
3.

Promoting students' wellbeing

The value of promoting students' wellbeing has been increasingly recognised in recent government policy and support. Alongside this, a greater understanding of the importance of students' sense of belonging at school has emerged through student voices, particularly those who feel they don't belong, such as many Māori and Pacific young people.⁶

Mental health is receiving serious attention in New Zealand.⁷ The Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project, launched in 2012, is aimed at preventing the development of mental health issues. It comprises a series of initiatives, designed to improve young people's access to mental health services. These include increases to school-based health services for students, expanding primary mental health services, and online tools and support.

Supporting students' mental and emotional wellbeing and social development goes hand in hand with helping them to meet academic goals. A recent meta-analysis showed that school-based programmes for social and emotional learning produce lasting benefits for students' behavioural and academic outcomes.⁸ To build students' wellbeing, a combination of preventive, skill-building, and protective approaches for all students and interventions in response to identified needs is needed.⁹

The findings we report in this section provide some useful information related to these concerns. We focus on:

- school approaches to promoting student wellbeing and belonging for all students
- the role of teachers in promoting students' wellbeing and belonging
- managing behaviour to support students' learning

6 See the series of reports by the New Zealand School Trustees Association and Office of the Children's Commissioner. (2018), including: *Education matters to me: Key insights*. Available at: <http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/education-matters-to-me-key-insights/>

7 Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction. (2018). *He Ara Oranga : Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction*. Available at: <https://mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/inquiry-report/he-ara-oranga/>

8 Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weisberg, R. P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(4), 18–23. doi:10.1177/0031721718815668

9 For more details about the different levels of wellbeing and behaviour interventions and planning to promote wellbeing, see Section 5: Supporting students' wellbeing in *Secondary schools in 2015* and *Finding a balance—fostering student wellbeing, positive behaviour, and learning: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*, both available at: <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey>

- schools' work with external agencies to promote student wellbeing
- the role of trustees in supporting students' wellbeing and behaviour
- parent and whānau views on wellbeing.

We report any notable differences in 2018 and 2015 responses where the same questions were asked.

School approaches to promoting students' wellbeing and belonging

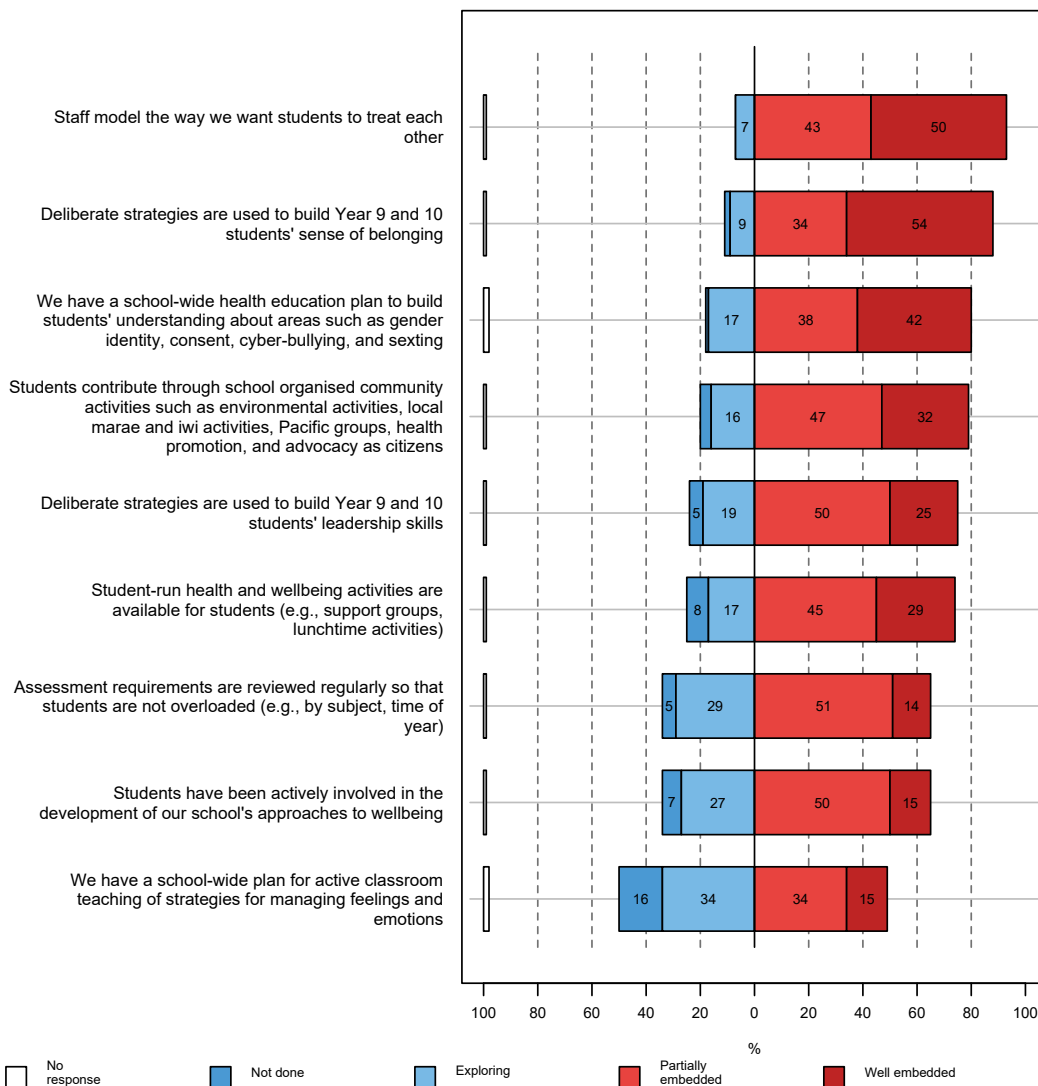
Many approaches to supporting students' wellbeing and belonging are partially or well embedded at most schools

Helping students maintain or strengthen their wellbeing and belonging over the initial transition to secondary school is important. More than half of the principals responding report their school has well embedded approaches to deliberately build the sense of belonging of their Years 9–10 students (see Figure 1). Strategies to build Years 9–10 students' sense of belonging were more likely to be well embedded than strategies to build their leadership skills.

Staff modelling the way they want students to treat each other is a well-embedded approach in half of schools. Somewhat fewer principals (42%) indicate a school-wide health education plan to build students' understanding about areas such as gender identity, consent, cyber-bullying, and sexting is well embedded.

Apart from the approaches already mentioned, the overall trend was for more principals to say an approach is partially embedded than well embedded. Fifteen percent of principals indicate their school has a well-embedded schoolwide plan for active classroom teaching of strategies for managing feelings and emotions. Actively involving students in the development of the school's approaches to wellbeing was also well embedded at 15% of schools. Fourteen percent of principals say regularly reviewing assessment requirements to ensure students are not overloaded is a well-embedded approach at their school. Over two-thirds of principals indicate their school is exploring each of these approaches or has them partially embedded, suggesting that we may see more schools having these well embedded by the next national survey of secondary schools in 2021.

FIGURE 1 Embeddedness of school approaches to supporting the wellbeing and belonging of all students, reported by principals (n = 167)



For the approaches to wellbeing shown in Figure 1, the only decile-related difference was for students contributing through school-organised community activities such as environmental activities, local marae and iwi activities, Pacific groups, health promotion, and advocacy as citizens. Fifty-eight percent of principals of decile 1–2 schools say this approach is partially or well embedded, compared with 76% for decile 3–4, and 85% for decile 5–10.

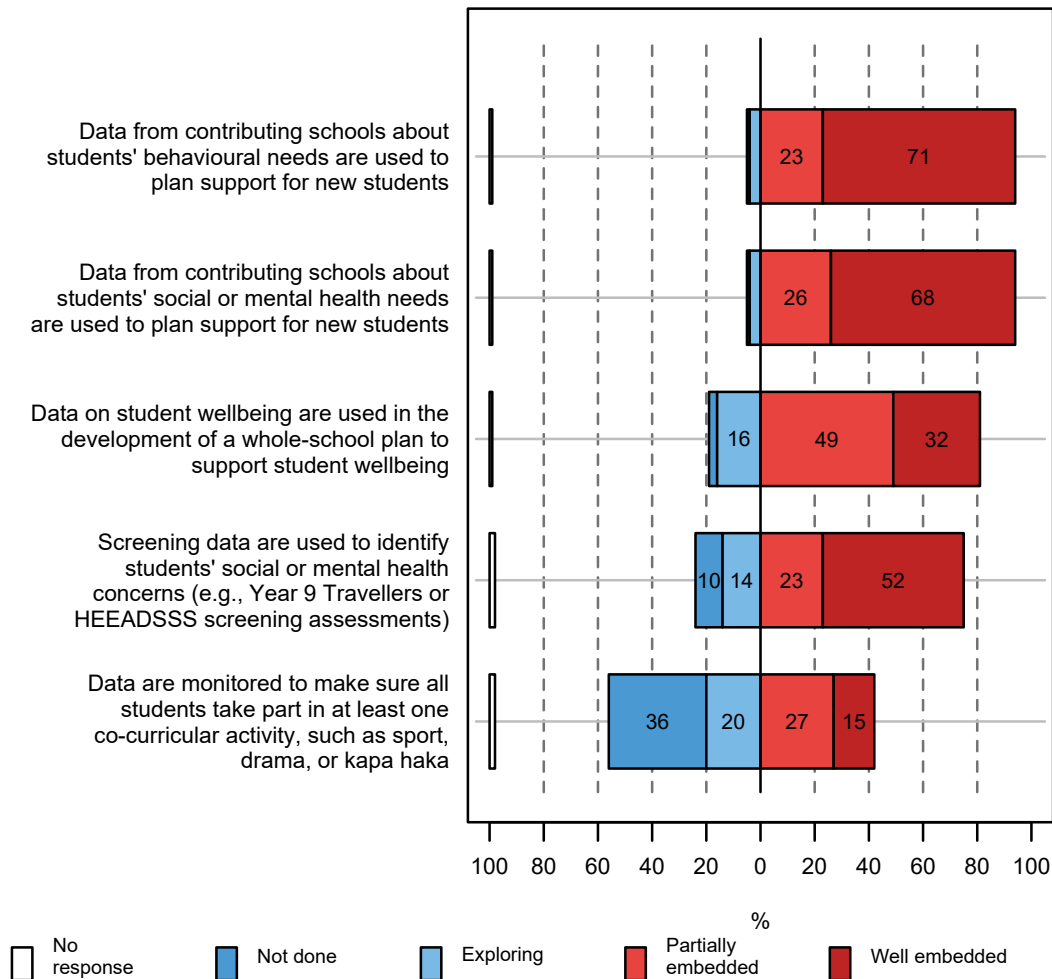
Most principals report using student data to plan for students' wellbeing

As shown in Figure 2, over two-thirds of the principals say using data from contributing schools about students' behavioural, social, or mental health needs to plan support for new students is well embedded at their school. Using data on student wellbeing in the development of a whole-school plan to support student wellbeing is well embedded at fewer schools.

Around half (52%) of principals say using screening data to identify students' social or mental health concerns (e.g., Year 9 Travellers or HEEADSSS screening assessments)¹⁰ is a well-embedded approach in their school (not significantly different from 47% in 2015).

Participating in co-curricular activities helps strengthen students' sense of belonging at school. Monitoring data on this is not as well embedded as other use of student data for student wellbeing.

FIGURE 2 **Embeddedness of the use of student data to support student wellbeing, reported by principals (n = 167)**



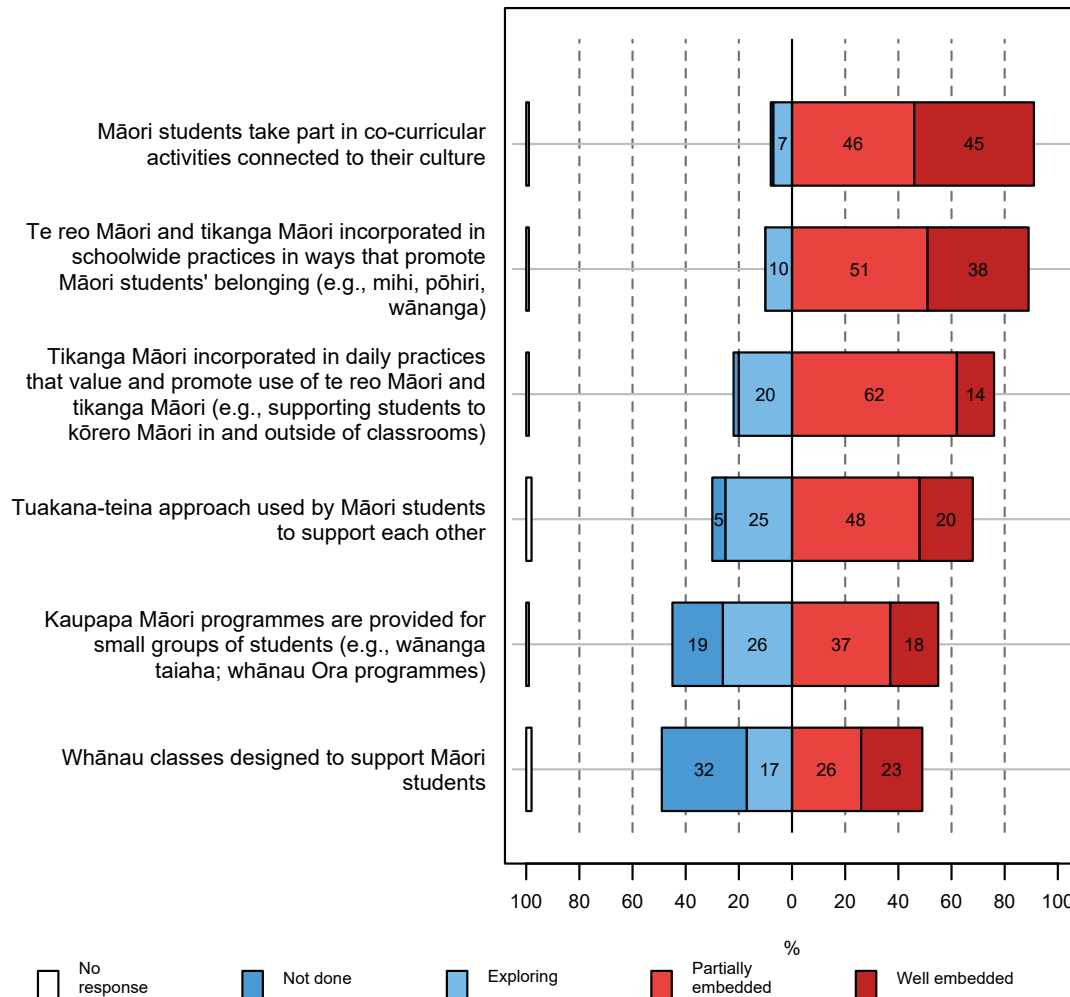
Approaches to support Māori students' belonging and wellbeing tend to be partially embedded

Less than half of the secondary principals say any of the school approaches to supporting the wellbeing of all Māori students shown in Figure 3 are well embedded at their school. Participation in co-curricular approaches is the most commonly well embedded approach, followed by the incorporation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in schoolwide practices.

¹⁰ HEEADSSS is the acronym for the Home, Education/Employment, Eating, Activities, Drugs and Alcohol, Sexuality, Suicide and Depression, Safety screening assessment.

Relatively large proportions indicate some of these approaches are partially embedded. What we cannot tell from the survey responses is whether schools have the understanding, confidence, and types of resources and staffing they need for these approaches to become well embedded over time.

FIGURE 3 Embeddedness of school approaches supporting the wellbeing of Māori students, reported by principals (n = 167)



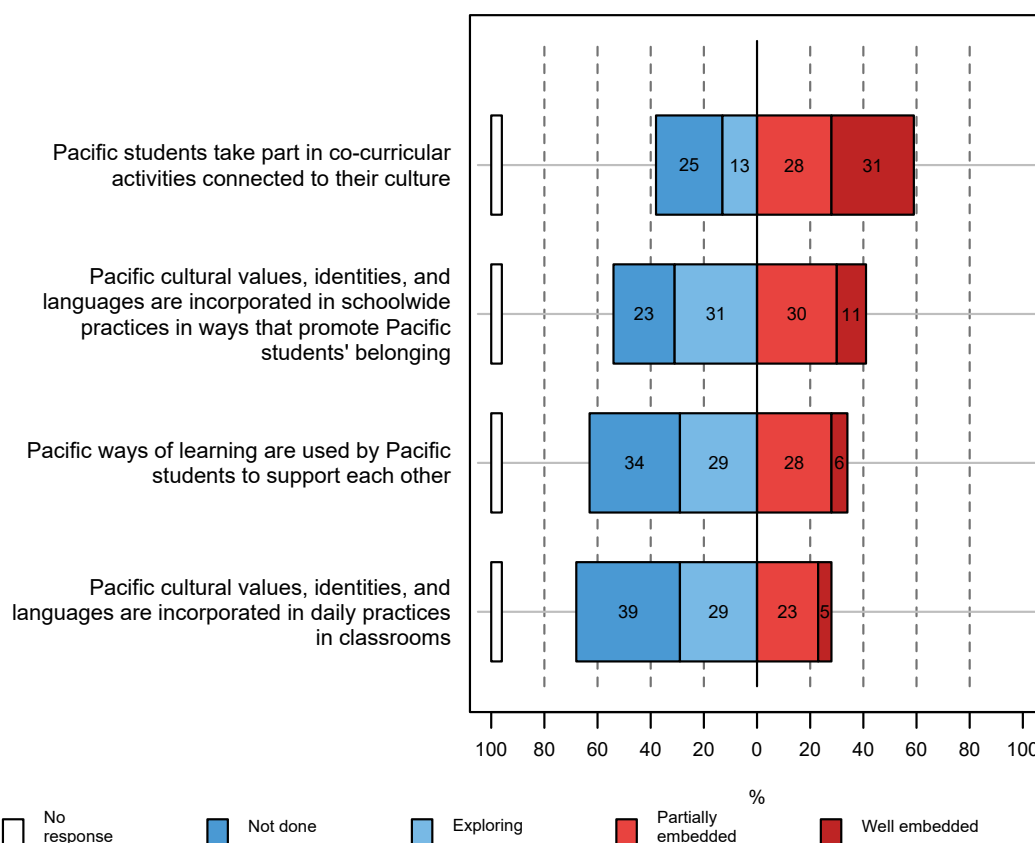
There were two decile-related differences in supporting the wellbeing of Māori students:

- Almost the same proportion of principals at decile 1–2 (57%) and 9–10 (58%) schools say Māori students using a tuakana–teina approach to support each other is a partially or well-embedded approach at their school (compared with 81% for decile 3–4 schools, 63% for decile 5–6 schools, and 73% for decile 7–8 schools).
- Whānau classes designed to support Māori students are partially or well embedded at 27% of decile 9–10 schools (compared with 47% of decile 1–2 schools, 62% of decile 3–4 schools, 50% of decile 5–6 schools, and 55% of decile 7–8 schools).

Schools are exploring or have partially-embedded approaches for the belonging and wellbeing of Pacific students

Over half of the principals say Pacific students taking part in co-curricular activities connected to their culture is either partially or well embedded at their school (see Figure 4). More than half are at least exploring the other three approaches to support the belonging and wellbeing of Pacific students that we asked about.

FIGURE 4 Embeddedness of school approaches supporting the belonging and wellbeing of Pacific students, reported by principals (n = 167)



There was just one item for which response differences are significantly related to school decile. For 21% of decile 1–2 schools, incorporating Pacific cultural values, identities, and languages into daily classroom practices was well embedded, decreasing to 3% across decile 3–8 schools and no decile 9–10 schools. This approach was “not done” at half of decile 5–6 schools, and slightly fewer (47%) decile 9–10 schools.¹¹

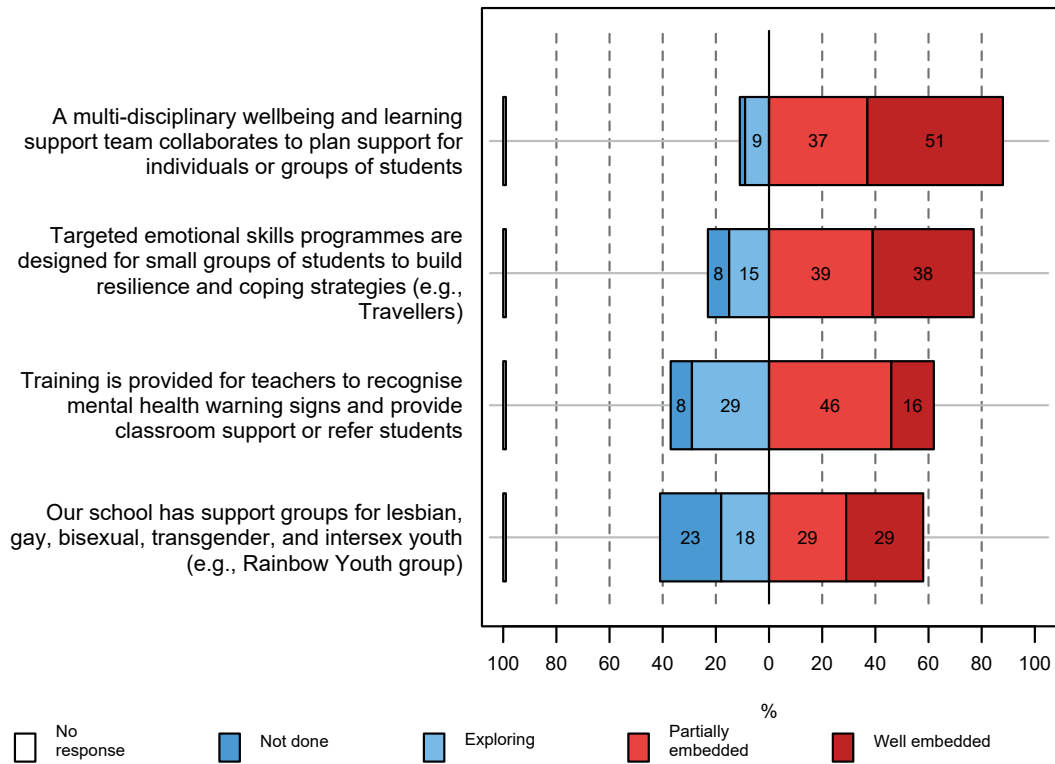
Support groups for LGBTI youth are well embedded at 29% of schools

Just over half the principals say a multi-disciplinary wellbeing and learning support team that collaborates to plan support for individuals or groups of students is a well-embedded approach at their school (see Figure 5). Twenty-nine percent say support groups for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex youth are well embedded at their school, more than double the 13% of principals who said this in 2015.

¹¹ This is related to the spread of Pacific students across deciles. In 2018, 47% of all Pacific students were enrolled at decile 1–2 schools, 21% at decile 3–4 schools, 11% at decile 5–6 schools, 12% at decile 7–8 schools, and 8% at decile 9–10 schools. This is based on information from 1 July 2018 roll returns, available at: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/6028>

Least well embedded of the four approaches included in Figure 5 is providing training for teachers to recognise mental health warning signs and provide classroom support or refer students (16%).

FIGURE 5 Embeddedness of school approaches to supporting the wellbeing of students who need extra support, reported by principals (n = 167)



The role of teachers in promoting student’s wellbeing and belonging

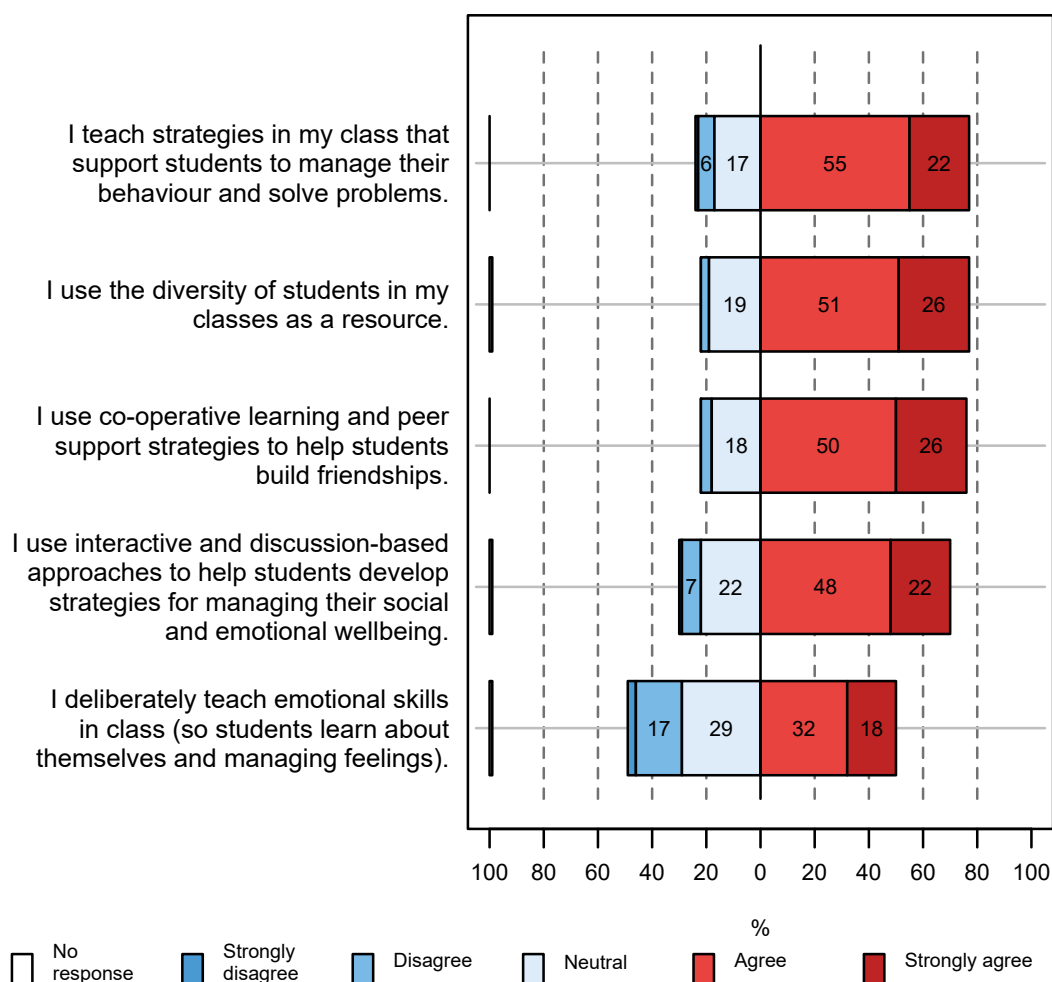
To find out about secondary teachers’ role in developing protective factors at the classroom level, we asked them about teaching strategies to help students manage their wellbeing and support their sense of belonging.

Teachers focus on strategies to manage behaviour more than social and emotional wellbeing

Many teachers incorporate a range of practices to support the wellbeing and positive behaviour of students in their classes (see Figure 6). Over three-quarters of teachers teach strategies to help students manage their behaviour and solve problems, and to help them build friendships. Slightly fewer teachers use interactive and discussion-based approaches to help students develop strategies for managing their social and emotional wellbeing.

Half of the teachers say they deliberately teach emotional skills in class to help students learn about themselves and manage their feelings.

FIGURE 6 Teaching practices to promote student wellbeing, reported by teachers (n = 705)



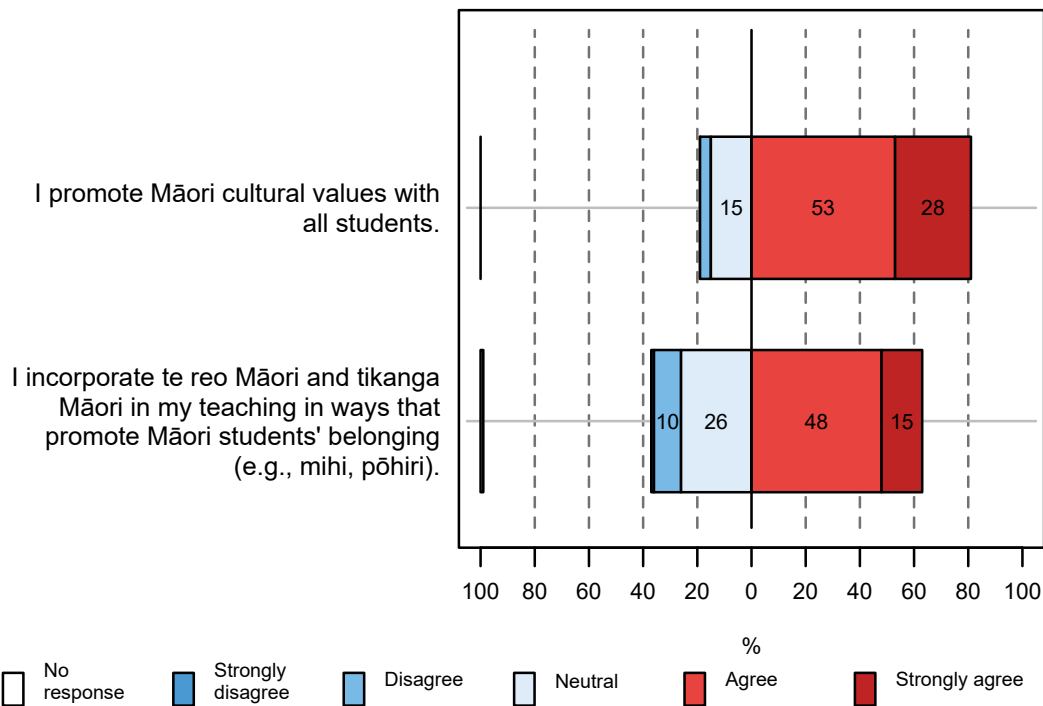
There were no school decile-related differences for the teacher practices shown in Figure 6.

In response to a different question, 54% of the teachers indicated their professional learning over the past 3 years has provided them with practical help for supporting students' social and emotional learning, indicating teachers' interest or school focus in providing such support. Also related to promoting students' wellbeing, around three-quarters of teachers say their professional learning has provided practical help with building relationships with students that have a positive effect on their learning.

Most teachers promote Māori cultural values

Over half of the teachers indicate they promote Māori cultural values with all students and incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in their teaching in a way that promotes Māori students' belonging. Relatively few of these teachers strongly agree with this (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 Teaching practices to promote Māori students' wellbeing and belonging, reported by teachers (n = 705)



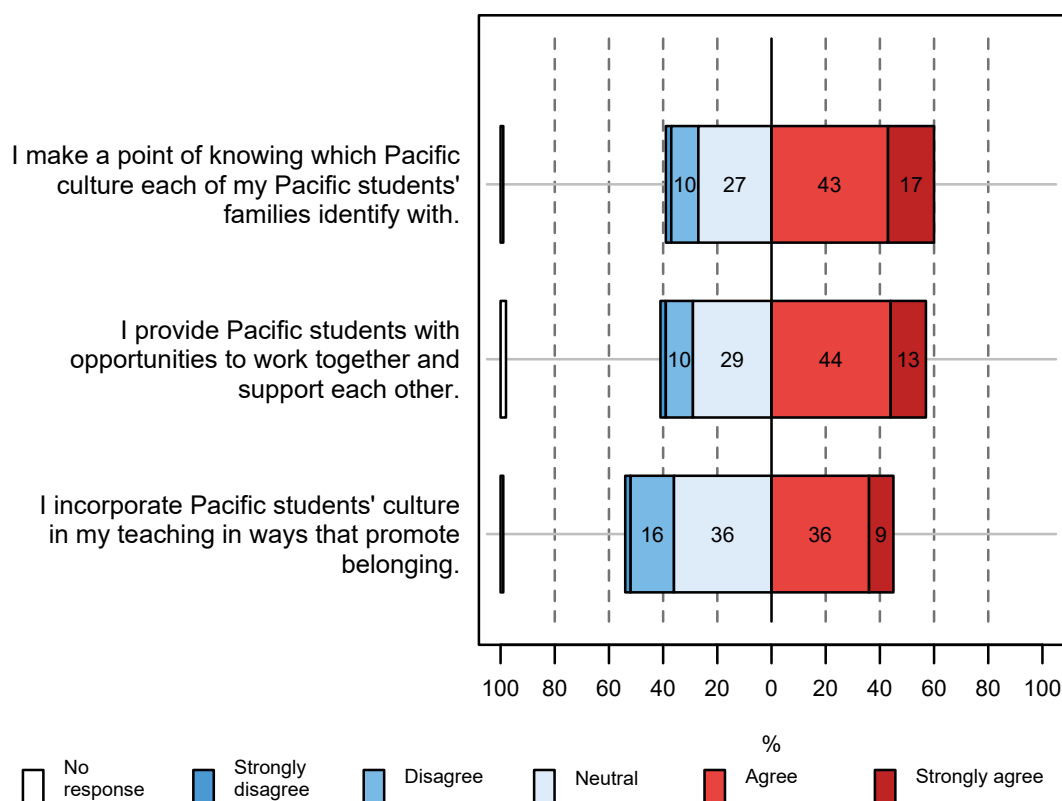
Teachers at decile 1-2 schools were more likely to indicate they incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in their teaching in ways that promote Māori students' belonging (70%, decreasing to 59% of teachers at decile 9-10 schools).

Over half of teachers make a point of identifying their Pacific students' cultures

Sixty percent of teachers agree they make a point of knowing which Pacific culture(s) their Pacific students' families identify with.¹² Slightly fewer provide Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other (see Figure 8). Teachers were somewhat less likely to incorporate Pacific students' culture in their teaching in ways that promote belonging.

¹² We are mindful that some teachers might have very few Pacific students in their classes.

FIGURE 8 Teaching practices to promote Pacific students' wellbeing and belonging, reported by teachers (n = 705)



Disproportionate numbers of Pacific students are enrolled at decile 1-2 schools, and teachers at these schools were most likely to use the practices shown in Figure 8. For example:

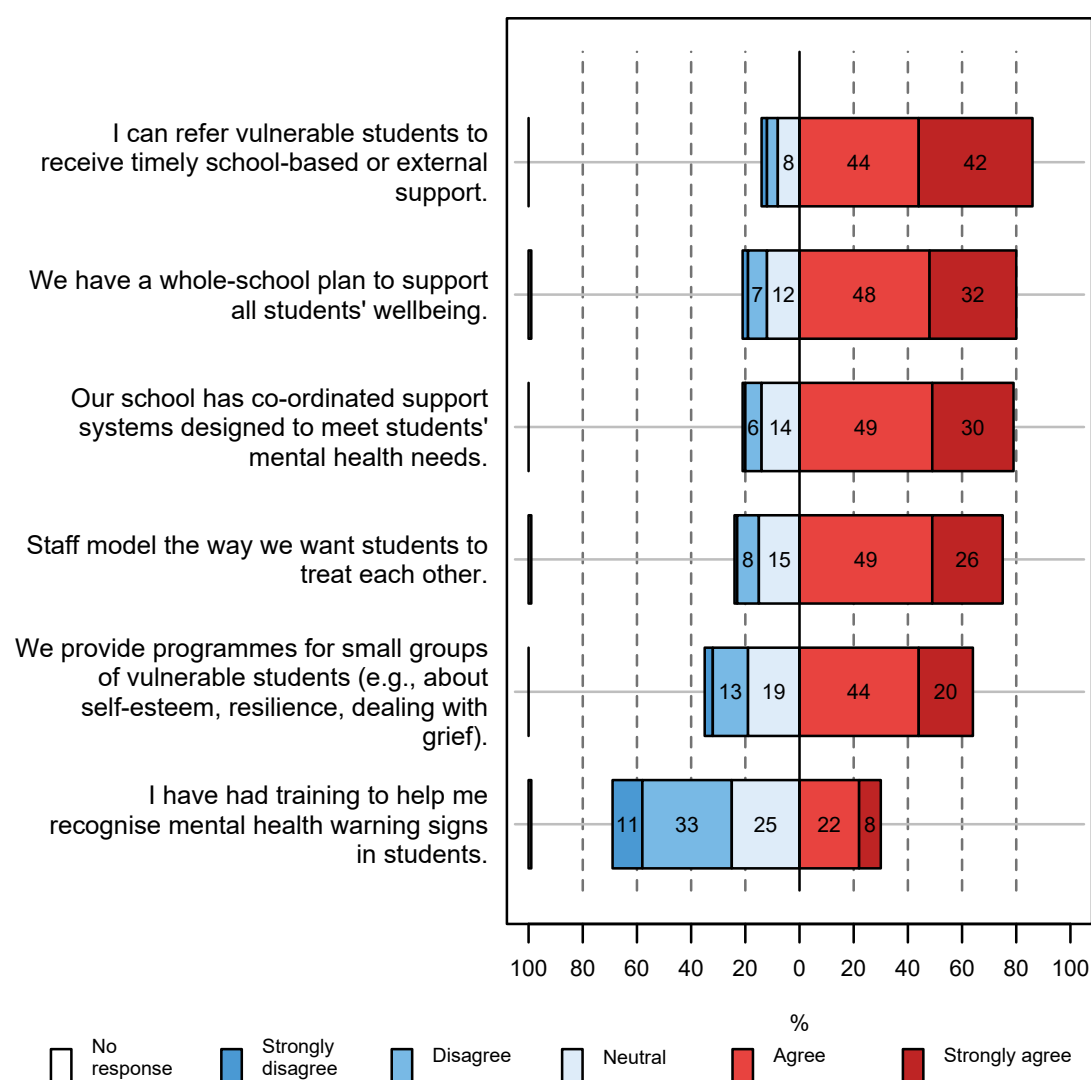
- 33% of teachers at decile 1-2 schools strongly agree they make a point of knowing which Pacific culture each of their Pacific students' families identify with
- 32% of teachers at decile 1-2 schools strongly agree they provide Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other
- 25% of teachers at decile 1-2 schools strongly agree they incorporate Pacific students' culture in their teaching in ways that promote belonging.

Most teachers can refer vulnerable students to receive timely support

Most of the teachers can refer vulnerable students to receive timely school-based or external support¹³ and indicate they have some school-wide systems in place to support students' wellbeing and mental health (see Figure 9). However, less than one-third of secondary teachers had received training to help them recognise mental health warning signs in students, suggesting that not all students who need support may be identified for referral. Only 16% of principals indicated the provision of such training is well embedded at their school.

¹³ Although most teachers agree they can refer vulnerable students to receive this help, actually *providing* support for vulnerable students was the second most identified major issue facing their school by principals (66%) and was in the top 10 issues identified by trustees (39%) (see Section 12: Issues facing secondary schools in 2018),).

FIGURE 9 School approaches to student wellbeing, reported by teachers (n = 705)



For five of the six approaches shown in Figure 9, differences related to school decile are evident in teachers' responses. (There is no significant decile-related difference for responses to "We provide programmes for small groups of vulnerable students".) Across these five items, the lowest levels of agreement are from teachers at decile 1-2 schools, and the highest are from teachers at decile 9-10 schools. Teachers' agreement that they have had training to help them recognise mental health warning signs in students has the widest decile-related differences, with 19% of teachers at decile 1-2 schools, around 30% of teachers at decile 3-8 schools, and 41% of those at decile 9-10 schools agreeing or strongly agreeing. Additionally, fewer teachers at decile 1-2 schools (73%) say they can refer vulnerable students to receive timely school-based or external support, increasing to 92% of teachers at decile 9-10 schools. From teachers' responses, it appears that some of the schools in which these approaches to students' wellbeing are most needed are the least likely to have them.

Six percent of the teachers (n = 41) expressed concern about students' wellbeing or behaviour in answer to our final question asking them if they had any overall comments about their work as a teacher.

My rural decile 1 has just started to see 'P babies' arriving with serious behavioural/social/learning problems, including serious violence.

We deal with huge issues on a day to day level, e.g., sick kids, suicidal kids, bullying, aggression, no gear, no food, kicked out of home, not wanting to learn.

I spend a lot of time not actually teaching but surviving the abusive behaviour of my students.

The real pressing issues for myself and other senior managers are the increasing types of problems students are bringing to the school. We are dealing with major social issues that we are ill equipped to solve and we also carry a vast amount of disturbing information and have no outlet to offload this burden.

Managing behaviour to support students' learning

The downward trend in student behaviour being a major issue has halted

Principals' responses to previous surveys showed a downward trend in student behaviour being a major issue in secondary schools (33% in 2009, 26% in 2012, and 15% in 2015). But in 2018 the trend does not continue, with 22% of principals identifying student behaviour as a major issue facing their school.

In 2015, there had been clear differences related to school decile: principals most likely to identify student behaviour as a major issue were at decile 1–2 schools. The patterns associated with school decile were somewhat different in 2018, with the highest proportions of principals at decile 3–4 schools identifying student behaviour as a major issue for their school (38%, compared with 21% for decile 1–2 schools, 30% for decile 5–6 schools, 10% for decile 7–8 schools, and 7% for decile 9–10 schools). This pattern was also reflected in the responses of trustees, with 44% of trustees at decile 3–4 schools identifying student behaviour as an issue.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Section 12: *Issues facing secondary schools in 2018* for more details.

PB4L initiatives are in around half of the secondary schools

The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) suite of initiatives has been the government’s main plank of support for building learning environments that promote positive behaviour that fosters students’ wellbeing and achievement. Collectively, these initiatives are a long-term, systemic approach to address behaviour that can get in the way of learning.¹⁵

Over half of the principals say their schools are part of PB4L School-Wide, with somewhat fewer saying they are part of PB4L Restorative Practices (see Table 1). Most of these have been involved for 3 years or more. Just over half of principals say their school is part of other whole-school restorative practices. Fifteen percent of the principals responded “not currently” or “don’t know” to all three of the initiatives we asked about.

TABLE 1 **Involvement in initiatives that support students’ behaviour and wellbeing, reported by principals (n = 167)**

Initiatives	Yes, for 3 years or more	Yes, for less than 3 years	Not currently	Don’t know
PB4L School-Wide	44	11	40	1
PB4L Restorative Practices	28	16	49	1
Other whole-school restorative practices	40	12	28	4

Schools of all deciles have joined the two PB4L initiatives. Although these initiatives were targeted at lower decile schools for some years, a current criterion for being part of PB4L is that a school’s key goal is to improve student behaviour. In 2018, a higher proportion of principals in decile 1–2 schools indicate their schools are involved in PB4L School-Wide (74%, compared with 64% for decile 3–6 schools, 45% for decile 7–8 schools, and 30% for decile 9–10 schools). Likewise, a higher proportion of principals at decile 1–2 schools are involved in PB4L Restorative Practices (74%, compared with 46% for decile 3–8 schools, and 13% for decile 9–10 schools). There was no significant decile-related difference for involvement in other whole-school restorative practices.

External expertise to help improve student behaviour was something 38% of principals say was not needed in 2018—up from 20% who said this in the previous survey.¹⁶ Principals of decile 7–10 schools were the most likely to say this (57%, compared with 30% at decile 1–2 schools, and 13% for decile 3–4 schools).

Most secondary schools have well-embedded approaches for managing behaviour

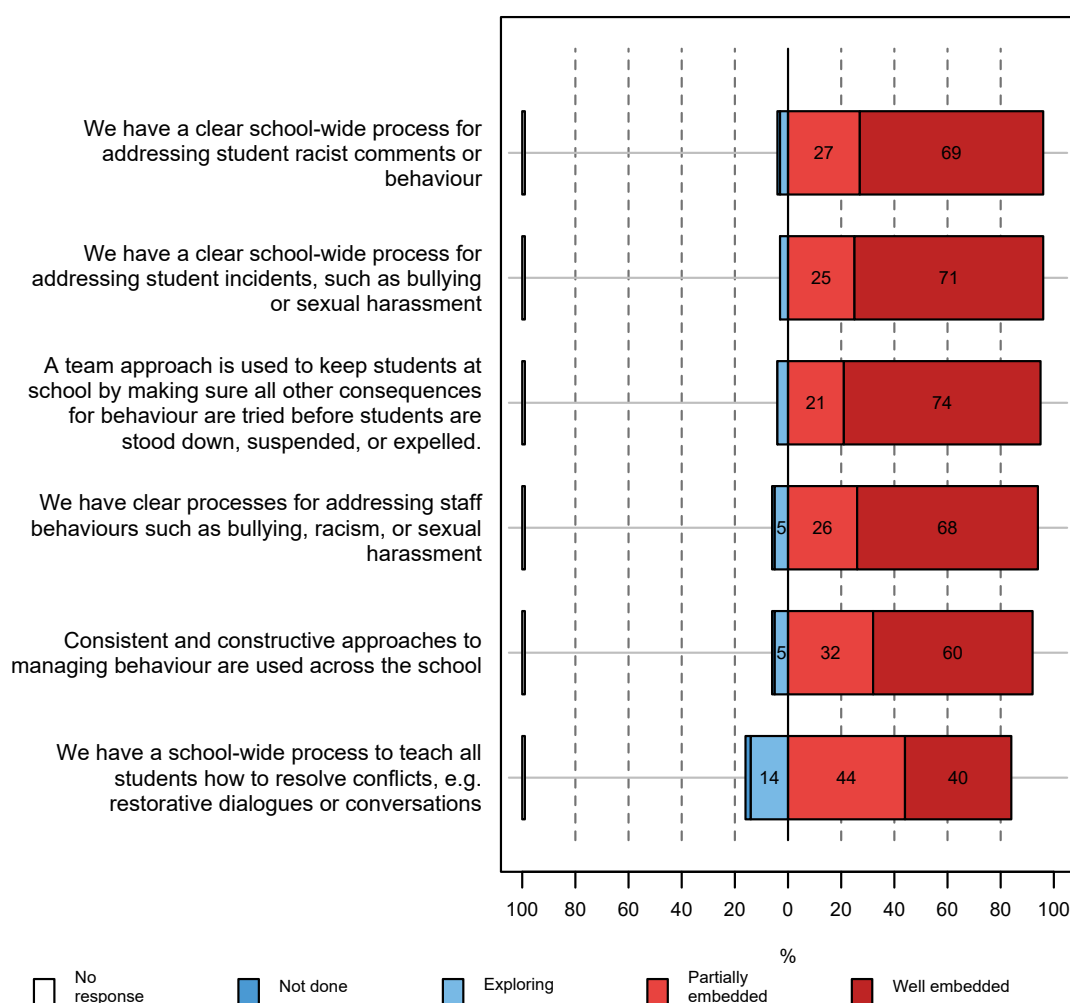
Figure 10 shows that almost three-quarters of the secondary principals say a team approach is used to keeping students at school by making sure all other consequences for behaviour are tried before students are stood down, suspended, or expelled, and that this approach is well embedded at their school. This is unchanged since 2015.

Over two-thirds of the schools have clear processes well embedded for addressing racist comments or behaviour by students or staff. Fewer schools (40%) have a well-embedded school-wide process to teach all students how to resolve conflicts.

¹⁵ See Boyd, S., & Felgate, R. (2015). *“A positive culture of support”: Final report from the evaluation of PB4L School-Wide*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

¹⁶ See Section 8: *Principals’ perspectives on external review, advice, and expertise* for more on principals’ responses about the external expertise their schools need.

FIGURE 10 **Embeddedness of school approaches for addressing behaviours that might get in the way of learning, reported by principals (n = 167)**



Almost a fifth of teachers say student behaviour often seriously disrupts their teaching

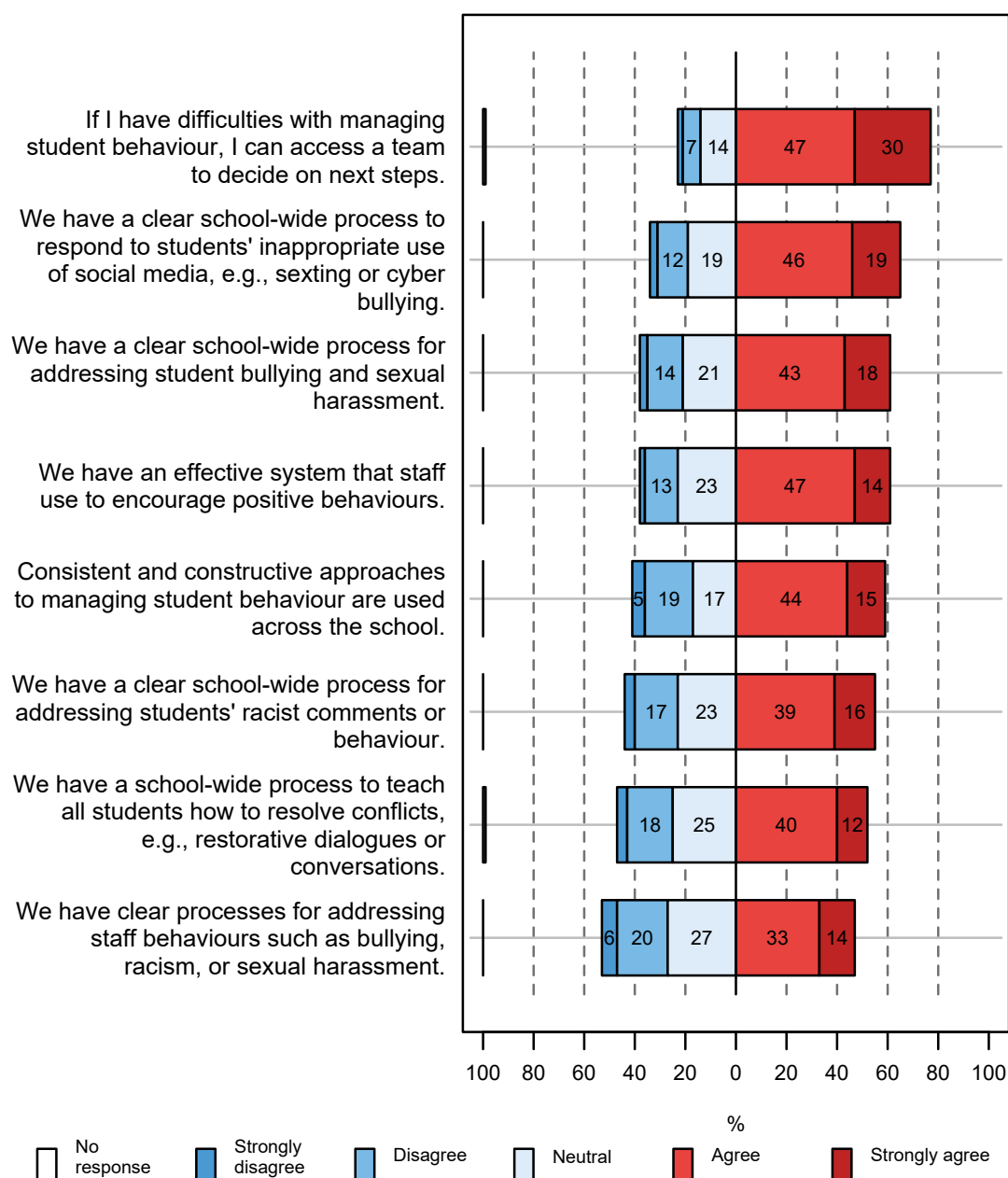
In 2018, somewhat more teachers often experienced student behaviour that caused serious disruption to their teaching (18%, up from 11% in both 2015 and 2012). Thirty-nine percent report experiencing this sometimes (similar to 2015 and 2012), and 42% rarely or never experience this sort of behaviour (down from 50% in 2015, and similar to 40% in 2012).

Serious disruption to teaching was experienced *often* by 35% of the teachers at decile 1–2 schools (decreasing to 5% at decile 9–10 schools). This was somewhat more than the 27% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools in 2015. One of the main things teachers at decile 1–2 schools would like to change about their work as a teacher is to have more support for them to teach students with behaviour issues (41%, about the same for teachers at decile 3–6 schools, 25% at decile 7–8 schools, and 16% of teachers at decile 9–10 schools).

Teachers' responses in Figure 11 show at least half indicate various approaches used at their school to address student behaviour that might get in the way of teaching and learning.

A quarter of teachers indicate they do not have clear processes in their school for addressing staff behaviours such as bullying, racism, or sexual harassment.

FIGURE 11 School approaches to addressing behaviour that might get in the way of teaching and learning, reported by teachers (n = 705)



School decile was related to the teachers’ responses to most of the items in Figure 11. (The two exceptions were teachers’ agreement with the bottom two statements in the figure, with which around 50% of all teachers agreed.) Teachers at decile 1–2 schools tended to express the least agreement, and teachers at decile 7–10 schools, the most. For example, 59% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools can access a team to decide on next steps. Seventy-five percent of teachers at decile 3–4 schools say they can do this, 71% at decile 5–6 schools, and 86% at decile 7–10 schools. Teachers at decile 1–2 schools were also less likely to say that consistent and constructive approaches to managing student behaviour are used across the school (38%, compared with 52% at decile 3–4 schools, 55% at decile 5–6 schools, 73% at decile

7–8 schools, and 70% at decile 9–10 schools). Overall, teachers' responses indicate that supports that encourage positive behaviour are less likely to be established in decile 1–2 schools—the schools where other responses suggest these approaches are currently most needed.

Schools' work with external agencies to promote student wellbeing

Principals were asked about the usefulness of the support they have had for students' wellbeing and behaviour, both based in their school and from external agencies they might call on for advice. At least 60% of the principals had used the sources included in Figure 12, and less than 60% had used those shown in Figure 13.

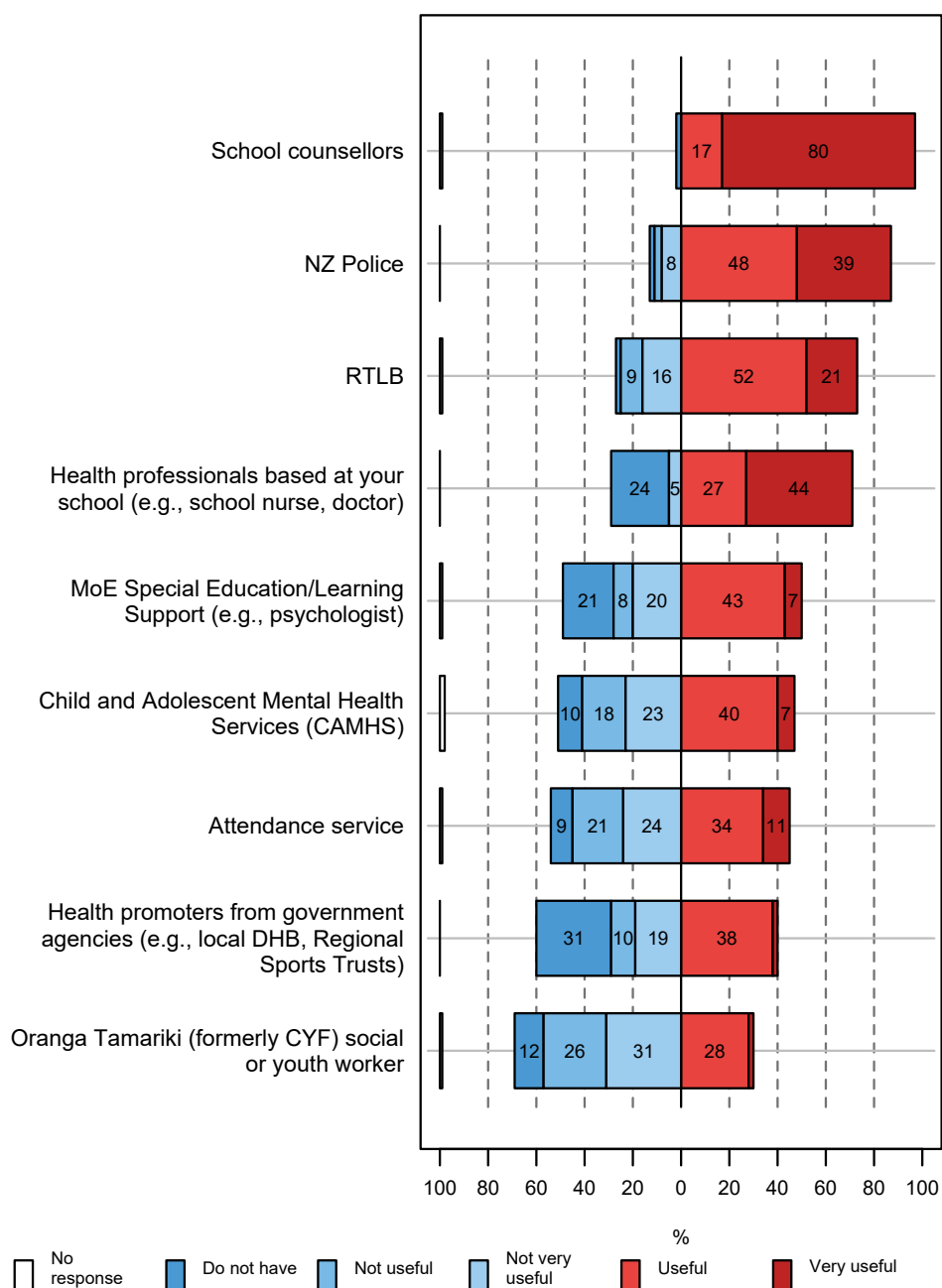
School counsellors provide the most useful support for students' wellbeing

Figure 12 shows clearly that principals think the most useful support for their students' wellbeing and behaviour has been from school counsellors; every principal who has a school counsellor (97% of all principals responding) rated their support as “useful” or “very useful”. Three of the four most useful sources of support are school-based (although RTLBs might be based at another school), which is consistent with the research finding that students' health and wellbeing benefit from having services based on-site.¹⁷

At the other end of the scale, more than 40% of principals say their school has had “not very useful” or “not useful” support from Oranga Tamariki, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and the attendance service—agencies that are likely to be needed to support students with some of the highest needs.

¹⁷ Denny, S., Grant, S., Galbreath, R., Clark, T., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., . . . Teevale, T. (2014). *Health services in New Zealand secondary schools and the associated health outcomes for students*. Auckland: The University of Auckland.

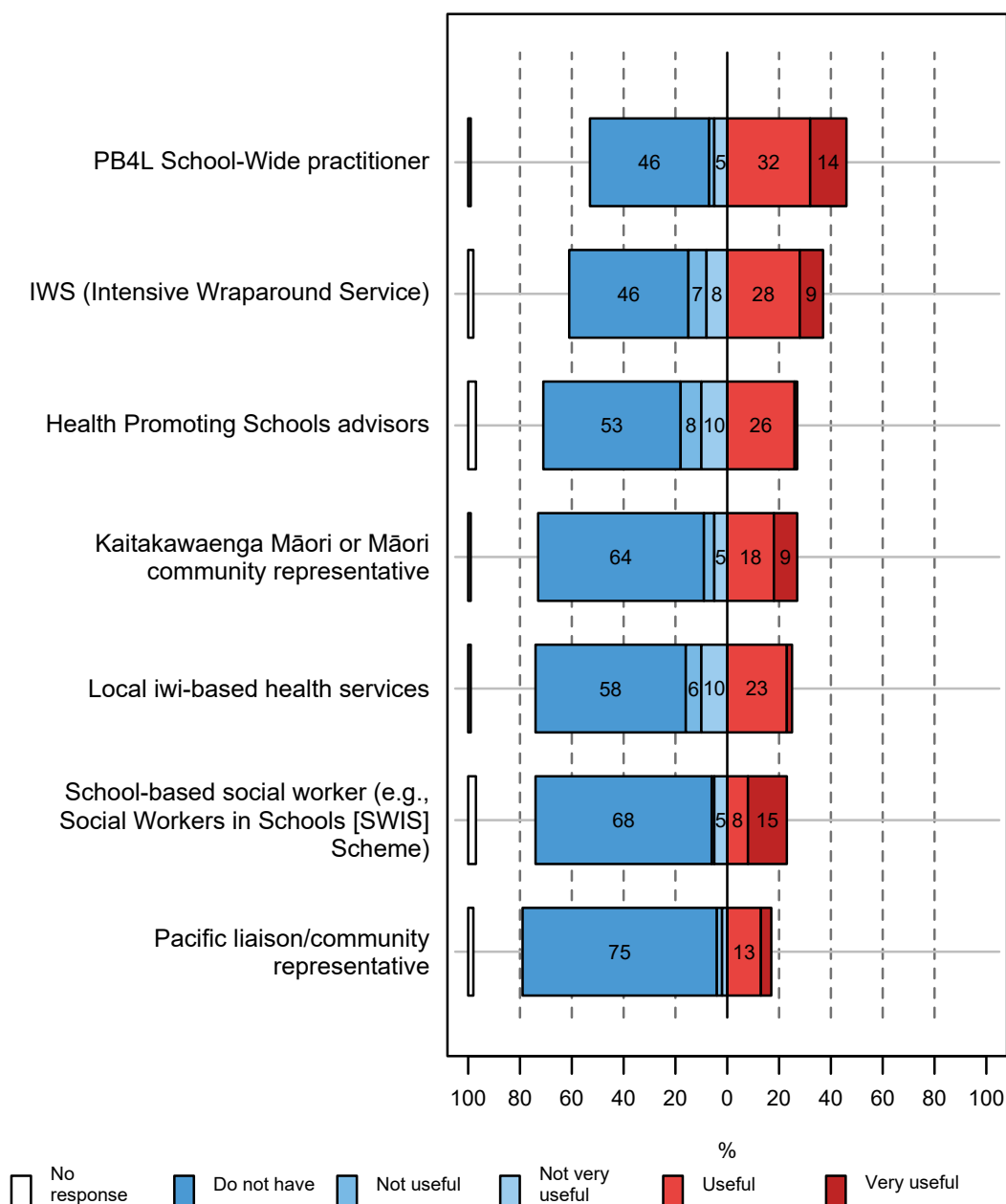
FIGURE 12 The usefulness of support for students' wellbeing and behaviour used by at least 60% of schools, reported by principals (n = 167)



The single school decile-related difference was for NZ Police. Half of principals at decile 1–4 schools say the support they have from NZ Police is very useful, compared with 34% of principals of decile 5–10 schools.

Less than 60% of the principals report having received support from the sources shown in Figure 13. Most of those who had used the supports shown were positive about their experience. For example, only 29% have had support from a school-based social worker. However, more than three-quarters of these principals think this on-site support for students' wellbeing and behaviour was “useful” or “very useful”. Proportionally, this is higher than the usefulness ratings for similar off-site support from Oranga Tamariki social or youth workers (see Figure 12).

FIGURE 13 The usefulness of support for students' wellbeing and behaviour used by less than 60% of schools, reported by principals (n = 167)



Eighty-one percent of principals whose school has been part of PB4L School-Wide think they have had useful or very useful support from a PB4L School-Wide practitioner. The same view is held by 77% of those whose school has been part of PB4L Restorative Practices.

The support agencies included in Figure 13 are used more by decile 1–2 schools, and very little or not at all by decile 9–10 schools. For example, 80% of decile 5–10 schools do not have a school-based social worker, and neither do 57% of decile 3–4 schools and 26% of decile 1–2 schools. Because of this, lower decile schools were more likely to rate these as useful or very useful.

Sixty-two percent of principals cannot access the mental health expertise they need for students

The report from the recent Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction highlights that school counsellors and teachers “are overwhelmed by the number of students in distress, the complexity of their issues and the incidence of acting out via problem behaviours in class”.¹⁸ The same report underscores the importance of students learning about mental health as part of the health curriculum in schools. The survey findings we report add to some of the material included in the Inquiry’s report.

We asked principals what external expertise their school needs in order to keep developing, and whether they could access this, as reported in *Section 8: Principals’ perspectives on external review, advice, and expertise*. In 2018, 62% of principals said they could not readily access expertise to support students with mental health issues, a considerable increase from 36% in 2015. Putting this together with less than half of principals saying they get useful advice from agencies such as CAMHS and Oranga Tamariki points to gaps in the mental health support for students, making it difficult for some schools to put support approaches in place. It is also possible that schools are tending to use school-based services (where these are available) in preference to external agencies, because of the timeliness and availability of on-site help.

Access to external expertise to keep improving student wellbeing was needed but not readily accessible for 27% of principals, up from 8% in 2015.

Some schools need more funding to keep building students’ wellbeing

The 78% of principals ($n = 131$) who say their school needs support in order to keep building students’ wellbeing were asked to describe the support they need. Almost half of these principals think their school needs more funding, including time for teacher professional learning (see Table 2). Eighteen percent of this group specifically identify support for students’ mental health as a need for their school.

Around a quarter say their school needs timely, quality support from external agencies, or more or better on-site services.

TABLE 2 Support needed to keep building student wellbeing, described by principals

Support needed	Principals who say their school needs support ($n = 131$) %
More funding, including time for professional learning	46
Timely, quality support from external agencies (including CAMHS), and inter-agency communication/co-ordination	27
Provide more/better on-site services, including more staff with appropriate qualifications (social workers, counsellors, youth workers, school nurses)	23
More/better support for students’ mental health, in particular	18

¹⁸ See page 49 of Government Inquiry into Mental health and Addiction. (2018). *He Ara Oranga : Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction*. Available at: <https://mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/inquiry-report/he-ara-oranga/>

The following quotes reflect principals' views about the need for more funding to build students' wellbeing.

Staffing ratio adjustment OR tagged staffing for counsellors over and above roll-based entitlement staffing formula. Need for counsellors has ballooned in recent years as mental health concerns have 'blown out' yet NO ADJUSTMENT has been made to school resources. I have DOUBLED my counsellor HR level totally at board expense. (Not sustainable)

Ring-fenced funding to provide additional supports (e.g., we do not have support access to mental health services or wellbeing programmes).

Much more resourcing around mental health services on-site!

The role of trustees in supporting students' wellbeing and behaviour

Around half of the trustees reported that, during 2018, parents and whānau had raised issues with them related to students' behaviour or bullying, much the same as in 2015. With 34% of trustees, parents had raised issues related to students' mental health and wellbeing.

Among the written resources trustees said they had used for their role over the past 12 months, three related to supporting students' wellbeing and behaviour. Use in 2018 was lower than in 2015.

- Hautū—Māori cultural responsiveness self-review tool (NZSTA, n.d.¹⁹), used by 14% of trustees (compared with 26% in 2015)
- the Ministry of Education's (2015) *Bullying prevention and response: A guide for schools*, used by 8% (compared with 16% in 2015)
- ERO's wellbeing guidelines, used by 16% (11% in 2015).

The use of these three resources did not vary with school decile.

Attending disciplinary meetings is what trustees enjoy the least

In response to an open question about what they enjoyed least about their role, one-quarter of trustees said attending disciplinary meetings and supporting students who have been excluded is what they enjoy least.

Disciplinary meetings (students). I feel that we are ill-equipped as parent reps to be able to make life-altering decisions for students. This is made even more difficult when there is a lack of support services within our community.

Having to attend disciplinary/exclusion meetings as this means we may have 'failed' the individual.

Can be difficult attending student hearings when parents are known or friends.

The main things trustees would change about their role included having clearer guidelines to make disciplinary decisions (16%) and reducing their role in disciplinary decisions (14%).

Parent and whānau views on wellbeing

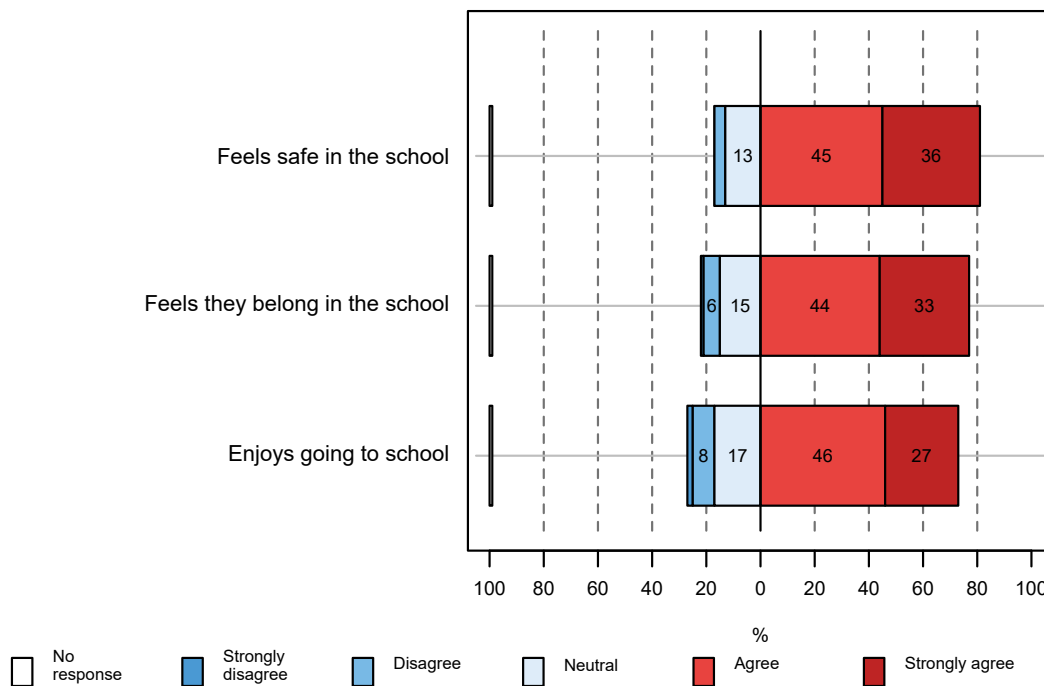
Parents' views were sought about their child's sense of belonging at school, and how well they think their child's school uses various approaches to help support their child's wellbeing. These approaches include helping their child develop social skills, self-awareness, and positive attitudes, and encouraging their child's participation in co-curricular activities.

¹⁹ NZSTA. (n.d.). *Hautū—Māori cultural responsiveness self-review tool*. Retrieved 14 March 2019, from: <https://www.nzsta.org.nz/assets/Maori-student-achievement/Hautu.pdf>

Most parents are positive about their child's secondary school

Most parents and whānau responding indicate their child feels safe, feels they belong at school, and enjoys going to school (see Figure 14). However, 10% of parents do not think their child enjoys school and a further 17% gave a “neutral” response.

FIGURE 14 Parent and whānau (n = 508) views of their children's sense of belonging at school



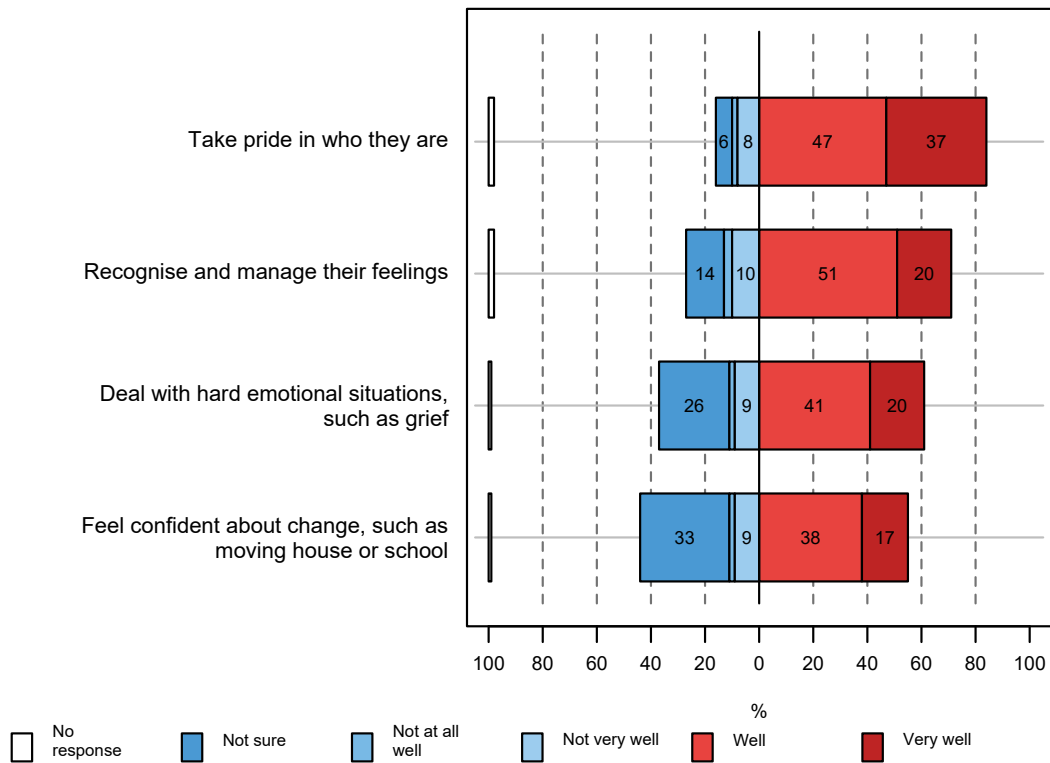
School decile was related to differences for the top two items in Figure 14. While 76% of parents whose child attends a decile 1–6 school say their child feels safe at school, 87% of those with a child at a decile 7–10 school say the same. Seventy-one percent of parents with a child at a decile 3–6 school say their child feels they belong in the school, compared to around 82% of parents with a child at a decile 1–2 or decile 7–10 school.

The importance of belonging in school has been brought to the fore in research that asks Māori students what matters to them.²⁰ Māori parents responding to this survey had much the same responses as other parents.

The majority of the parents responding think their school does well or very well at helping their child develop pride in who they are and recognising and managing their feelings (see Figure 15). Somewhat fewer parents think the school does well or very well at helping their child develop other personal skills, with 53% of the parents thinking their school does well or very well at helping their child feel confident about change, and 61% at dealing with hard emotional situations.

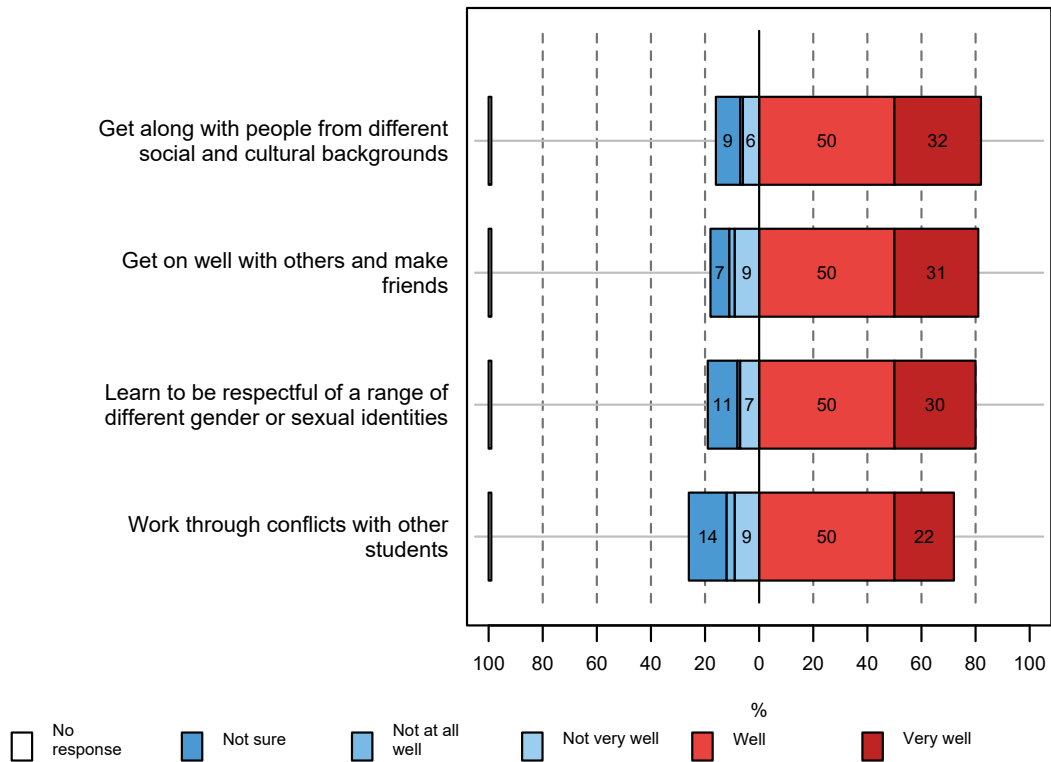
²⁰ See, for example, the series of reports by NZSTA and Office of the Children's Commissioner (2018), including: *Education matters to me: Key insights*. Available at: <http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/education-matters-to-me-key-insights/>

FIGURE 15 Parent and whānau (n = 508) views of how well the school helps their child to develop personal skills and attitudes



Most parents think their child’s school does well or very well with helping their child develop the social skills shown in Figure 16.

FIGURE 16 Parent and whānau (n = 508) views of how well the school helps their child to develop interpersonal skills



Although a small number of school decile-related differences were evident here, these did not show a consistent trend.

When it came to the school helping students to learn about making good decisions, slightly more parents think the school does “well” or “very well” at helping their child make good decisions about healthy choices, than about relationships and sexuality or dealing with social media issues (see Figure 17).

FIGURE 17 Parent and whānau (*n* = 508) views of how well the school helps their child to learn to make good decisions

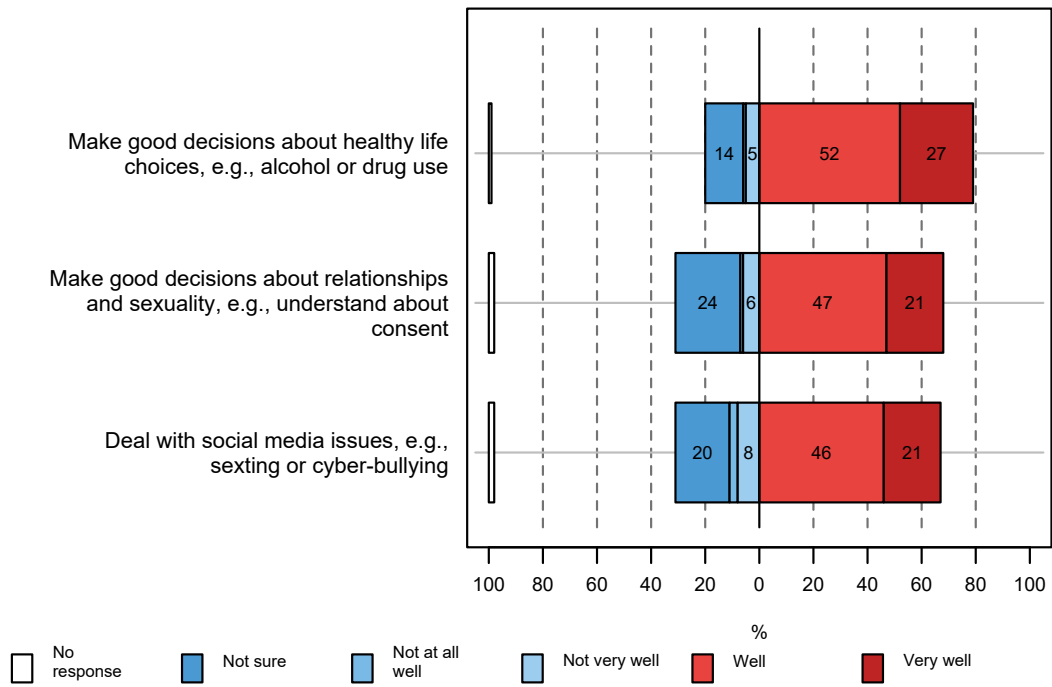
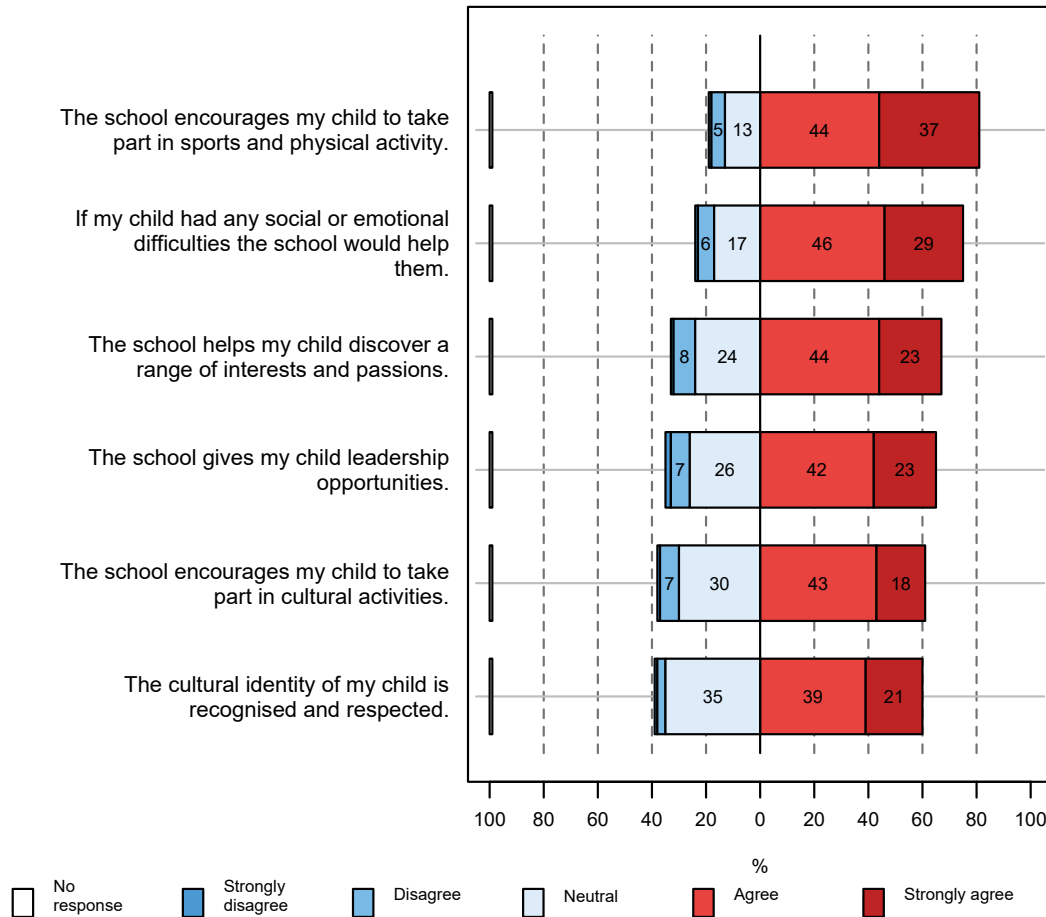


Figure 18 shows that many of the parents agree the school encourages their child to take part in sports and physical activity. Somewhat fewer agree that the cultural identity of their child is recognised and respected, or that the school encourages their child to take part in cultural activities.

FIGURE 18 Parent and whānau (n = 508) agreement that the school uses a range of approaches to support their child’s wellbeing



Parents whose child attends a decile 5–6 school were less likely to say the cultural identity of their child is recognised and respected at school (51%, compared with 58% for decile 3–4 and 7–8 schools, 65% for decile 1–2 schools, and 75% for decile 9–10 schools).

Māori parents were more likely to say their child’s cultural identity is recognised and respected (73%, compared with 59% of non-Māori parents who said this).

In the overall comments parents wrote in response to an open question about their child’s secondary schooling, 4% (n = 22) voiced their concern about students’ wellbeing or behaviour. Some comments express the need for greater support for students’ mental health, and others highlight students’ high stress levels associated with their workloads.

I feel like the overall interactions between teacher/pupil/parent are sadly lacking. This year (2018) I have found that the physical, emotional, mental, and sexual safety of students is deteriorating. And the school’s response to these issues has been to ‘whitewash’ things that are not happening. I do not feel that my child is currently having the best educational experience possible but am limited to change schools without moving out of our community.

The behaviour of students seems to have a major effect on the teachers. They need major support from what we are hearing, from our son.

I am pleased overall with the school but very unhappy about the lack of discipline for the naughty kids. The smokers and those that are breaking the rules and being ignored. It's a well-known fact these lads are getting away with it.

My child is in her second year at this school. From a child who loved school she now hates the idea of going. We have had 2 years of bullying which I have had to push the school to try and resolve. Like many parents I know or know of, I am currently looking for a new school out of district and hope to have her in a safer environment next year.

I do feel that the amount of homework is a bit harsh and out of balance at certain times, creating high stress levels which impacts emotional stability.

The school needs to boost sports performance and participation for the physical and mental health of its students.

Summary and discussion

Principals' and teachers' responses indicated an awareness that students' wellbeing and belonging matters, and that this is complex for them to effectively support. Principals report needing more funding and access to external expertise to support the school's work in this area. A particular area in which principals say they need more help is students' mental health. There are also signs that student behaviour might be a growing concern for some schools. In 2018, there are indications that deliberate approaches to promote students' wellbeing are well embedded at some schools. However, in many cases such approaches are being explored or are partially embedded.

School-based supports—school counsellors, RTLB, and health professionals based at schools—were generally judged more useful by principals for supporting students' wellbeing and behaviour than external supports. Most teachers can refer vulnerable students to receive timely school-based or external support and their schools have some school-wide systems in place to support students' wellbeing and mental health. In 2018, more schools have support groups for LGBTI youth than in 2015. There was also an increase in the number of schools where students' social or mental health concerns are identified by using screening data.

Practices for identifying students' mental health needs are inconsistent across schools. In some schools, teachers are provided with training to recognise mental health warning signs in students, and in others, screening data are used to identify students' mental health needs. Nearly half the 78% of principals who indicate their school needs support to keep building their students' wellbeing identify more funding as the support they need, with some saying this would enable more teacher professional learning that could include identifying mental health warning signs in students.

Overall, the need for more support for students' wellbeing was most obvious in decile 1–2 schools. At these schools, using data from contributing schools to plan support for new students' behavioural, social, or mental health needs was less likely to be well embedded, and fewer teachers receive training to recognise mental health warning signs in students.

Yet these are also the schools in which teachers are least likely to say they can refer students to receive timely support, where fewer school-wide processes are in place to address behaviour that might get in the way of learning, and where teachers are the most likely to have had student behaviour issues *often* cause serious disruption to their teaching.

To a degree, this echoes what principals say about the embeddedness of related approaches, which were more likely to be partially embedded than well embedded.

Approaches that promote the belonging of Māori and Pacific students are more evident at decile 1–2 schools, where Māori and Pacific students tend to be enrolled in disproportionate numbers. Te reo Māori and tikanga Māori were more likely to be incorporated in teaching at decile 1–2 schools, to promote Māori students' sense of belonging. Although this is strongest among teachers at decile 1–2 schools, over half of teachers at decile 9–10 schools also incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.

Sixty percent of all teachers know which Pacific culture(s) each of their Pacific students' families identify with. Decile 1–2 schools were the most likely to have well-embedded approaches to incorporate Pacific cultural values, identities, and languages into daily classroom practices. More teachers at these schools also include teaching practices that promote Pacific students' wellbeing.

Most parents are positive about their child's secondary school and think the school does well with helping their child develop a range of social skills. The majority of the parents think their school does well at helping their child develop pride in who they are and recognising and managing their feelings. Somewhat fewer parents agree that the cultural identity of their child is recognised and respected, and think the school does well at helping their child feel confident about change and dealing with hard emotional situations. Many parents indicate their child's school encourages their child to take part in sports, while fewer report the school encouraging participation in cultural activities.