun's School
- St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School, Colchester
- St. Andrew's College Cambridge
- Staffordshire University
- Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form
- Swansea University
- Tarporley CofE Primary School
- Tattershall Primary School
- The Bemrose School
- The Bishop's Stortford High School
- The Dales School
- The Globe Primary Academy
- The Higher Education Academy
- The King's School
- The Milestone School
- The Olympus Academy Trust
- The Primary School of St Mary and St Martin
- The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
- The Study Preparatory School

- The Westwood Academy
- Thomasson Memorial School
- Thorpe Primary School
- Tranmoor Primary
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
- Trinity Solutions Academy
- Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums
- University of Aberdeen
- University of Bath
- University of East Anglia
- University of Exeter
- University of Salford
- University of South Wales
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- Valley Park School
- Venerable Bede Church of England Academy
- Wales High School
- Walsham-le-Willows Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
- Water Mill Primary School
- Wheatcroft Community Primary School
- Wolsey House Primary School
- Wood Green Academy
- Wood Lane Primary School
- Woodfield Primary School
- Worthinghead Primary School

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