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## 11.

# Parent and whānau perspectives

The parent and whānau responses represent the views of a cross-section of all parents of secondary school students in New Zealand, with sufficient numbers of parents with different social characteristics, such as ethnicity and qualification levels, to encompass a broad range of perspectives. However, one caution in the picture following is that we have an over-representation from parents with degrees. Survey responses from 508 parents are reported here, a 14% response rate.<sup>60</sup> The margin of error for the parent and whānau responses is around 4.3%.

Looking at respondents' characteristics, the majority were women (82%). Age-wise, the biggest group was between the ages of 40 and 49 (60%), with a further 29% between 50 and 59 years. Seventy-three percent identified themselves as NZ European/Pākehā, 10% as Māori, 6% as Pacific peoples, and 5% as Asian. An additional 12% of parents identified with other ethnicities, such as African, Latin American, 'New Zealander' and 'Kiwi'. A relatively high proportion of the parents who responded to the survey had degree qualifications (46%).<sup>61</sup> Six percent of respondents had no formal qualification.

The survey comprised mostly closed-response questions, focused on a parent's youngest child at the school (if they had more than one child there, as did 38% of parents<sup>62</sup>). Fifteen percent of parents had a child in Years 7 or 8<sup>63</sup>; between 23% and 27% had a child in Years 9, 10, 11, or 12; and 20% had a child in Year 13 or above.

At the end of the survey, parents and whānau were invited to add a comment about their youngest child's secondary schooling. Around 37% wrote comments, some of which are included throughout this section to further illustrate their perspectives.

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60 The Appendix has details about how the parent survey was distributed, along with more details of the parent sample, including their highest qualification. Parents with a child attending a decile 1-2 school were under-represented, and those with a child at a decile 7-8 school were somewhat over-represented, although both to a lesser degree than when the previous methodology was applied in 2015.

61 For instance, 36% of parents who responded to the 2015 survey had degree qualifications.

62 Thirty-four percent of parents had two children attending their school, 4% had three children there, and less than 1% had four children or more at their school.

63 The secondary schools in the sample included Years 7-15 schools as well as Years 9-15.

## Choosing their child's secondary school

Most parents responding to the survey (90%) said their child attends their first choice of school. This figure was the same in the 2015 and 2012 surveys. In 2018, this comprises 59% for whom this is also their closest secondary school, and 30% for whom it is not, much the same as in 2015.

How did parents and whānau access their first choice of school? The most likely way was to live within the school's zone (51% of this group of parents). Smaller proportions got into the school because there was no enrolment zone or by meeting the special character criteria for the school (both 17%). Eight percent say their child was drawn from the ballot for their school, and 7% had been on the priority list for the school<sup>64</sup> (up from 3% in 2015). Eight percent of parents gave other reasons, including the school being the only local secondary school.

Eight percent of parents ( $n = 38$ ) say their child does not attend their first choice of school. The main reasons for not attending parents' first choice of school were that the child did not want to attend the school their parents preferred (14 parents), the school has an enrolment zone which the family lived outside (11 parents), cost (five parents), and a lack of transport (also five parents). Eight parents gave other reasons.

There were some school decile-related differences here. Parents with a child attending a decile 1–2 school were more likely to say this was not their first choice of school (16%, compared with 2% at decile 9–10 schools). Parents and whānau whose child got into their first choice of school because:

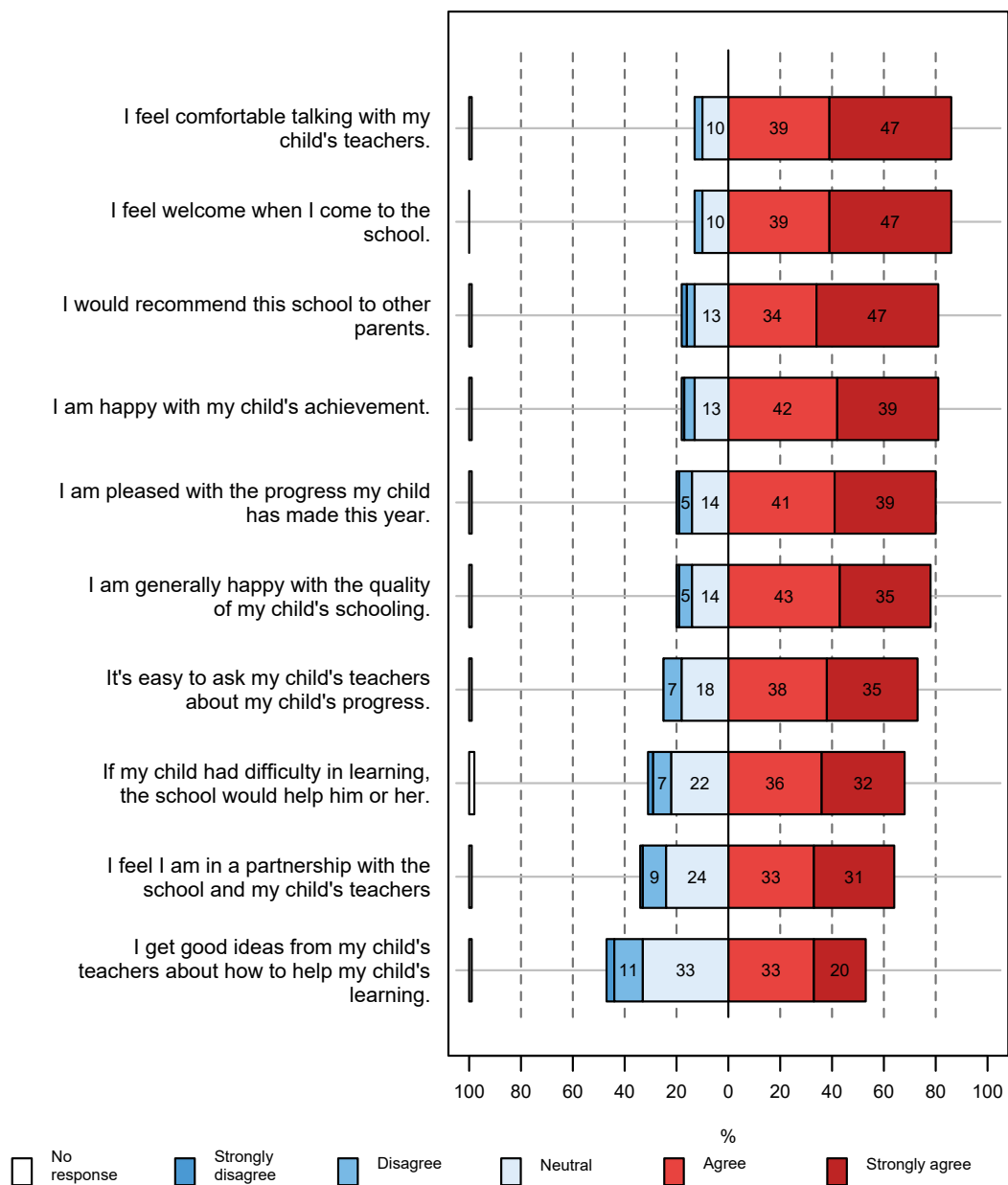
- the school has no enrolment zone, were more likely to have their child attending a decile 3–4 school (32%, compared with 24% at decile 1–2 schools, 19% at decile 5–6 schools, and 9% at decile 7–10 schools)
- they met the special character criteria for the school, were more likely to have their child attending a decile 7–8 school (30%, compared with 28% for decile 1–2 schools, 20% for decile 9–10 schools, 7% for decile 5–6 schools, and 1% for decile 3–4 schools)
- they were on the school's priority list, were more likely to have their child attending a decile 9–10 school (14% of these parents, decreasing to none at decile 1–2 schools).

## Most parents have positive experiences of their child's school and teachers

Most parents who responded to the survey have had positive experiences of their child's school (see Figure 50). Around two-thirds say they feel they are in partnership with the school and their child's teachers, and that if their child had difficulty in learning, the school would help him or her. Just over half say they get good ideas from their child's teacher for ways to help their child's learning.

<sup>64</sup> Where an applicant lives outside a school's zone, they might still be accepted according to a priority list (e.g., because they are enrolling for a special programme the school runs, or have a sibling already attending the school). More details of the priorities list are available at: <https://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/schooling-in-nz/enrolment-schemes-zoning/>

FIGURE 50 Parent and whānau experiences of their child's school (n = 508)



There were no significant school decile-related differences here. Parents' responses to items in Figure 50 that were also included in 2015 were largely the same.

Eighteen percent of parents wrote positive comments about their own experience of the school, often coupled with a comment about their child's experience.

We are really happy with the balance of physical/social/academic skills our youngest has acquired at school. The staff really know the children, even though the roll is high. For a big school, it's great to be a 'familiar face', a name and not a number.

This school is good for my child's learning, and also it is close to us. It saves money, saves time and especially helps us a lot. The teachers are kind, respectful and well educated.

She is an enthusiastic student with interests in a variety of curriculum areas. Her needs and interests have been well catered for by [school's name]. It is both a safe and challenging environment—good preparation for tertiary study/employment.

Very good school, I'm glad my son was given the opportunity to attend [school's name]. He's doing well in his core subjects, social studies, science and physical education. The administration and management of the school are very helpful and supportive if I need questions answered.

Five percent of parents made negative comments about their experience of their child's secondary school.

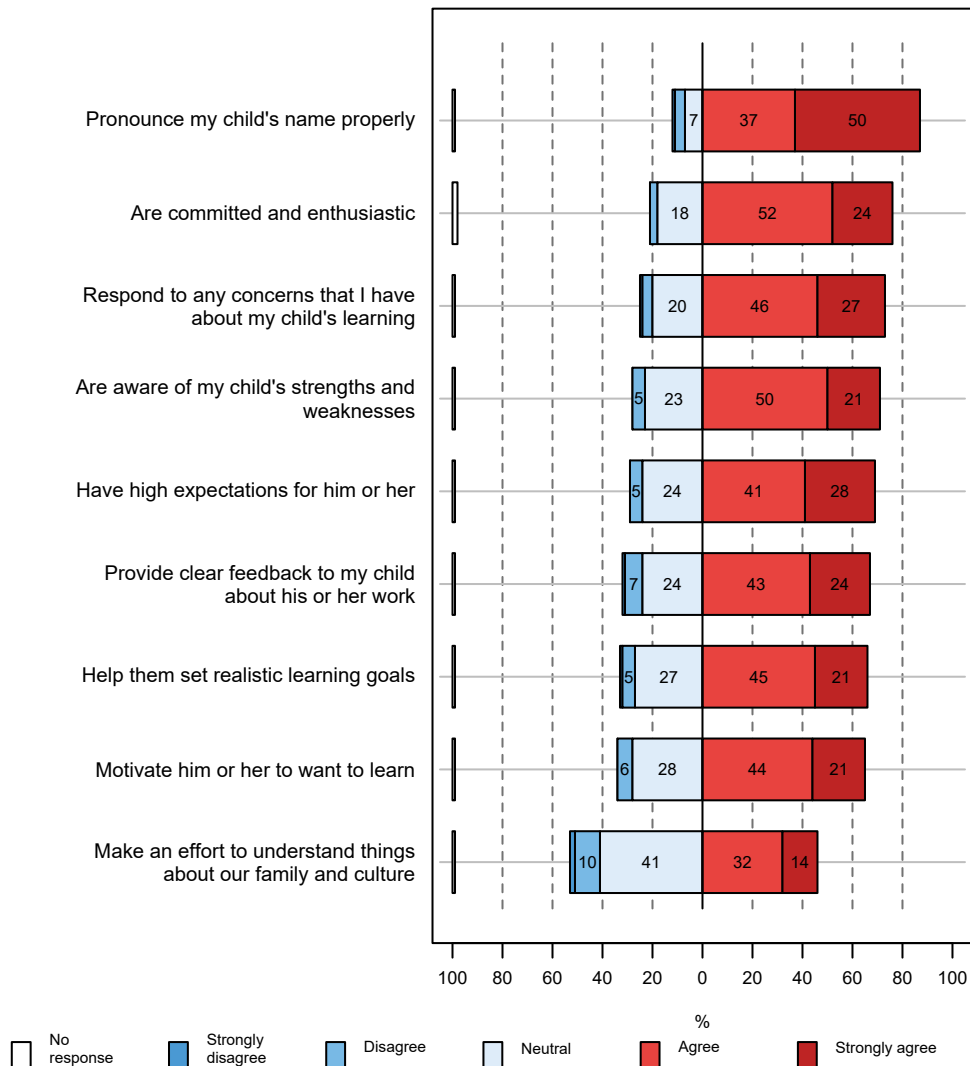
I have been really disappointed with the school's lack of openness and willingness to consult/collaborate with regard to parental issues and consult about the children's access to devices and unrestricted contact during the school day. Our children are not being adequately protected by the school, nor are appropriate boundaries established.

Lack of consistency between teachers in senior school—their teaching methods are so different and often very confusing for students. Not enough actual teaching. Learning opportunities are affected by children in class who don't want to learn. Feel there's not enough clear feedback + direction about their actual strengths/weaknesses regarding training pathways. This school focuses too much on sport.

In enrolling our daughter here, I had thought secondary education would be very different now, to when I experienced it in 1970s. It is not (sadly). My daughter experiences the same power imbalance with teachers I remember—where teachers' views matter more and students' views are not listened to, particularly when there is conflict or clashes of personality with a teacher or disengagement in class due to poor classroom content e.g., Year 9—doing a social studies where a country is selected to study and producing artefacts for it (daughter commenting this was done in Year 4/5).

Many parents and whānau express positive views about their child's teachers (see Figure 51). They are less sure that teachers make an effort to understand things about their family and culture (46% agreed or strongly agreed). However, this was higher than the 38% of parents who expressed this view in 2015.

FIGURE 51 Parent and whānau views of their child's teachers (n = 508)



Māori parents' responses to the items in Figure 51 did not vary significantly from those of non-Māori parents. Neither did the responses of NZ European parents vary significantly from non-NZ European parents' responses. There were no decile-related differences.

In the overall comments parents wrote about their child's secondary schooling, 7% included a positive comment about teachers or school leaders.

The teachers are very encouraging and supportive and also generous of their time to those that need or want help. Each child is watched carefully in regard to their performance and results.

The principal is an inspiring leader to the girls at this school.

Our youngest child is happy, well adjusted, loves attending school, looks at the bigger picture in life working towards it. Teachers are aware, supportive, encouraging, knowledgeable about things regarding this. Excellent school. :)

A smaller proportion (4%) wrote negative comments about staff members, sometimes following a positive one.

I am unhappy with the quality of teaching from some of the teachers and concerned that teaching practice at this school ignores the different needs of boys and girls, to the detriment of boys.

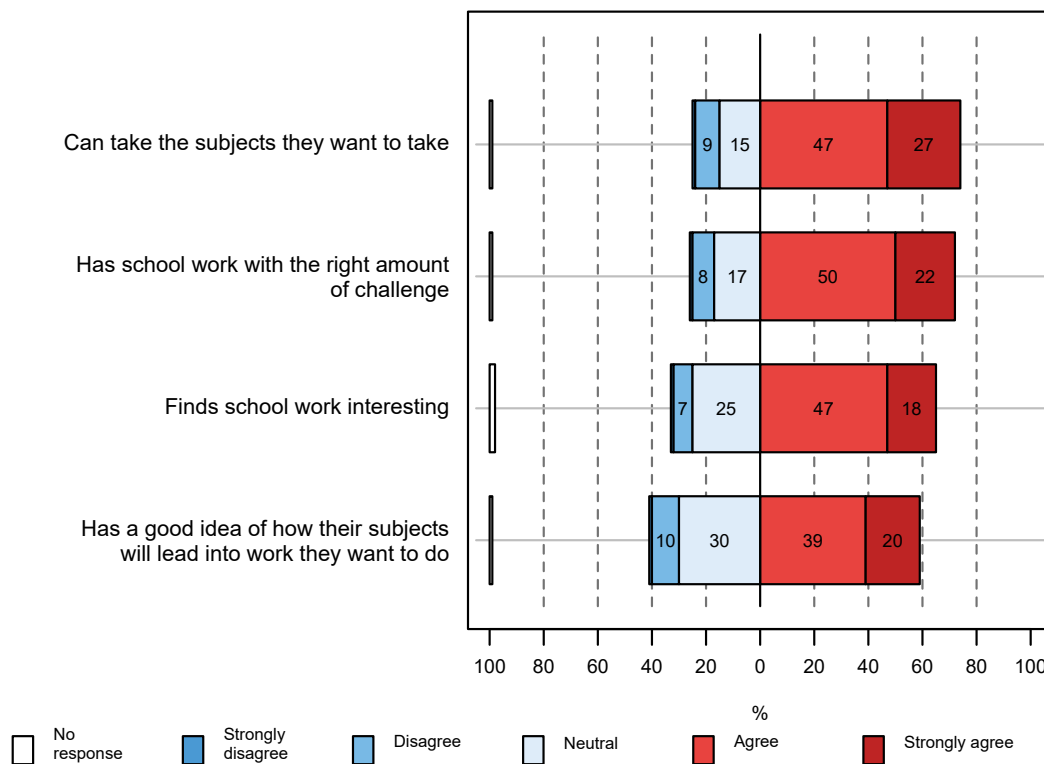
One of the school teachers has taken a particular dislike to my youngest child this term. So much so that he will not even fill out their weekly report. It is a poor reflection on their inability to do a job they have chosen and a poor example to set. He [the teacher] is getting full support from the school with this which is very disappointing.

There are some very good teachers at [school name] but most give the impression that they don't want to be there and have told my child that! Bad attitude carries on from there—starts at the top!

## Parents' views of their child's learning at school

Figure 52 shows that nearly three-quarters of the parents responding think their child can take the subjects they want to take or has school work with the right amount of challenge. Fewer parents agreed or strongly agreed their child finds school work interesting or has a good idea of how their subjects will lead into work they want to do.

FIGURE 52 Parent and whānau views of their child and their school work (n = 508)



Parents' view of their child being able to take the subjects they want to take is varied across school deciles. Parents whose child attends a decile 3–4 school are the least likely to agree or strongly agree their child can do this (64%, compared with 75% for decile 5–8 schools, 81% for decile 1–2 schools, and 84% for decile 9–10 schools).

Most parents are positive about how well their child's school fosters the development of skills and attitudes that support learning (see Figure 53).

FIGURE 53 Parent and whānau views of how well their child's school fosters the development of skills and attitudes that support learning (n = 508)

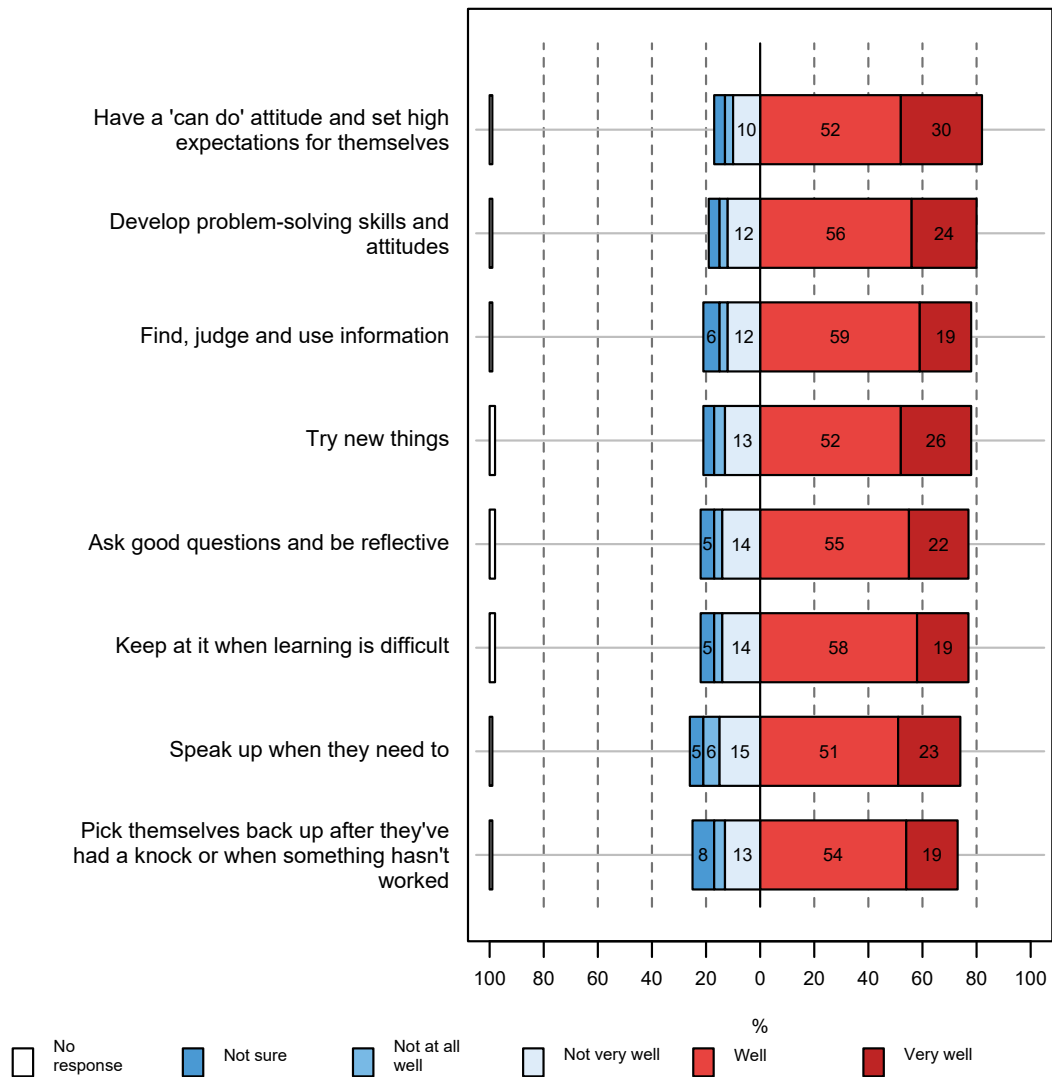


Figure 54 shows parent and whānau views of how well the school helps support their child's learning pathways. Seventy-one percent of parents responding say the school does well or very well at helping their child understand the different learning pathways available to them. We also saw in Figure 52 that 59% of parents say their child has a good idea of how their subjects will lead into the work they want to do.

FIGURE 54 Parent and whānau views of how well their child’s schools help support their learning pathways (n = 508)

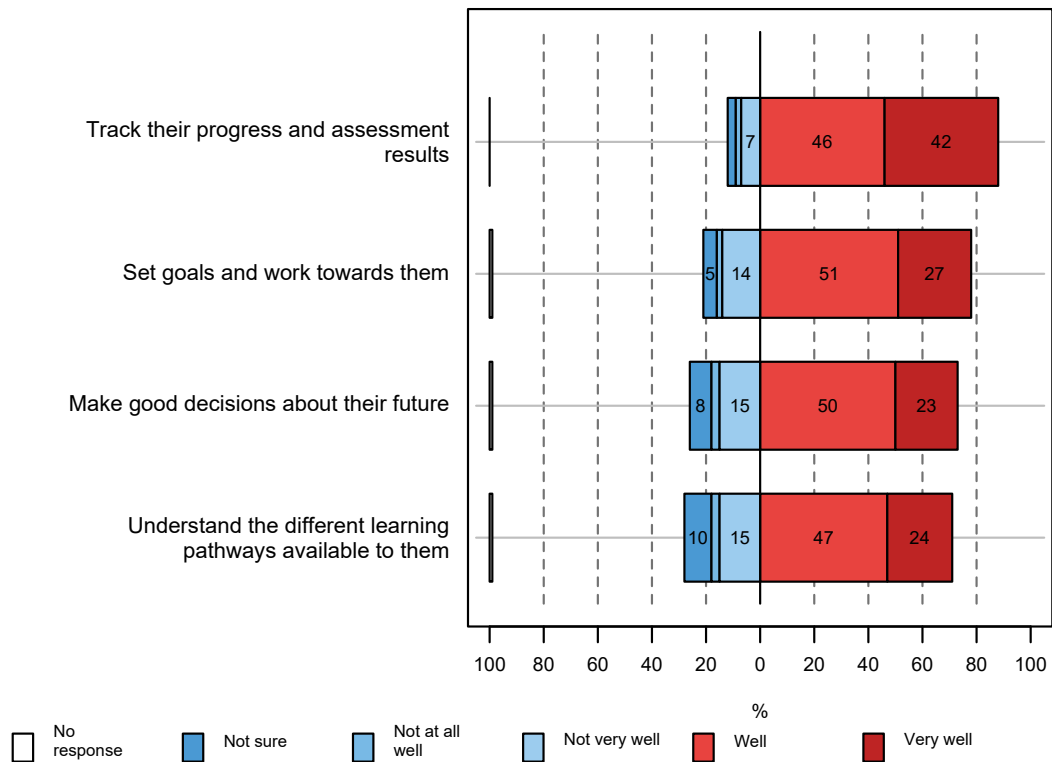
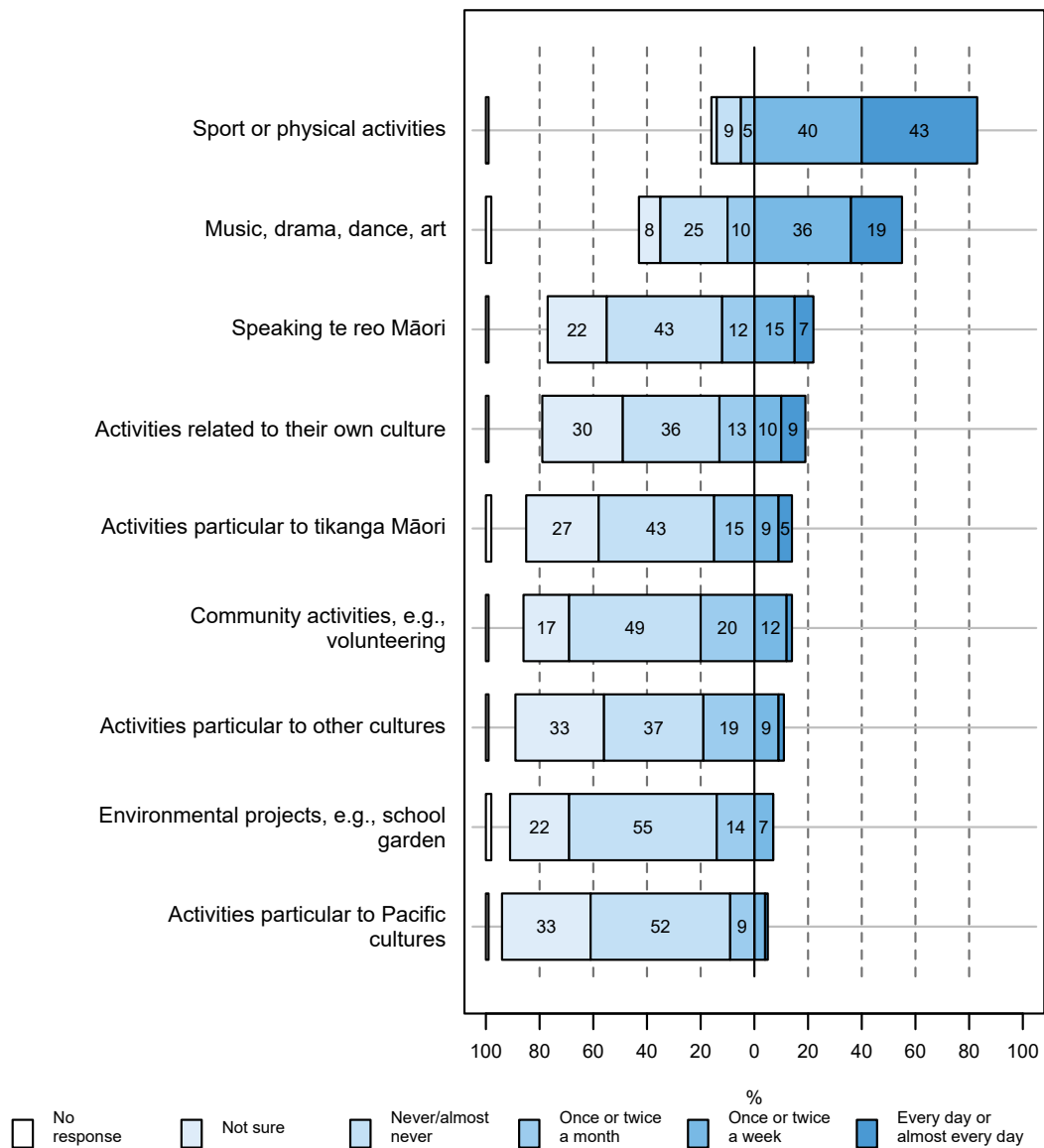


Figure 55 shows there are two school or class activities that more than half of parents say their child takes part in on at least a weekly basis: sport and music, drama, dance, or art. Less than a quarter of parents say their child speaks te reo Māori with the same frequency.

At least two-thirds of parents indicate their child never or almost never takes part in the remaining activities, or they are unsure if they do.



FIGURE 55 Frequency with which their child takes part in school/class activities, reported by parents and whānau (n = 508)



Differences related to decile showed that parents of children at decile 1–2 schools were more likely to say their child takes part *at least* once a week in:

- speaking te reo Māori (42% of these parents, decreasing to 18% for decile 7–8 schools and 23% for decile 9–10 schools)
- activities particular to tikanga Māori (39%, decreasing to 8% for decile 7–10 schools)
- activities particular to Pacific cultures (32%, compared with 6% for decile 7–8 schools and 3% of schools of other deciles)
- environmental projects (e.g., school garden) (19%, compared with 7% for decile 3–10 schools).

Māori parents were more likely than non-Māori parents to say their child takes part at least once a week in the following school activities:

- speaking te reo Māori (54%, compared with 18% of non-Māori parents)
- activities particular to tikanga Māori (44%, compared with 10% of non-Māori parents)
- activities related to their own culture (42%, compared with 17% of non-Māori parents).

Six percent of parents ( $n = 33$ ) wrote comments expressing a variety of concerns about their child's learning. These include wanting more support for their child's learning needs or a greater degree of challenge for them, as well as concerns about learning pathways and the school's limited subject offerings.

My Year 9 boy is not feeling challenged at school, but as it's a small college I understand it is difficult to cater to all levels of academic ability. He has been given some extension work, particularly in Maths where he has a very good teacher who pushes him. I think the school does extremely well overall, but is limited for options due to roll size. Limited options make it hard to keep a bright teenage boy interested in all aspects of schooling.

As a child who has come from an English as a second language culture, the school overall has only been interested in slotting the child into a class. More emphasis is placed on uniform and minutiae rather than finding out who the child is, what they know, where they are likely to head. Emphasis is placed on NCEA credits. The child has covered the work previously. No effort to extend. Inflexible about NCEA level.

### School activities cost too much for some parents

Twenty-four percent of parents and whānau indicate at least one school activity has cost too much for their child to be able to do. Fifteen percent of parents say their child has been unable to go on an overseas trip for a particular subject/class because it costs too much. This was similar to 2015. Other activities that parents say cost too much for their child to do were:

- sport (6% of parents)
- camp (5%)
- use a digital device at school (4%)
- field trip (4%)
- do school work at home that they need the internet for (3%)
- select a subject/class that they wanted to do (3%).

Only one of these items varied with school decile. Eight percent of parents with children at decile 3–4 schools say their child has been unable to do school work at home that they need the internet for, compared with 3% whose children attend decile 1–2 or 5–6 schools, and 2% at decile 7–8 schools. None with a child at a decile 9–10 school indicated their child had been unable to do this due to cost.

A higher proportion of Māori parents indicate their child has been unable to do the following school activities because they cost too much:

- sport (14%, compared with 5% of non-Māori parents)
- do school work at home that they need the internet for (10%, compared with 2% of non-Māori parents).

## School information for parents and whānau

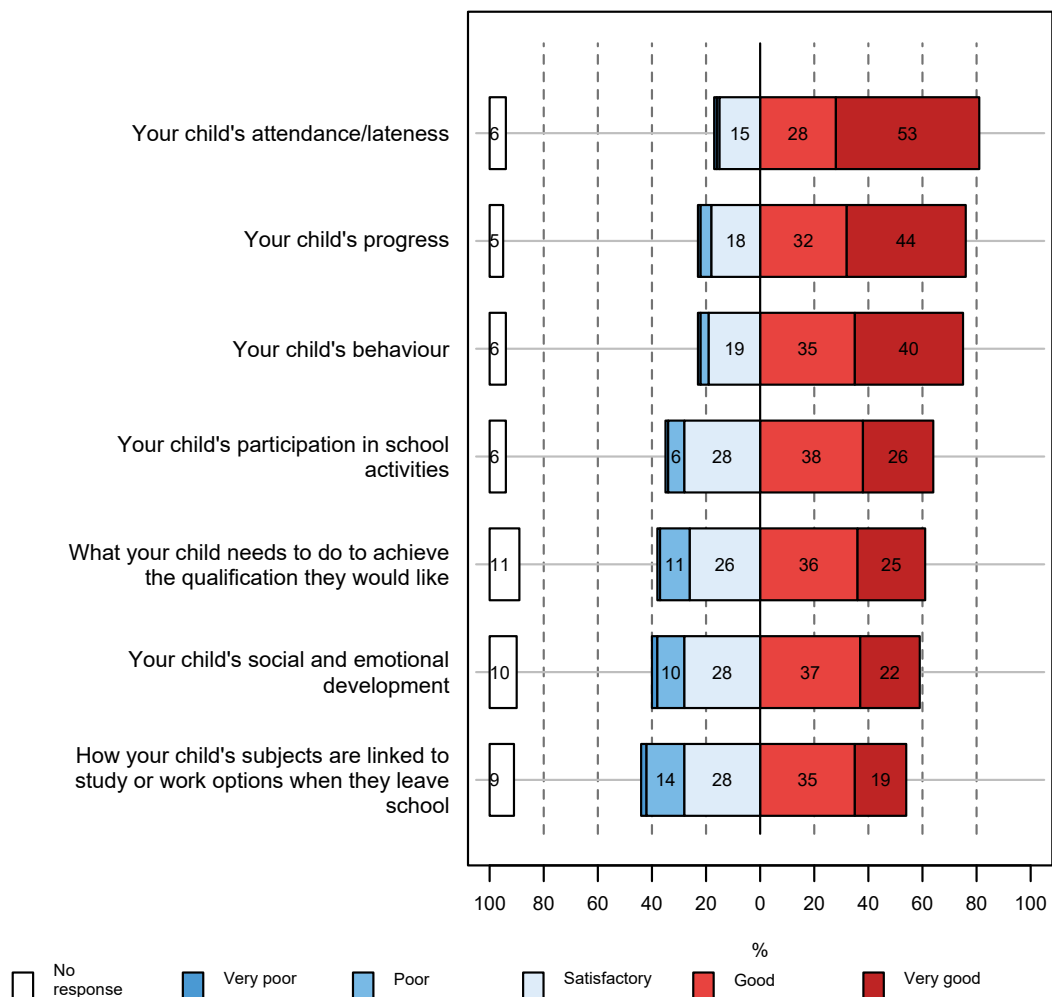
In this section, we look at the nature of information parents and whānau receive from the school, and their online access to school information related to their child.

### Many parents get good/very good information about their child’s attendance, progress, and behaviour

Parents’ ratings of the information they receive from their child’s school (see Figure 56) are similar to those given by parents in 2015. Of the parents who receive information from the school about their child’s attendance/lateness, progress, and behaviour, around three-quarters of parents rate it as good or very good.<sup>65</sup>

Around half gave ratings of good or very good to the information they receive about their child’s social and emotional development, what their child needs to do to achieve the qualification they would like, and how their subjects are linked to study or work options when they leave school. At least 10% of parents say the information they receive relating to these three areas is poor or very poor.

FIGURE 56 Parent and whānau ratings of the information they receive from their child’s school (n = 508)



<sup>65</sup> Figure 56 excludes parents who indicated they do not receive these kinds of information. Small proportions (5% or less) of parents indicated they do not receive some information. Larger proportions reported they do not receive information from the school about:

- how their child’s subjects are linked to study or work options when they leave school (16%)
- what their child needs to do to achieve the qualification they would like (14%)
- their child’s social and emotional development (11%).

## **Parents' online access to school information about their child is increasing**

In 2018, greater proportions of parents and whānau have online access to their child's assessment results, and information about school events and trips (both around 75%, compared with 63% in 2015). Seventy-nine percent have online access to information about their child's attendance/lateness. Close to 10% say they do not have access to these kinds of information, and 12% were unsure if they do.

School decile is related to differences in the information to which parents say they have online access. Fewer than half of parents whose child attends a decile 1–2 school have online access to information about their child's attendance/lateness (48%, increasing to 88% for decile 7–10 schools). Parents whose child attends a decile 1–2 school were also the least likely to have online access to information from the school about their child's assessment results (55%, increasing to 88% for decile 7–8 schools and 84% for decile 9–10 schools), and school events and trips (58%, increasing to 83% for decile 9–10 schools). For each of these three kinds of information, around 20% of parents with a child at a school in the decile 1–4 range say they are not sure whether they have online access (compared with 5%–12% for decile 5–10 schools).

## **Just over half of the parents have online access to their child's learning at school**

Parents and whānau were less likely to have online access to the learning their child was doing at school than to information about their child's assessment results and school events. Fifty-four percent of parents have online access to work their child has done, 24% say they do not, and 21% are unsure. Still fewer (23%) have online access to information about what their child is doing in the classroom (e.g., video, blog), with 46% saying they do not have access to this, and 30% unsure.

## **Parents and whānau have multiple sources of information about the school**

To get up-to-date information about the school, parents and whānau are using the sources shown in Table 40. In 2018, more parents were getting information about the school electronically:

- Since 2012, receiving newsletters via email has increased, while receiving paper newsletters has decreased.
- The school website was used by more parents as an information source in 2018 than 2015, returning to a similar level as 2012.
- Digital media (including School App and the school's Facebook page) was a source of information about the school for 16% of parents (compared with 4% in 2015).

However, there were only two digital information sources that more than two-thirds of parents say they used in 2018 to get information about their child's school: newsletters that were emailed to them, and the school website.

Ten percent or fewer parents use the information available to them in the school's annual report or latest ERO report, as was also the case in 2015.

TABLE 40 Sources of information about their child's school, reported by parents and whānau; 2012, 2015, and 2018

Information sources	2012 (n = 1,477) %	2015 (n = 1,242) %	2018 (n = 508) %
Newsletters emailed to me	66	76	79
School website	64	59	67
Other parents and whānau	28	22	21
Newsletters on paper	43	30	20
Other	6	7	20
Local community newspaper	19	13	11
Annual report	13	7	10
Latest ERO report	16	9	7
"Find a School" website	*	5	3
Class blog	2	3	2

\* Not asked.

In 2018, 16% of parents used the response "Other" and described various forms of digital media, such as Facebook, email, School App, and text (4% had done this in 2015). An additional 2% responded "Other", explaining they were getting information from their own child.

### Parents and whānau with children at decile 1–2 schools are less likely to get information electronically

A difference between those receiving email or paper newsletters was related to school decile. Forty-eight percent of parents with children at decile 1–2 schools received up-to-date information about the school from newsletters on paper, and the same proportion received information from newsletters emailed to them. In contrast, 15% of parents with a child at a school in the decile 5–10 range and 25% at a decile 3–4 school get information from paper newsletters, while more than 78% of parents with a child attending a school in the decile 3–10 range gets information from email newsletters. Getting up-to-date information from the school website is also decile related: 48% of parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school get their information here, increasing to 77% of those with a child at a decile 9–10 school.

### Parent and whānau involvement with their child's school

In Table 41 we compare parents' involvement with their child's secondary school over the three most recent surveys. In 2015, we saw increased parental involvement in most aspects we asked about, compared with 2012.

In 2018, the proportion of parents and whānau who say they had been involved with their child's school by responding to a school survey has increased again. To a lesser extent, so has the proportion of parents attending school plays, choir, or orchestra. Otherwise, there were only minor differences compared with 2015.

TABLE 41 Parent and whānau involvement with their child's secondary school; 2012, 2015, and 2018

Involvement	2012 (n = 1,477) %	2015 (n = 1,242) %	2018 (n = 508) %
Responded to school survey(s)	37	43	52
Attending sports	34	50	51
Fundraising	28	32	33
Attending school plays, choir, or orchestra, etc. <sup>#</sup>	21	26	33
Coaching/helping with sports	17	17	22
School trips	13	20	21
Consultation	9	10	14
PTA/school council/BOT	4	6	9
Other	6	6	6
Attending kapa haka <sup>†</sup>	*	5	5
Attending Polynesian group	*	*	2
Classroom help	1	2	2
Canteen/school lunches	2	1	2
Coaching/helping with school plays, choir, or orchestra, etc.	6	4	2
Supervision around grounds during school hours/duty	<1	1	1
Coaching/helping with kapa haka <sup>†</sup>	*	1	1
Building repairs and maintenance	1	1	1
Library, helping	<1	1	1
Coaching/helping with Polynesian group	*	*	1

<sup>#</sup> In 2009 and 2012, this item also included kapa haka.

\* Not asked.

<sup>†</sup> In 2012, kapa haka was included with "School plays/choir/orchestra/kapa haka etc." for both "attending" and "coaching/helping" items.

Looking at parents' involvement in school activities, there are several differences related to school decile:

- 11% of parents whose children attend decile 1–4 schools have attended kapa haka (compared with 5% or less for other deciles)
- 10% of parents with children at decile 1–2 schools have helped in the classroom (compared with 2%–3% for decile 5–10 schools, and none for decile 3–4 schools)
- 7% of parents whose children attend decile 1–2 schools have helped with Polynesian group (decreasing to 1% for decile 5–6 schools, and none for decile 7–10 schools).

Greater proportions of Māori parents have been involved with their child's secondary school by:

- attending kapa haka (21%, compared with 3% of non-Māori parents)
- coaching/helping with kapa haka (8%, compared with less than 1% of non-Māori parents).

In a separate question, parents were asked about whether they think their school genuinely consults them. In 2018, more parents think this is the case (56%, compared with 47% in 2015, 41% in 2012, and 34% in 2009). A further 19% think the school does not do this, and 24% are unsure. The steady increase in parents feeling genuinely consulted by the school mirrors increases in the proportions who have responded to school surveys.

### Summary and discussion

Most parents say their child attends their first choice of school, though this is less so for parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school. Most parents were positive about their experiences of their child's secondary school, and their child's teachers. Slightly more parents say their child's teachers make an effort to understand things about their family and culture than in 2015, although this remains under half. Parents generally agree that the school fosters skills and attitudes that support their child's learning and supports their child's learning pathway. They are less sure their child understands how their subjects will lead into the work they might want to do.

More parents are using electronic sources to get up-to-date information about their child and the school than in the previous survey in 2015. However, this is related to school decile. Parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school are less likely to have online access to information about their child, and are also less likely to get information about the school via emailed newsletters. Instead, almost half of this group of parents get their information about the school via paper newsletters. This is consistent with what parents also say about their child's access to the internet at home for school work.

Cost had meant that almost a quarter of parents report their child being unable to do at least one school activity. An overseas trip for a particular subject or class was the activity most often cited. There was very little difference related to school decile. Compared with non-Māori parents, a higher proportion of Māori parents indicate their child has been unable to do school work at home that they need the internet for, or participate in sport, because these activities cost too much.

Just over half of parents responding to the survey have been involved in their child's secondary school in the past year by responding to a survey or attending sports events. This had increased steadily since 2012 and is consistent with an increase in 2018 in parents feeling genuinely consulted by their school. Parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school were the most likely group of parents to attend kapa haka, help in the classroom, and help with Polynesian group.

Māori parents' views about their children's teachers did not vary significantly from those of other parents. However, there were several different response patterns for Māori parents, closely related to Māori culture. Greater proportions of Māori parents have been involved with their child's secondary school by attending or coaching/helping with kapa haka. Māori parents were more likely to say their child takes part at least once a week in speaking te reo Māori, activities particular to tikanga Māori, and activities related to their own culture.