

# Parent and whānau perspectives on their child's schooling

Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary  
and intermediate schools 2016

Linda Bonne and Eliza Stevens



---

# Parent and whānau perspectives on their child's schooling

Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016

Linda Bonne and Eliza Stevens

2017

---

---

---

# Acknowledgements

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) is very grateful to the parents and whānau who completed the 2016 NZCER primary and intermediate national survey questionnaires, and so enabled us to provide this national picture of parent and whānau views in 2016. We also thank the trustees, teachers, and principals who took part in the national survey; we include some of their responses in this report.

The NZCER national surveys are team efforts, involving survey co-ordination, data cleaning and analysis, and feedback on draft reports, as well as writing, and we thank our colleagues for their work which lies behind this report.

These national surveys are funded by NZCER's Government Grant. We are grateful to the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF), the New Zealand School Trustees' Association (NZSTA), and the Education Review Office (ERO) for their interest in and support of this research, and their helpful comments on draft surveys.

---

New Zealand Council for Educational Research  
P O Box 3237  
Wellington  
New Zealand  
[www.nzcer.org.nz](http://www.nzcer.org.nz)  
ISBN: 978-1-98-854218-8  
© NZCER 2017

---

---

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	iii
<b>Key findings</b>	1
Most parents and whānau were positive about their child's schooling	1
Most children attended the first choice of school for their parents and whānau	2
Improvements in information parents and whānau received about their child	2
Access to online information varied by school decile	2
Fewer parents and whānau using some sources of general education information	3
Parents and whānau additional participation in their child's school	3
<b>1. Introduction</b>	4
About the parents and whānau	5
<i>A note about school deciles</i>	5
<b>2. How parents and whānau chose a school</b>	7
Sources of information that helped parents and whānau choose a school	8
<b>3. How did parents and whānau view their child's school and learning experiences?</b>	10
Most parents and whānau felt positive about their child's school	10
Parents and whānau saw their child's teachers as committed and enthusiastic	12
Most parents and whānau were positive about their child's experience of school	13
Parent and whānau views of their child's learning	15
<i>Positive attitudes and skills for learning were being developed</i>	15
<i>Schools helped most students develop skills to manage their wellbeing</i>	16
<i>Children participated in a range of school and class activities</i>	19
Learning with digital technology is important to most parents and whānau	21
Cost was sometimes a barrier for small numbers of children	22
<b>4. Information for parents and whānau</b>	23
Quality and clarity of information about their child	23
<i>Parent and whānau views of National Standards</i>	26
Online access to information about their child's schooling	27
How parents and whānau accessed information about the school	28
<i>Did parents and whānau have all the information they wanted about their child's school?</i>	29
Information about education in general	30
<b>5. Parent and whānau interactions with their child's school</b>	31
Parent and whānau participation in school activities and events	31
<i>Involvement in school consultation</i>	32
Parent and whānau views of the board's role	33
<i>Participation in board of trustees elections</i>	33
No single major issue facing schools, from parent and whānau perspectives	33
Parent and whānau comments about their child's schooling	35
<b>6. Discussion</b>	37

---

## Tables

Table 1	Parent and whānau respondents by school decile band	6
Table 2	Factors that helped parents and whānau decide on a school for their child	7
Table 3	Information that helped parents and whānau choose their child's school	9
Table 4	Clear information parents and whānau received from the school in their child's mid-year report/ parent-teacher conference	25
Table 5	How parents and whānau accessed information about the school: Non-digitally (shaded) and digitally, 2013 and 2016	29
Table 6	Parent and whānau sources of information about education in general (apart from their school), 2013 and 2016	30
Table 7	School activities in which parents and whānau had participated during the year	32
Table 8	Major issues facing their schools, parent and whānau views, 2013 and 2016	34

## Figures

Figure 1	Parent and whānau feelings about their child's school	11
Figure 2	Parent and whānau views of their child's teachers	12
Figure 3	Parent and whānau views of their child's experience of learning at school	14
Figure 4	Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop positive attitudes to learning	15
Figure 5	Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop skills for learning	16
Figure 6	Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop skills for managing their social wellbeing	17
Figure 7	Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop skills for managing their mental and emotional wellbeing	18
Figure 8	Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child make good decisions	19
Figure 9	Parent and whānau reports of their child's participation in school and class activities	20
Figure 10	Parent and whānau views of the quality of information they get from their child's school	24
Figure 11	Parent and whānau views about National Standards	26
Figure 12	Parent and whānau views about, and support of, National Standards	27
Figure 13	Online information parents and whānau can access about their child	28

---



# Key findings

## Most parents and whānau were positive about their child's schooling

In 2016, most parents and whānau responding were positive about their child's overall experience of primary or intermediate school, and agreed their child enjoyed school and felt safe there.

Most indicated their school helped their child to develop positive attitudes to learning, skills for learning, and skills for managing their social wellbeing. Fewer parents and whānau were sure about how well the school helped their child to develop skills for managing their mental and emotional wellbeing, such as dealing with hard emotional situations.

A majority of parents and whānau thought their child's teachers were committed and enthusiastic, and responsive to any concerns they have as parents and whānau. More than half of parents and whānau strongly agreed they feel comfortable talking with their child's teachers and asking about their child's progress, feel welcome in the school, and would recommend it to others.

In 2016, a slightly increased proportion of parents and whānau from 2013 viewed schools as being respectful and inclusive of their child's cultural identity. This echoes an increased focus on practices that promote students' cultural identity and values that was reported by teachers and principals.

Most parents and whānau viewed their child using digital technology as part of their learning at school as of high (35%) or medium (46%) importance. The two main themes emerging from the comments parents and whānau wrote reflected a belief that everyone needs to be able to use digital technology and that it is important to balance learning with digital technology with other learning.

Nearly two-thirds of the comments parents and whānau wrote when they responded to the survey expressed a positive view of their primary or intermediate school. Seven percent of all parents and whānau voiced concern that students might not be having their needs met by what the school provides, and 3% expressed concerns about funding or about specific teachers, or negative experiences of their child's school.

In 2016, there was little change in the major issues that parents and whānau identified were facing their child's school. Less than a fifth of parents and whānau identified any single issue. The top three major issues for parents and whānau were staffing levels/class sizes, student behaviour, and funding (despite this being down from 39% in 2013, to 17% of parents and whānau in 2016).

## **Most children attended the first choice of school for their parents and whānau**

For the majority of parents and whānau (90%), their child was attending their parent and whānau first choice of school. For two-thirds, this was also their nearest primary or intermediate school. Just over half the parents and whānau responding to the survey said that living in their school's zone had enabled them to enrol their child there.

The single consideration that helped more than half of parents and whānau choose a school for their child was an older child or other family members having attended the school. The same consideration had helped 16% of parents and whānau choose to enrol their child in a school that was not their nearest school. The views of other parents and whānau they know or their child's friends going there contributed to the choices made by 39% and 30% of parents and whānau, respectively.

Visiting a school or attending a school open day helped just over half of parents and whānau choose a school. Less important for parent and whānau decision making were information sources such as ERO reports (used by 15% of parents and whānau), the school annual report (used by 4%), or National Standards results (used by 5%).

## **Improvements in information parents and whānau received about their child**

For parents and whānau to be partners in their child's learning, they need to have good information about their child and their school. In 2016, parents and whānau were more positive than in 2013 about the information they received from their child's school as part of their mid-year reporting processes. Increased proportions of parents and whānau said they received clear information about their child's learning goals and what the school is doing to help their child achieve these. At least 85% of parents and whānau indicated they received clear information about their child's achievement in relation to National Standards for reading, writing, and mathematics. These proportions have steadily increased since 2010. However, for learning areas not included in National Standards (the arts, technology, science, and social sciences), only about 20% of parents and whānau said they received clear mid-year information about their child's progress, showing little change since previous surveys. Although most parents and whānau received clear information about their child's National Standards achievement, just under half of parents and whānau said they supported them in principle.

Over three-quarters of parents and whānau rated the quality of information they received from school about their child's progress, achievement, behaviour, and attendance/lateness as 'good' or 'very good'.

## **Access to online information varied by school decile**

Many parents and whānau were accessing information about their child's schooling online—more often this was related to school events and trips than what was happening in their child's classroom. Parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2 school<sup>1</sup> had lower rates of access to the school website, class blog, and online information about school events and trips and what their child was doing in the classroom. They were also less likely to receive school newsletters via email than those whose child attended a school in the decile 3–10 range.

---

<sup>1</sup> We generally describe deciles in bands (decile 1–2, decile 3–4, decile 5–6, decile 7–8, decile 9–10). However, because there were no responses from parents and whānau with a child at decile 1 or decile 6 schools, we specifically refer to decile 2 and decile 5 schools throughout the report.

More parents and whānau got up-to-date information about the school non-digitally than digitally, with many getting their information from paper newsletters (72%) or from their child (65%). Relatively small proportions of parents and whānau said they accessed information about the school via the media, or the school's ERO report or annual report.

### **Fewer parents and whānau using some sources of general education information**

Overall, fewer parents and whānau were drawing on education-related information, with decreases evident in parent and whānau use of internet searches, newspapers, books, and magazines for this purpose. In 2016, fewer than half got information about education from any one of these sources. Similar to 2013, parents and whānau were more likely to get education information from their interactions with friends, other parents, and family members.

The only difference associated with decile here was that parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2–4 school were more likely than others to get information from their family.

### **Parents and whānau additional participation in their child's school**

Over half of parents and whānau indicated they had attended sport, responded to school surveys, or participated in fundraising or school trips during 2016. Parent and whānau sport attendance had increased markedly (from 39% in 2013, to 62%), with smaller increases in the proportions of parents and whānau taking part in fundraising and school trips.

More parents and whānau thought a key aspect of the board of trustees' role was providing strategic direction for the school than representing parents and whānau or supporting the principal. Just over half of parents and whānau thought their school genuinely consults with them about issues or new directions. Fewer than half of parents and whānau responding had voted in the 2016 triennial board of trustee elections.

# 1.

## Introduction

This report looks at parent and whānau views of, and involvement with, their children's schooling as part of a comprehensive national picture of what was happening in primary and intermediate schools in 2016.<sup>2</sup> The parent and whānau survey comprised mostly closed-response questions, but also asked for comments about three aspects: learning with digital technology, National Standards, and their child's schooling in general.

We invited principals at a subset of 36 schools in the national sample to survey their parents and whānau. These schools were selected to approximately reflect the decile band<sup>3</sup> and size characteristics of the national sample. Based on each school's roll, we estimated the number of questionnaires that would be needed for one in every four families with a child at the school. Questionnaires were sent to the schools with guidelines to identify a systematic random sample of parents and whānau from their school roll. Schools were asked not to send questionnaires to parents and whānau who were also trustees or teachers at the school.

We received completed questionnaires from 31 of the 36 schools that agreed to take part.<sup>4</sup> The response rate for the parent and whānau survey was 32% ( $n = 504$ ), much the same as for our 2013 national survey.

We begin this report with a brief description of the parents and whānau members who responded to the survey, before reporting on their experiences of choosing a school for their child. We then report on parent and whānau view of the school, their child's experiences there, and how they see their child's teacher. Parent and whānau interactions with the school and their participation in school events and activities are discussed next, followed by the school's interactions with parents and whānau, including board consultation. We report parent and whānau views on National Standards, and learning with digital technology, and finally what they see as the major issues facing their school.

We tested for statistically significant relationships between parent and whānau responses and school decile, because decile was associated with some different response patterns in 2013. Statistically significant relationships are reported throughout.

---

<sup>2</sup> This report is one of a series of reports available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey)

<sup>3</sup> In other reports in this series, school deciles are referred to in pairs/bands for analysis purposes: decile 1–2, decile 3–4, decile 5–6, decile 7–8, decile 9–10.

<sup>4</sup> For further information about the sample, see Berg, M. (2017). *NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016: Methodology and sample information*, available on the project web page: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey)

### About the parents and whānau

The majority of respondents to the parent and whānau survey were women (87%). This was a similar proportion as in the previous national surveys of schools.

Age-wise, the largest proportion of respondents were in their forties (49%), with a further 41% younger than 40 years, and 10% aged 50 or older.

Around 35% had degree qualifications. This is just over double the 2013 Census figures for mothers aged 30 to 64 years, 17% of whom said a Bachelor's degree was their highest qualification. Eight percent of parents and whānau had no formal qualifications (compared with 17% of mothers in the Census).

The ethnic composition of the parents and whānau responding<sup>5</sup> was:

- 82% NZ European/Pākehā
- 19% Māori<sup>6</sup>
- 4% Asian (Indian, Chinese)
- 3% Pasifika (Cook Island Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Niuean).

Parents and whānau who identified with ethnicities classified as 'Other' (including those who identified as 'New Zealander' or 'Kiwi') made up 8% of the responses.

The year levels that parents and whānau reported their children were in provided good coverage across all primary and intermediate year levels. If they had more than one child at the school, we asked them to focus on the youngest of these children when responding to the survey. The youngest children were also spread across all the year levels. Fifty-six percent of the parents and whānau had only one child at the school we asked them about, 34% had two children there, 8% had three children, and 2% had four or more children at the school. These are similar proportions to those in 2013 and 2010.

### A note about school deciles

To select parent and whānau schools for the national survey, school deciles are grouped into decile bands (see Table 1). We use these groupings to test for associations between survey questions and school decile. We think that the responses received from parents and whānau within these decile bands are similar enough that separating them out is not necessary. However, we do acknowledge that there are no parents and whānau from decile 1 and decile 6 schools in this national survey, particularly as decile 1 is at one end of the decile range. We therefore refer to decile 2 (rather than decile 1–2) and decile 5 (rather than decile 5–6) schools from the next section onwards.

Lower decile schools tend to be smaller schools with fewer students, and higher decile schools tend to be larger schools with larger numbers of students. Although the same number of schools fall evenly into each decile (by design), the student population is not the same in each decile. As the number of parents and whānau we include in the national survey from each school is proportional to the number of students from each school, a higher proportion of parent responses come from higher decile schools compared to lower decile schools.

---

<sup>5</sup> Parents and whānau were able to identify with multiple ethnic groups, so the total percentage reported here exceeds 100%.

<sup>6</sup> The views of parents and whānau who identified as Māori are reported in Bright, N., & Wylie, C. (2017). *Ākonga Māori in English-medium primary and intermediate schools: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey)

**TABLE 1 Parent and whānau respondents by school decile band**

Decile band	Sample of schools that agreed to survey their parents and whānau	Parent and whānau responses (n = 504)	
	%	%	(n)
Decile 1-2	25	16	79
Decile 3-4	19	18	88
Decile 5-6	19	23	115
Decile 7-8	19	26	133
Decile 9-10	17	18	89

## 2.

# How parents and whānau chose a school

Which school a child attends is based on a variety of factors, including parent and whānau preferences and pragmatic considerations such as proximity and access to a school. The overall picture for parent and whānau decision making around school choice was much the same as it was in 2013 and 2010.

### Parent and whānau preferences

Most parents and whānau (90%) said that their (youngest) child attends their first choice of school. Overall, parent and whānau school choice was more likely to be influenced by people-oriented factors—such as family connections, a child’s friends, or the child’s preference—than by opportunities offered by the school (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 Factors that helped parents and whānau decide on a school for their child

Factor helping decision on a school	2016 (n = 504) %
Older child or other family members went there	54
The views of other parents or whānau they know	39
Child’s friends were going there	30
Child wanted to go there	28
Opportunities in sports or physical activities	19
Opportunities in environmental projects	13
School’s cultural inclusiveness	12
Opportunities in arts programmes or events	12
School’s incorporation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori	10
School characteristics and facilities	9
Practical considerations (e.g., school bus service, proximity to home)	8
Early childhood education teachers’ views	8
Digital technology opportunities	8

Some of these factors varied according to school decile. Nineteen percent of parents and whānau whose child attended a decile 2 school said their child did not attend their first choice of school (decreasing to 6% for decile 7–10 schools). For parents and whānau whose child attended a decile 2 school, their school choice was the least likely to be decided by their child's friends going to the school (11%), or their child wanting to go there (17%), compared with those whose child attended a decile 3–10 school.

The school's incorporation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori or their cultural inclusiveness were cited most by decile 2 school parents and whānau as factors that had helped them decide on the school (28% and 23%, respectively).

Thirteen percent of parents and whānau gave other factors that helped them decide, including a particular staff member being a drawcard, and the school's good reputation.

### **Access to schools**

Almost two-thirds (63%) of parents and whānau said that their child attended the nearest primary or intermediate school. For most of these parents and whānau this school was also their first choice.

However, being the nearest school was not always a consideration when parents and whānau had a choice. Of the 90% of parents and whānau who said their child attended their first choice of school ( $n = 452$ ), nearly two-thirds also said it was their nearest. This suggests that, for just over a third of these parents and whānau, being the nearest school may have been less important than other considerations in choosing a school. These proportions are similar to the 2013 and 2010 survey responses.

For 16% of parents and whānau, their child attended a school that was not their closest school, and which had been chosen partly because an older child or other family member attended it. This was the only significant relationship between factors that helped parents and whānau choose a school (shown in Table 2) and their child not attending the closest school.

School zoning also influences the school a child attends. Just over half of all parents and whānau (54%) reported that living in their school's zone enabled their child to enrol at their current school. Another 23% had their child at a school with no enrolment zone.

Where a family lives outside a school's enrolment zone, parents and whānau usually go into the ballot for spare places at the school. Six percent said their child had been drawn from the ballot for the school. For those with a child at a decile 7–10 school, the figure was 12%. Another 6% of parents and whānau said their child met the special character criteria for the school (e.g., it was a Catholic school and their family is Catholic). A further 6% were unsure how their child got into their school.

School zoning, transport, or the child not wanting to go to that school, were among the main reasons a child did not attend the school that was the first choice for 9% of parents and whānau ( $n = 46$ ). A few parents and whānau mentioned their child's special needs, and others commented that having moved to or from a particular area, or having only one school in an area, meant their child was not at the school they would have chosen.

### **Sources of information that helped parents and whānau choose a school**

Overall, first-hand experience of a school was the most helpful source of information used by parents and whānau. Just over half the parents and whānau responding visited the school or attended an open day (see Table 3). Around one-fifth reported the school's website had helped them choose their school. Slightly fewer said the school's most recent ERO report or the school's prospectus had helped them. Very few parents and whānau indicated a school's National Standards results helped them choose their child's school.



TABLE 3 Information that helped parents and whānau choose their child's school

Information sources	2016 ( <i>n</i> = 504) %
Visited school/attended school open day	54
School website	19
Most recent Education Review Office (ERO) review of school	15
School prospectus	15
National Standards results	5
School annual report	4
'Find a school' website	3
The media (e.g., newspaper, Stuff)	2

### 3.

## How did parents and whānau view their child's school and learning experiences?

We asked parents and whānau for their views about their child's school and teachers, as well as their child's experiences at school—what they were learning, and their participation in school and class activities. Most of the questions were also asked in the 2013 and 2010 national surveys, with similar responses. One exception was schools' recognition of cultural diversity, about which slightly higher proportions of parents and whānau responded positively in 2016.

We end this section with parent and whānau views about learning with digital technology, and the extent to which cost was a barrier to their child's participation in school activities.

### Most parents and whānau felt positive about their child's school

More than half the parents and whānau strongly agreed they feel comfortable talking with their child's teachers and asking about their child's progress, feel welcome in the school, and would recommend it to others (see Figure 1). Under half strongly agreed they were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling, and their child's achievement and progress, and that if their child had difficulty in learning, the school would help him or her. Just over one-third of parents and whānau strongly agreed their child's cultural identity is recognised and respected, that they get good ideas from their child's teachers about how to help their child's learning, and that if their child had any social or emotional difficulties, the school would help him or her. This picture did not vary with school decile.

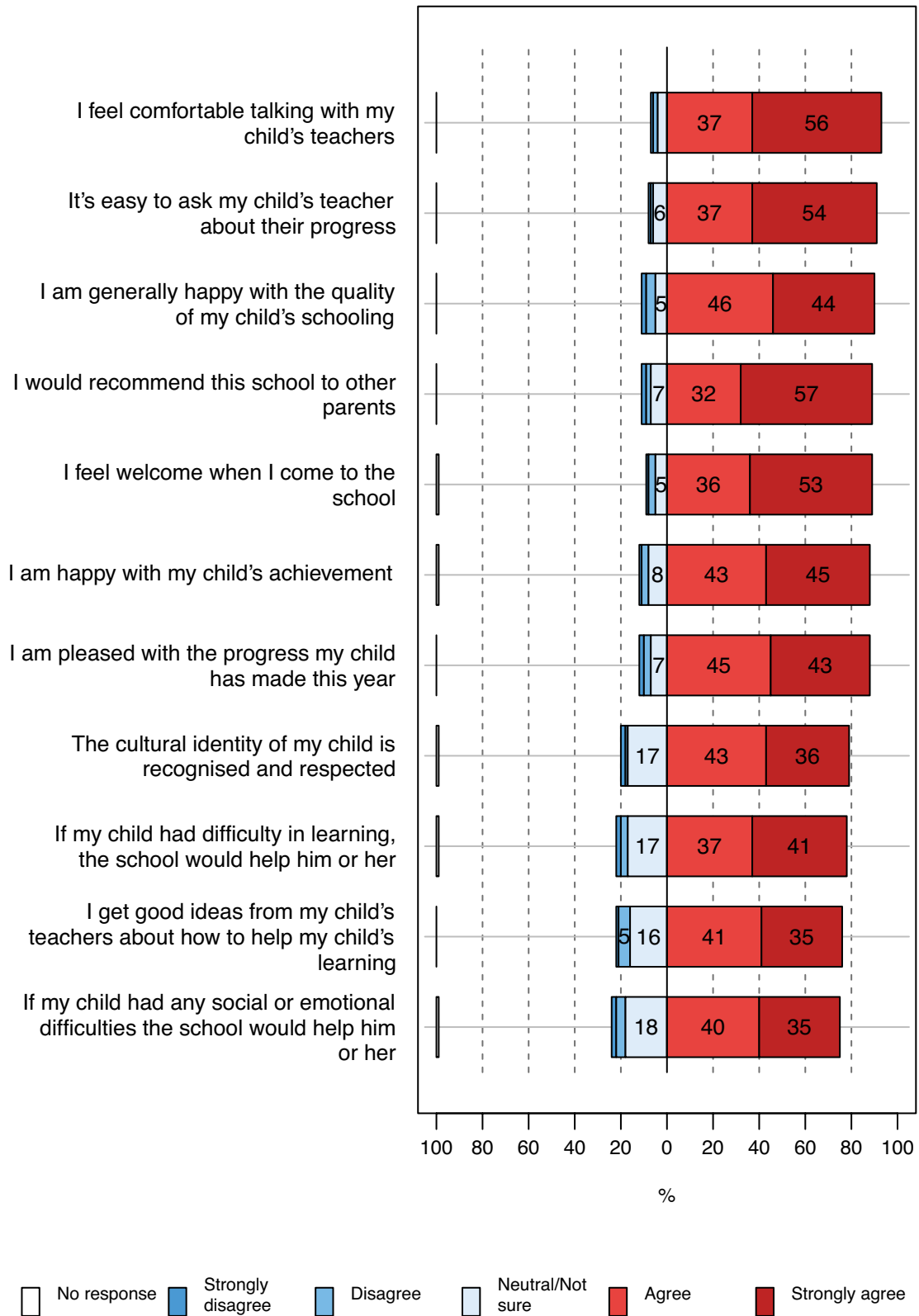
Seventy-nine percent of parents and whānau agreed or strongly agreed that their child's cultural identity is recognised and respected, up from 67% in 2013, mostly at the 'strongly agree' level (increasing from 27% in 2013 to 36%). Parent and whānau response patterns here are consistent with increases in the proportions of teachers reporting their professional learning and development had helped them engage Māori and Pasifika students, and build positive relationships with parents and whānau.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> See Bonne, L., & Wylie, C. (2017). *Teachers' work and students' learning: Findings from the 2016 NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/teachers\\_national\\_survey\\_2016](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/teachers_national_survey_2016)

3. How did parents and whānau view their child's school and learning experiences?

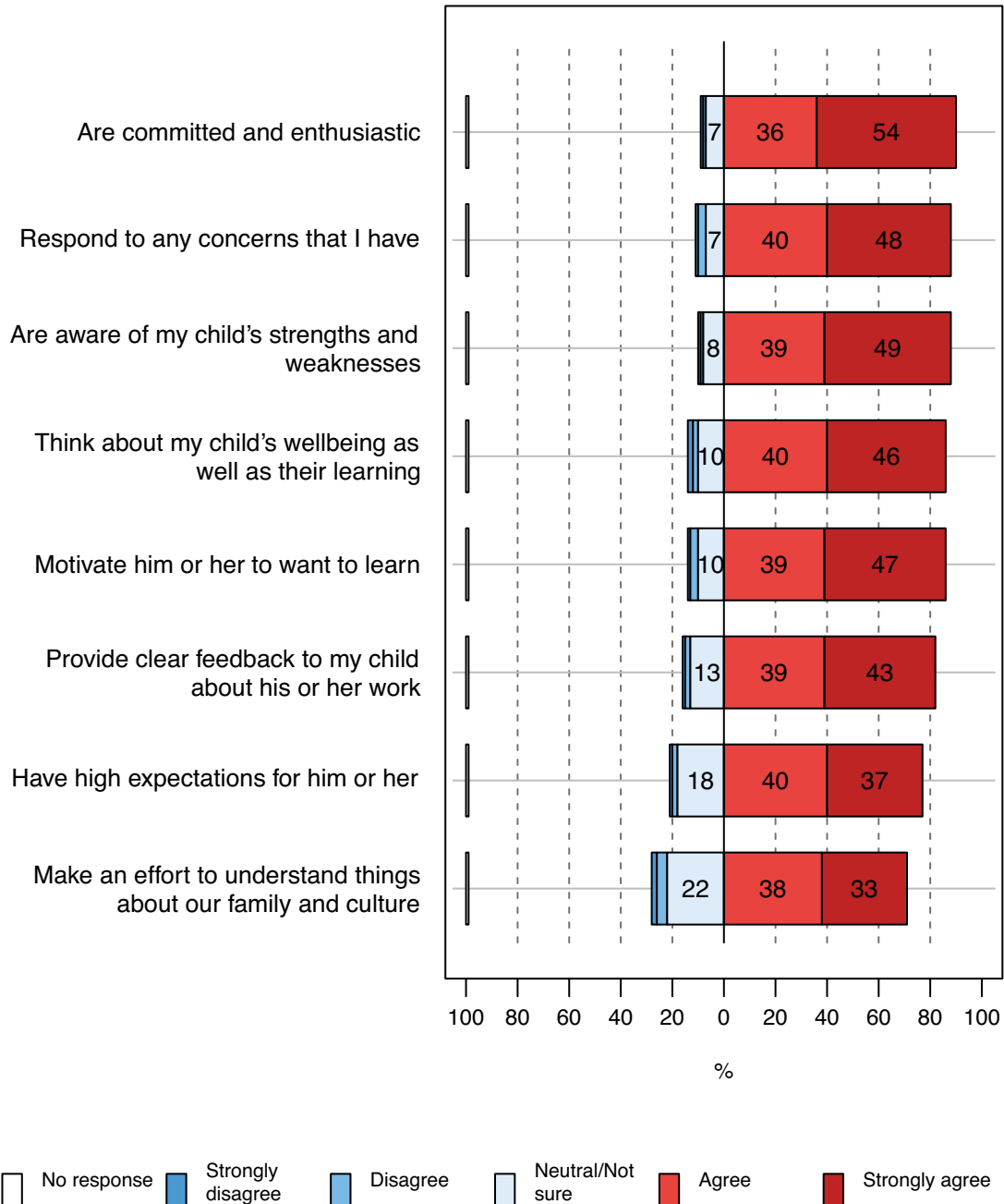
FIGURE 1 Parent and whānau feelings about their child's school (n = 504)



## Parents and whānau saw their child's teachers as committed and enthusiastic

Figure 2 shows the generally positive views that parents and whānau had of their child's teachers. Teachers were seen as committed and enthusiastic and focused on children's learning and wellbeing, as they have been in previous national surveys.

FIGURE 2 Parent and whānau views of their child's teachers (n = 504)



One change since 2013 is that slightly more parents and whānau in 2016 agreed or strongly agreed that their child's teacher makes an effort to understand things about their family and culture, increasing from 66% in 2013 to 72% in 2016.<sup>8</sup> Although this change might not be statistically significant, it is consistent with the growing recognition and respect of children's cultural identity in the wider school that parents and whānau reported (see page 10), and the separate report on students' wellbeing.<sup>9</sup> It is also consistent with an increased focus on practices that promote students' cultural identity and values, reported by teachers and principals.<sup>10</sup>

## Most parents and whānau were positive about their child's experience of school

Figure 3 shows that around 90% of parents and whānau reported that their child enjoys going to school, feels safe, has good friends, and feels they belong at their school.<sup>11</sup> Most (79%–87%) were also positive about their child's learning experiences at school, such as finding their school work interesting and at the right level of challenge.

---

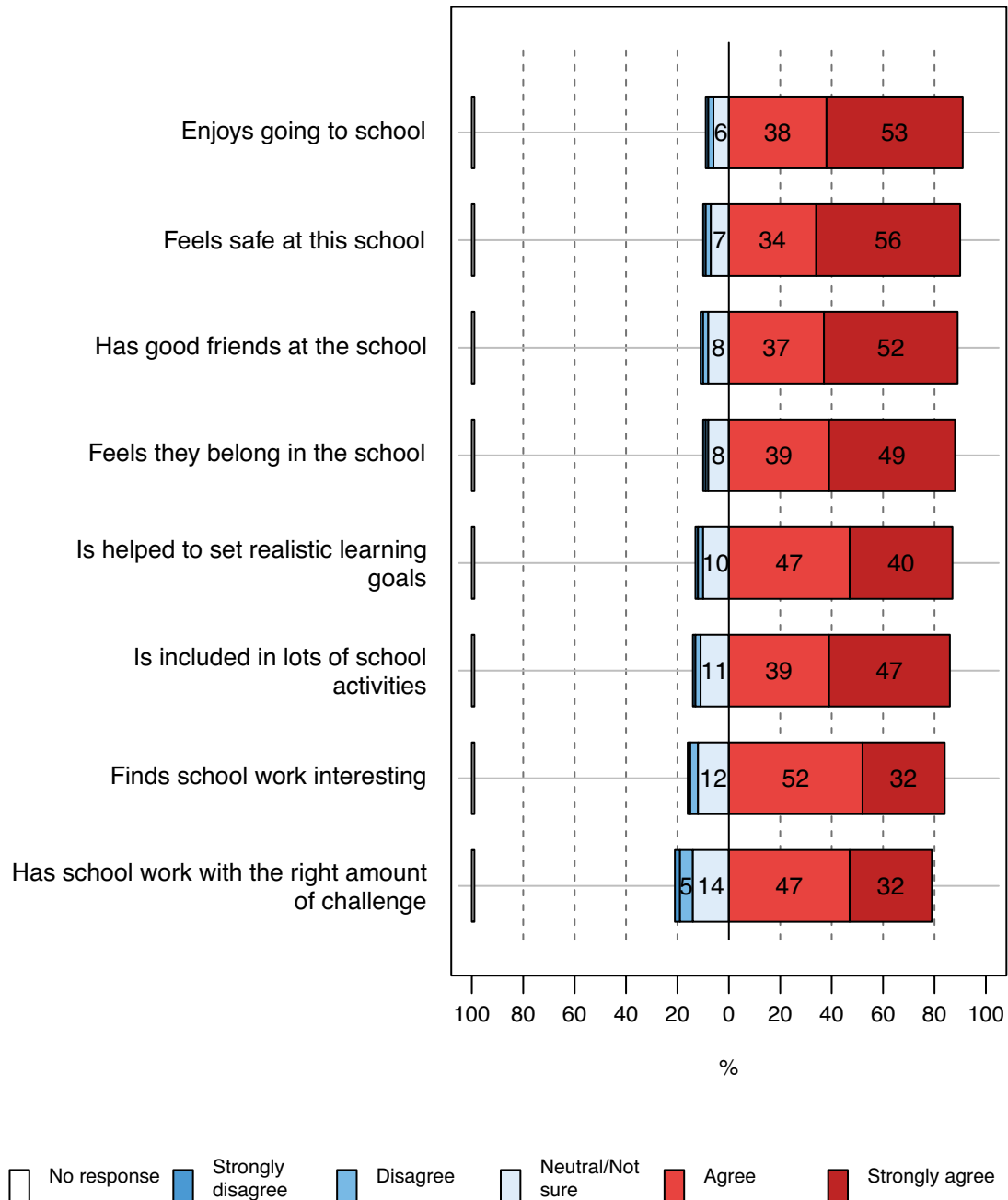
8 In 2010, 70% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with a different statement: *The cultural identity of my child is recognised and respected.*

9 For more on what schools were doing to support the development of students' cultural identity, see pp. 25–29 of Boyd, S., Bonne, L., & Berg, M. (2017). *Finding a balance: Fostering student wellbeing, positive behaviour, and learning in primary and intermediate schools.* Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/findingbalance-fostering-student-wellbeing](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/findingbalance-fostering-student-wellbeing)

10 See separate reports of teachers' and principals' views, available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey)

11 For further information about what schools were doing to build students' sense of belonging and cultural identity, see Boyd et al., op cit.

**FIGURE 3 Parent and whānau views of their child's experience of learning at school (n = 504)**



A new question in 2016 asked parents and whānau how much they agreed with a statement about their child having good friends at school. Overall, most parents and whānau agreed or strongly agreed that their child has good friends at school. However, fewer parents and whānau whose child was attending a decile 2 school, than parents and whānau with a child in decile 3–10 schools (71%, compared to 92%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This aligns with fewer parents and whānau of children at a decile 2 school mentioning having friends at that school as a factor in their school choice.

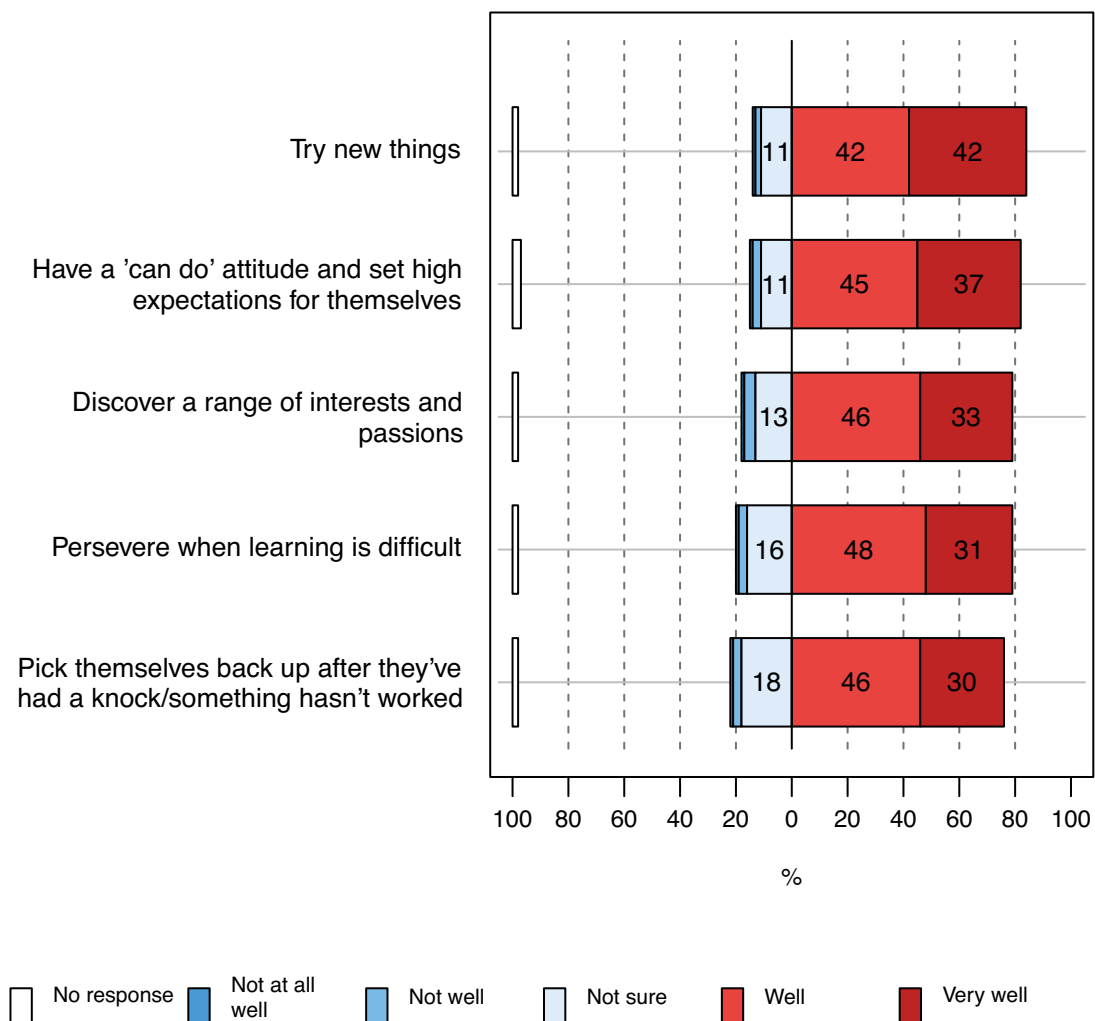
## Parent and whānau views of their child's learning

### Positive attitudes and skills for learning were being developed

The majority of parents and whānau thought their child's school was helping their child develop attitudes and skills that are needed to make the most of life, to continue learning, and to use in social contributions and future employment.

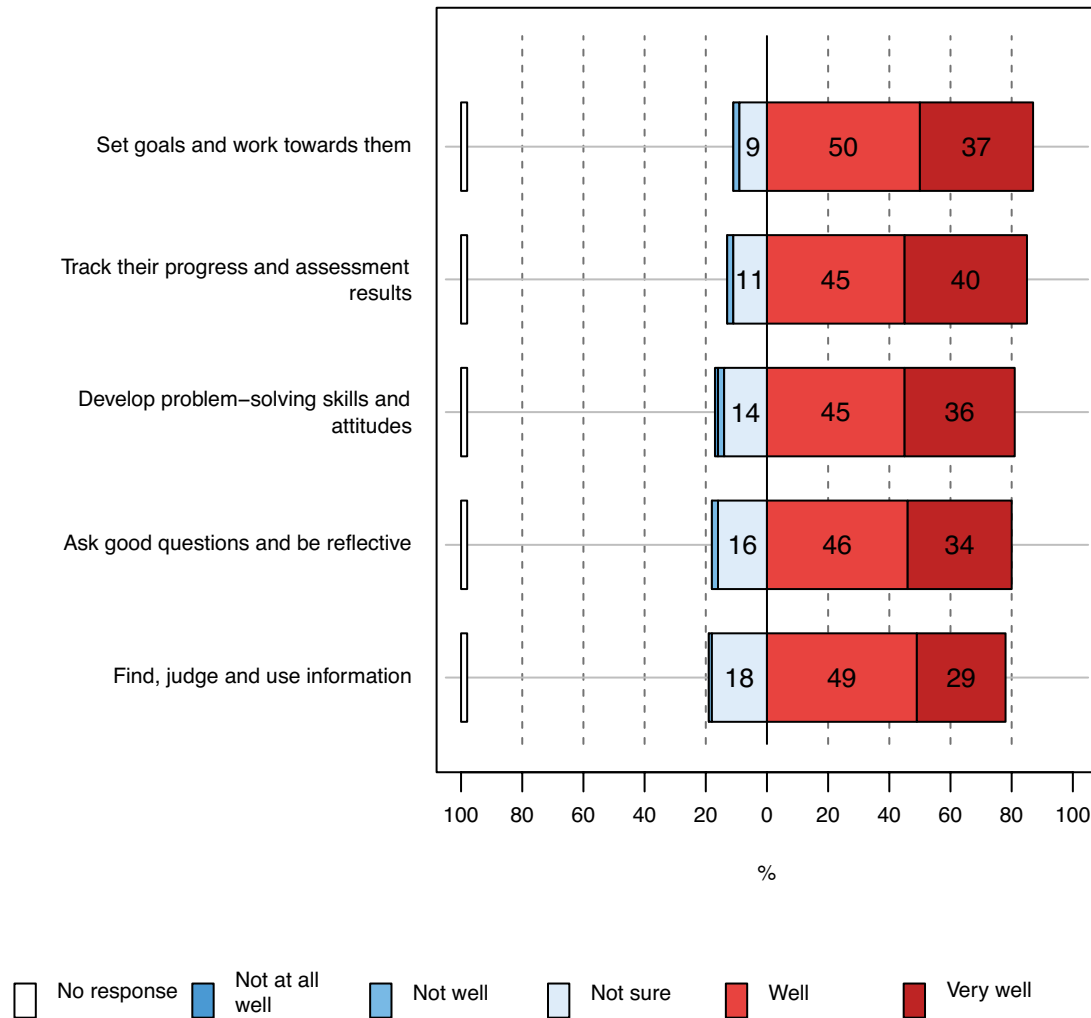
Over three-quarters of the parents and whānau thought that their child's school did 'well' or 'very well' in helping their child develop positive attitudes to learning, including aspects of confidence building and resilience (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop positive attitudes to learning (n = 504)



Similarly, over three-quarters thought that the school also developed their child's skills for learning, such as goal setting and tracking progress, as well as finding information and asking good questions (see Figure 5).

**FIGURE 5 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop skills for learning (n = 504)**



Variations related to school decile are described shortly in the section *Differences associated with school decile*.

### **Schools helped most students develop skills to manage their wellbeing**

Learning to manage your wellbeing is an aspect of Health and Physical Education learning, and includes the development of a range of skills and attitudes relating to students' social wellbeing, and their mental and emotional wellbeing. It also involves learning to make good decisions about areas that have an impact on the child—now and in the future.<sup>12</sup>

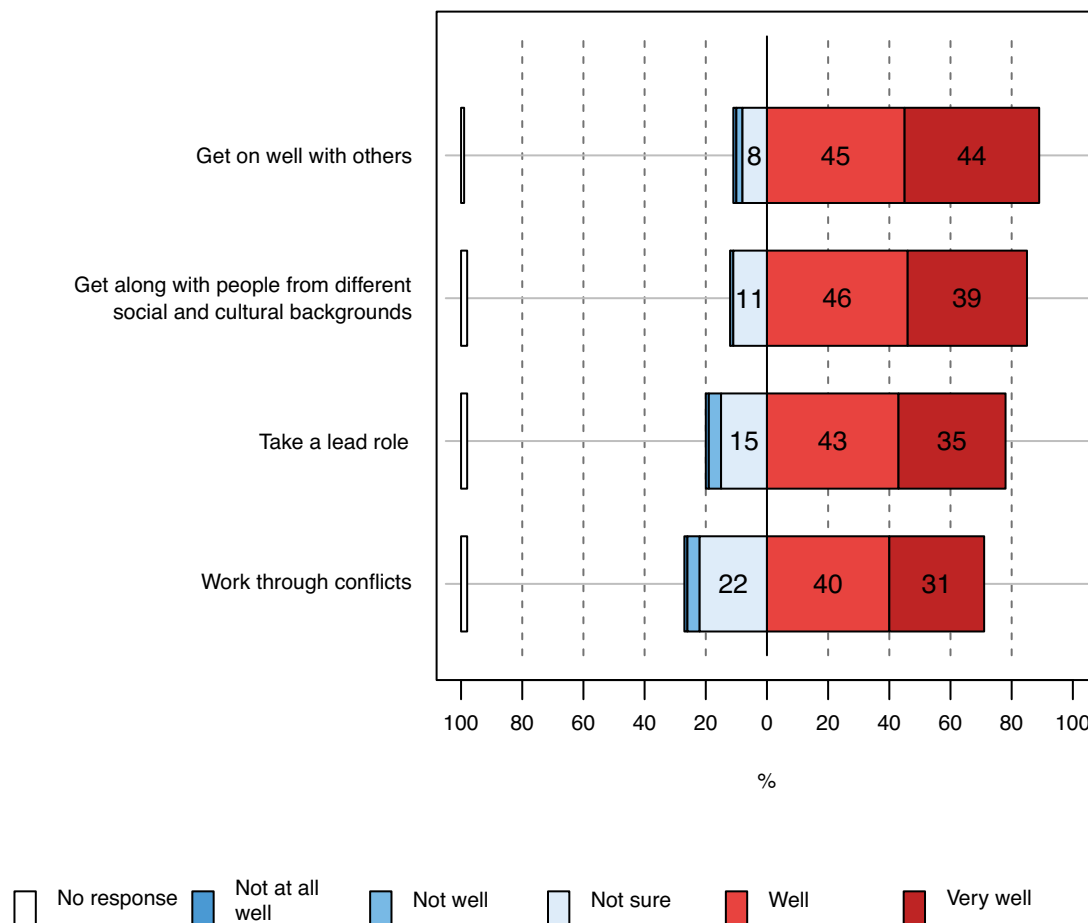
<sup>12</sup> For further detail, see Boyd et al. (2017). Op cit.



### 3. How did parents and whānau view their child's school and learning experiences?

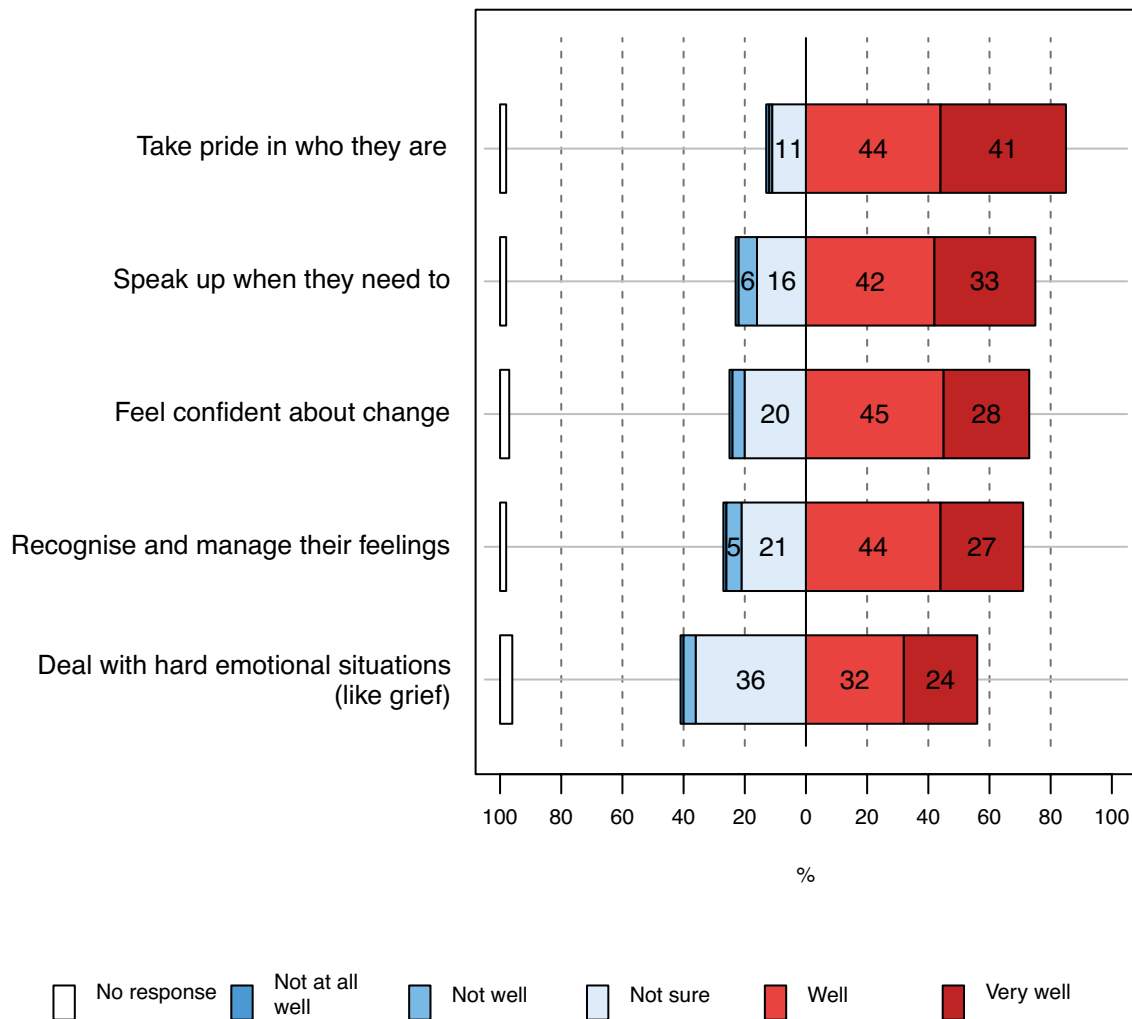
Figure 6 shows that a greater proportion of parents and whānau thought their child's school did very well at helping their child to get on well with others than to work through conflicts. Just over one-fifth were not sure their school helped their child work through conflicts.

**FIGURE 6 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop skills for managing their social wellbeing (n = 504)**



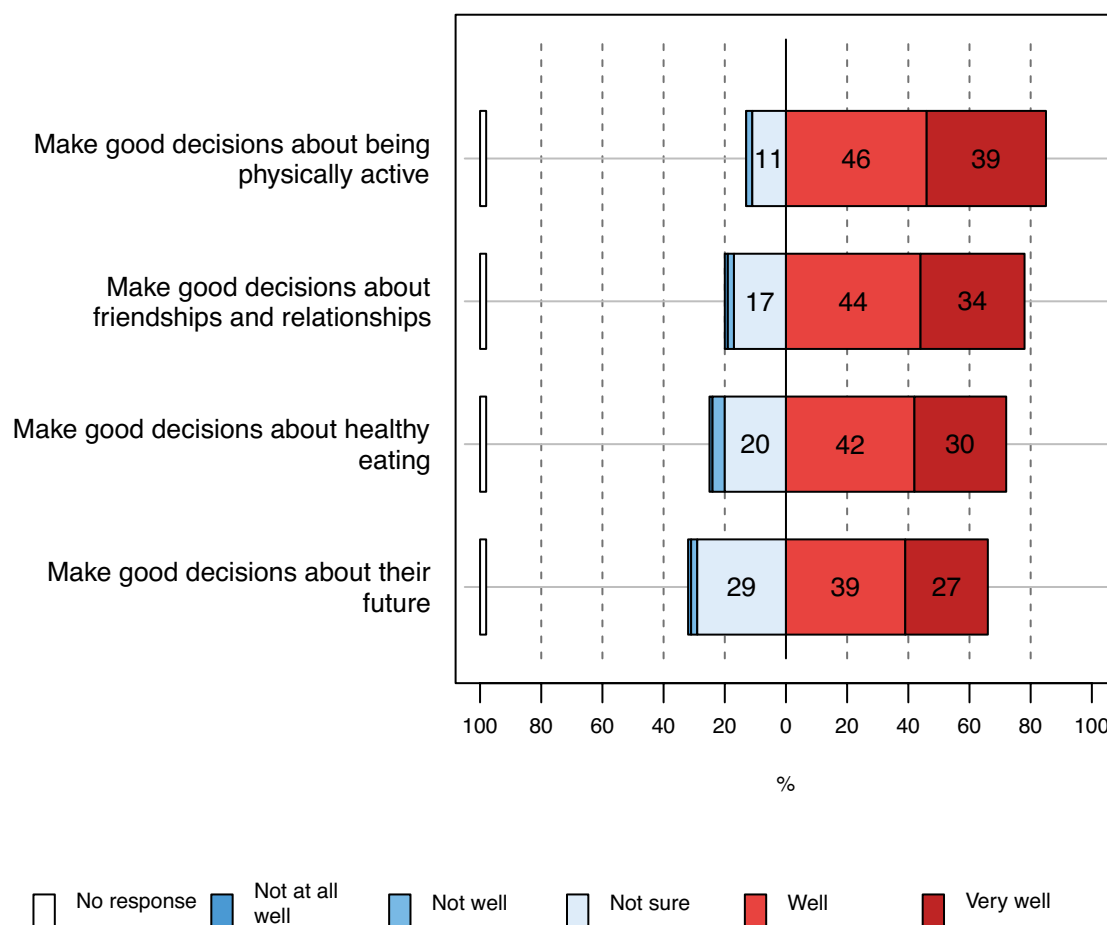
Slightly fewer parents and whānau were positive about how well their school helps their child develop self-confidence in communication and self-management skills, perhaps because it may be particularly difficult for parents and whānau to actually know whether these skills are being learnt at school. Figure 7 shows at least one-fifth of parents and whānau were unsure the school helped their child to: deal with hard emotional situations, such as grief; recognise and manage their feelings; or feel confident about change.

**FIGURE 7 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child develop skills for managing their mental and emotional wellbeing (n = 504)**



At least 70% of parents and whānau indicated their school did 'well' or 'very well' at helping their child make good decisions (see Figure 8), particularly about areas that were likely to have an immediate (as well as long-term) impact on their child. Twenty-nine percent of parents and whānau were unsure how well the school helped their child make good decisions about their future.

FIGURE 8 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helps their child make good decisions (*n* = 504)



### Differences associated with school decile

Across the parent and whānau views shown in Figures 4–8, there were no consistent response patterns associated with school decile. There were, however, some significant differences related to particular items.

Parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2 school were the most likely to say their child's school did very well at helping their child:

- set goals and work towards them (54%)
- track their progress and assessment results (53%)
- get along with people from different social and cultural backgrounds (53%).

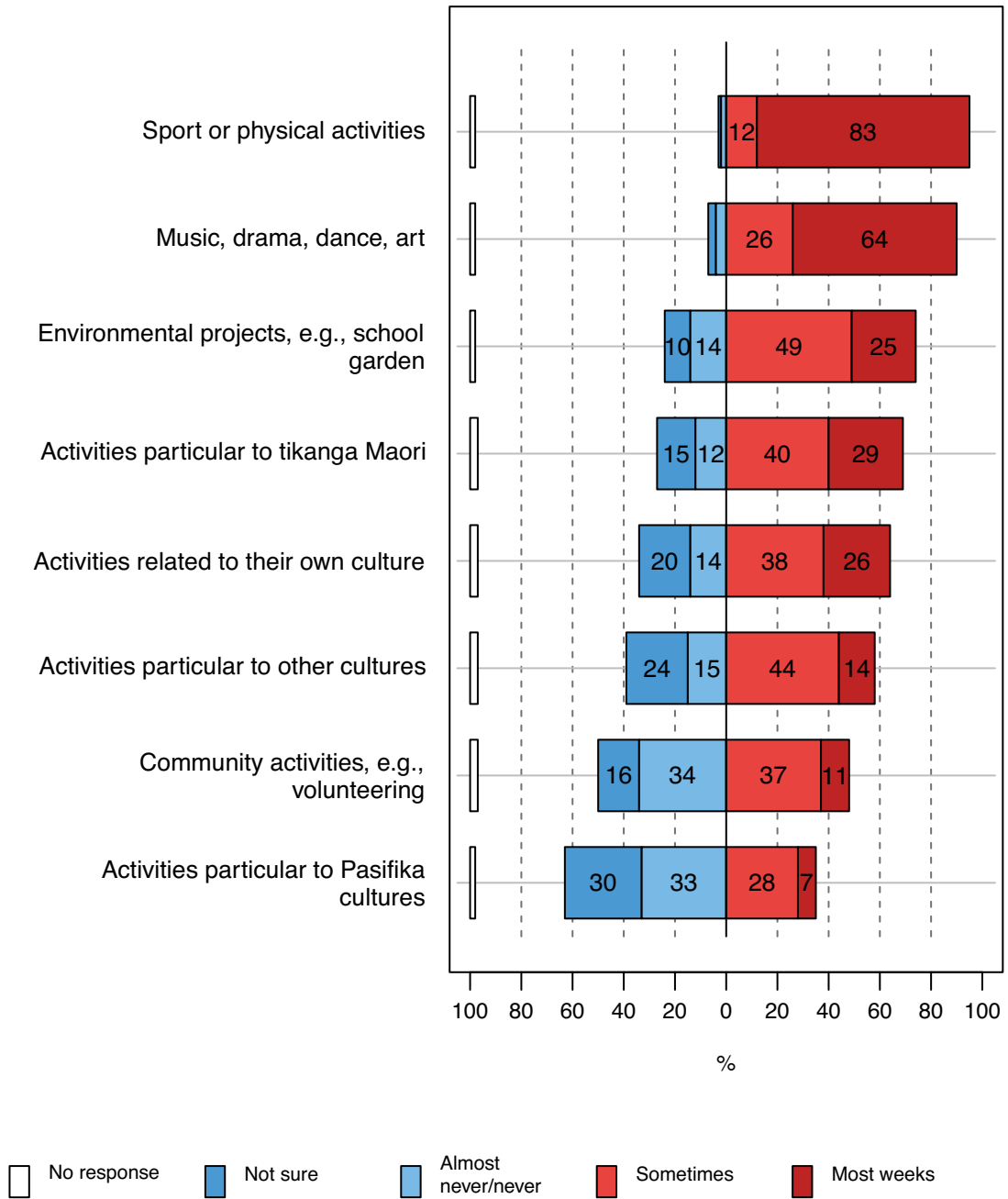
Those with a child at a decile 9–10 school were the most likely to say their child's school did very well at helping their child:

- take a lead role (46%)
- find, judge, and use information (38%).

### Children participated in a range of school and class activities

Children were seen by their parents and whānau to take part in a wide range of school or class activities. In Figure 9, sport tops the list of the activities that children at primary and intermediate schools do most weeks, followed by the arts. At least a quarter of parents and whānau reported their child took part most weeks in environmental projects or activities particular to tikanga Māori or to their own culture. Less common were activities related to other cultures, particularly Pasifika, and community activities.

FIGURE 9 Parent and whānau reports of their child's participation in school and class activities (n = 504)



Parents and whānau whose child attended a decile 2 school were more likely to say that 'most weeks' their child took part in school or class activities:

- particular to tikanga Māori (47%)
- related to their own culture (39%)
- particular to other cultures (29%)
- in the community, such as volunteering (23%)
- particular to Pasifika cultures (23%).

They were also least likely to say that 'most weeks' their child took part in sport or physical activities (67%, compared with 75% for decile 3–4, and 88% for decile 5 and 7–10 schools).

## Learning with digital technology is important to most parents and whānau

Given the increased emphasis on digital technology in schools, we thought it useful to ask parents and whānau how important it was that their child used it as part of their learning.

Many parents and whānau viewed their child using digital technology as part of their learning at school as of high (36%) or medium (46%) importance. Most parents and whānau (88%) also wrote a comment. Nearly half of all parents and whānau (46%) noted that everyone needed to use digital technology. Almost as many (44%) said they thought it was important to balance digital technology and other learning. Wider benefits of developing digital technology skills were referred to by 37% of parents and whānau. A small proportion of parents and whānau (7%) voiced concerns about digital technology learning for their child. These included concerns about possible health effects, a reduced focus on basic skills, and a lack of experiences with hands-on equipment.

Most of the 15% of parents and whānau who thought that digital learning at school was of low importance noted that their child already used digital devices at home or outside school.

The following sample of quotes shows the range of parent and whānau views about digital technology in their child's education:<sup>13</sup>

To keep up with the fast paced environment we live in, to educate ourselves with the help of learning platforms available to be on par with the international standard.

Given my child's level of Year 2 it is not important. He uses technology at home and is comfortable/familiar with many devices already. Feel it more important at this age to learn more 'traditional' skills of reading, writing, handwriting, and maths. In the technological age we live in, children pick up technology quickly anyway. More relevant for older children (Years 6 and above) I feel.

I think it is still very important for children to learn to use a pen and paper for writing and not simply rely on pushing a button. I also do not think it is healthy for children to spend lots of time looking at screens (i.e., it is bad for their necks, eyes, and can be quite addictive).

I think having a solid understanding of digital technology is important, as it is an important and helpful tool for learning and doing research at school. I do however think technology can be isolating and encourages kids to do things by themselves rather than interacting with each other.

---

<sup>13</sup> A more detailed discussion about digital technology in schools, including the views of parents, teachers, and principals can be found in: Bolstad, R. (2017). *Digital technologies for learning: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/digital-technologies-learning-national-survey](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/digital-technologies-learning-national-survey)

## Cost was sometimes a barrier for small numbers of children

In the 2016 survey, we asked parents and whānau whether their child had been unable to take part in specific school activities because of their cost. Cost was not an issue for 83% of the parents and whānau. However, cost meant a child was unable to take part in using a digital device (5% of parents and whānau), doing schoolwork at home that they need the internet for (4%), taking part in sport (4%), a class trip (3%), camp (3%), or a cultural activity (3%). Other than the use of a digital device, proportions were highest for parents and whānau whose child was at a decile 2 school (from 9%–11%).

Some parents and whānau commented on some of their experiences related to the cost of activities:

No, but activities are quite expensive and there are a lot of activities throughout the school year. If we had more than one child attending it would be a big cost.

All payments are made out of school account that I pay into weekly.

There is a lot of pressure to do all the activities and if you don't pay your child is left at school while the rest of the children enjoy their day away from the classroom.

Unable to attend really good camps because other parents had not paid and therefore not enough students had paid to go (school had offered fundraising activities and paying off option). It's not the school's fault.

## 4.

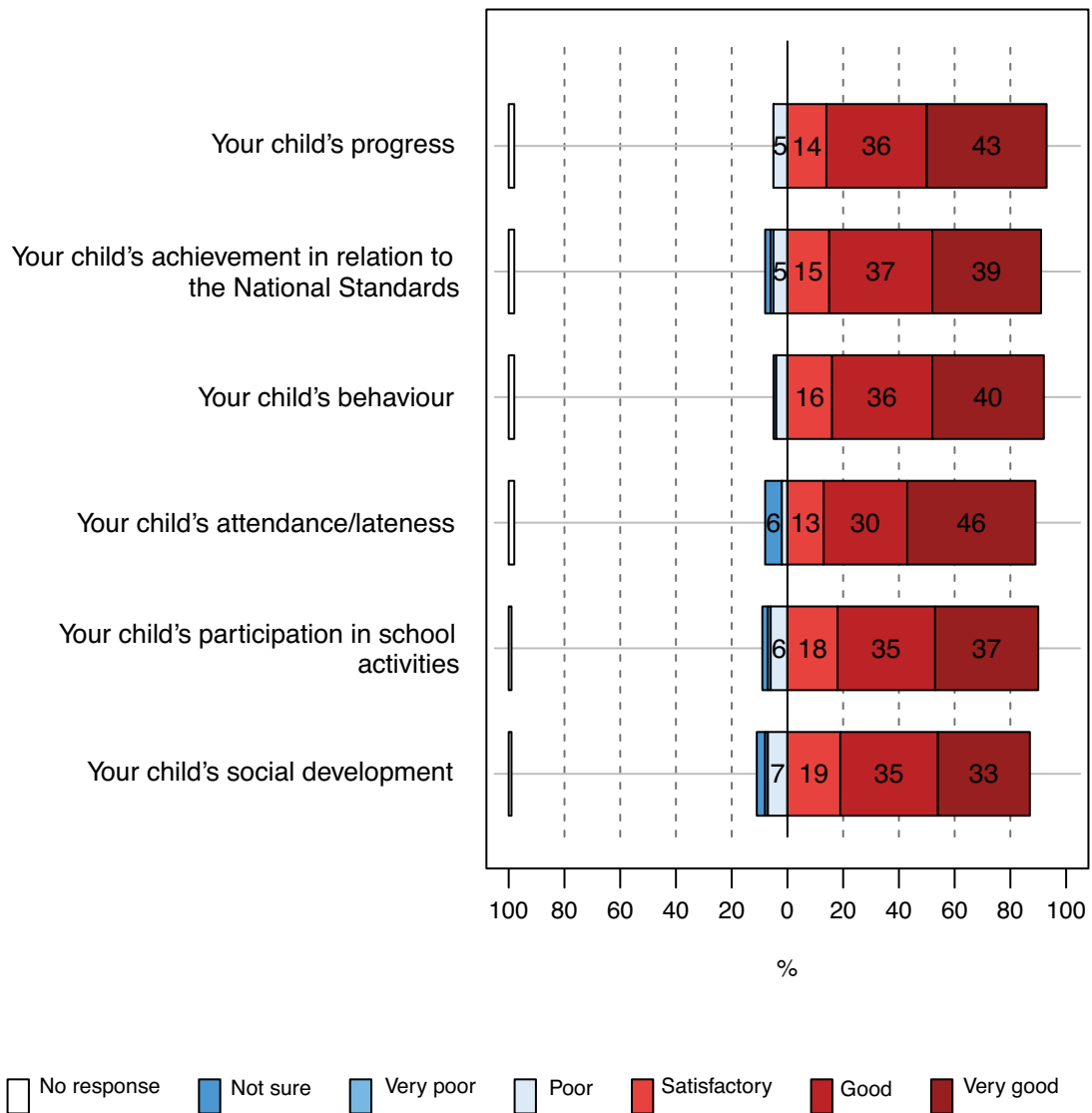
# Information for parents and whānau

Parent and whānau ability to support their child's learning is related to the information they have about their child's time at school and their performance. Information about the school and its activities is also important to parent and whānau participation in the school community, and contributing to its wellbeing. Information about education helps parents and whānau understand the broader context that their child learns in, and what can be expected of schools.

### **Quality and clarity of information about their child**

Over 75% of parents and whānau thought the quality of information they received from school about their child's progress, achievement, behaviour, and attendance/lateness was good or very good. Fewer than 9% of parents and whānau indicated any of the information shown in Figure 10 was of a poor or very poor quality.

FIGURE 10 Parent and whānau views of the quality of information they get from their child's school (n = 504)



Seventy-six percent of all parents and whānau responding to the survey rated the information they received about their child's achievement in relation to National Standards as 'good' or 'very good'. A greater proportion (85%) of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 9 or 10 school rated this information as 'good' or 'very good', compared with around 72% for parents and whānau of children in decile 2–8 schools.

Table 4 shows the things parents and whānau reported receiving clear information about in the mid-year report or parent–teacher conference for their youngest child. Most parents and whānau indicated they had received clear information related to their child's learning, with smaller proportions getting clear information about their child's attitudes and behaviour at school, or their wellbeing.

In Table 4, the 2016 results are compared with those from 2013 and 2010. Since 2010, the proportions of parents and whānau who reported receiving clear information relating to National Standards have



increased.<sup>14</sup> Clear information relating to individual learning goals and what the school is doing to help their child achieve these were also reported by increased proportions of parents and whānau. In fact, for all items that were included in all three surveys, parent and whānau responses in 2016 were more positive about the information they received.

Overall, the general increases suggest a strengthening of reporting practices and perhaps greater engagement of parents and whānau in reporting processes. However, there was little change in the proportions of parents and whānau who said they received clear information about their child's progress in learning areas that were not included in National Standards: the arts, technology, science, and social sciences. This is consistent with the high proportion of teachers (69%) reporting that the National Standards had narrowed the curriculum they taught.<sup>15</sup>

TABLE 4 **Clear information parents and whānau received from the school in their child's mid-year report/parent-teacher conference**

Information	2010 (n = 550) %	2013 (n = 684) %	2016 (n = 504) %
Where they are in relation to the National Standards in <i>reading</i>	63	77	87
Where they are in relation to the National Standards in <i>writing</i>	52	66	86
Overall progress this year	72	74	85
Where they are in relation to the National Standards in <i>mathematics</i>	59	73	85
Learning goals for the rest of the year	50	48	75
Attitudes/behaviour at school	63	61	71
Helpful ideas for how I can support my child's learning	49	55	66
Their relationships with other children	*	*	59
What the school is doing to help my child achieve their learning goals	33	36	53
Overall wellbeing	*	*	53
How my child is working towards their key competency goals	*	33	52
Progress in health and physical education	*	22	33
The interests and abilities my child is developing through school activities such as sport or music	*	22	32
Assessment of my child's additional learning needs	*	*	28
Progress in the arts	*	23	22
Progress in technology	*	16	21
Progress in science	14	15	20
Progress in social sciences	*	18	15

\*Not asked

<sup>14</sup> Experiences of National Standards are discussed in greater detail in: Bonne, L. (2016). *National Standards in their seventh year*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-standards-their-seventh-year](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-standards-their-seventh-year)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

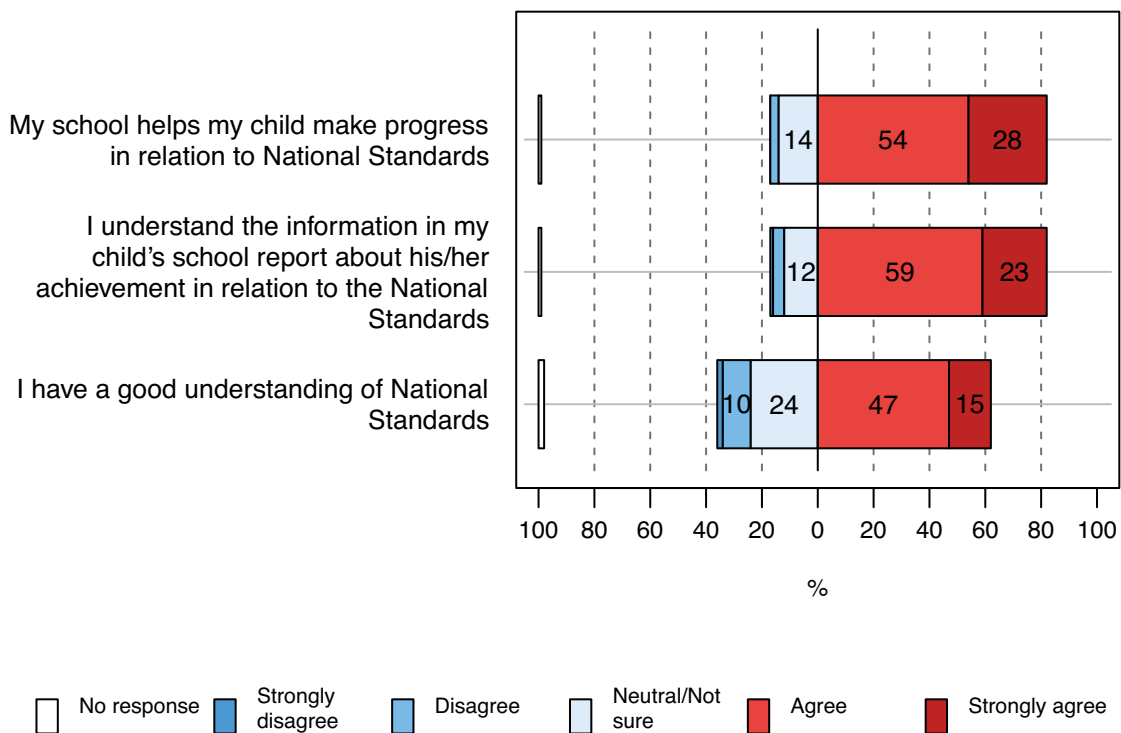
Parents and whānau whose child attended a decile 2 school were less likely than those whose child attended other schools to say they received clear information about:

- overall progress this year (75%)
- where they are in relation to the National Standards in *reading* (75%)
- where they are in relation to the National Standards in *writing* (75%)
- where they are in relation to the National Standards in *mathematics* (71%).

### Parent and whānau views of National Standards

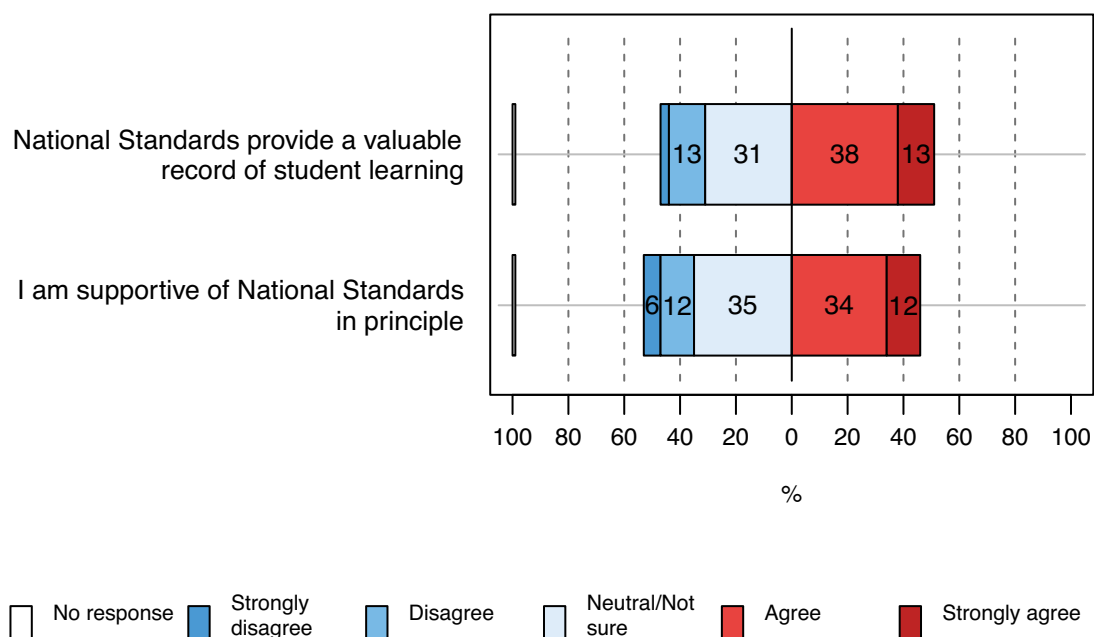
Figure 11 shows that most parents and whānau thought they understood the National Standards information in their child's school report, and thought that their child's school helped their child make progress in relation to National Standards.

**FIGURE 11 Parent and whānau views about National Standards (n = 504)**



The National Standards measures of student performance have been in place since 2010. When our survey was conducted in 2016, 46% of parents and whānau agreed or strongly agreed that they support National Standards in principle. About half (51%) thought National Standards provide a valuable record of learning (see Figure 12). Around one-third of parents and whānau gave 'neutral/not sure' responses to these statements. This is much the same as in 2013. However, more parents and whānau in 2016 saw the National Standards providing a valuable record of student learning (51%, compared with 43% in 2013), perhaps related to increases in parents and whānau finding that school reporting on the National Standards is clear.

FIGURE 12 Parent and whānau views about, and support of, National Standards (n = 504)



Just over one-quarter (27%) of parents and whānau wrote comments about National Standards. The main themes in their comments were concerns that National Standards do not recognise that children progress at different rates, or are not suited to students with additional learning needs. Parents and whānau were also concerned about negative effects of National Standards on students, such as the labelling of students whose achievement was below National Standards being demotivating and impacting students' self-esteem.<sup>16</sup> A similar concern was expressed by 63% of teachers who thought that anxiety about their performance in relation to the National Standards had negatively affected some students' learning.

### Online access to information about their child's schooling

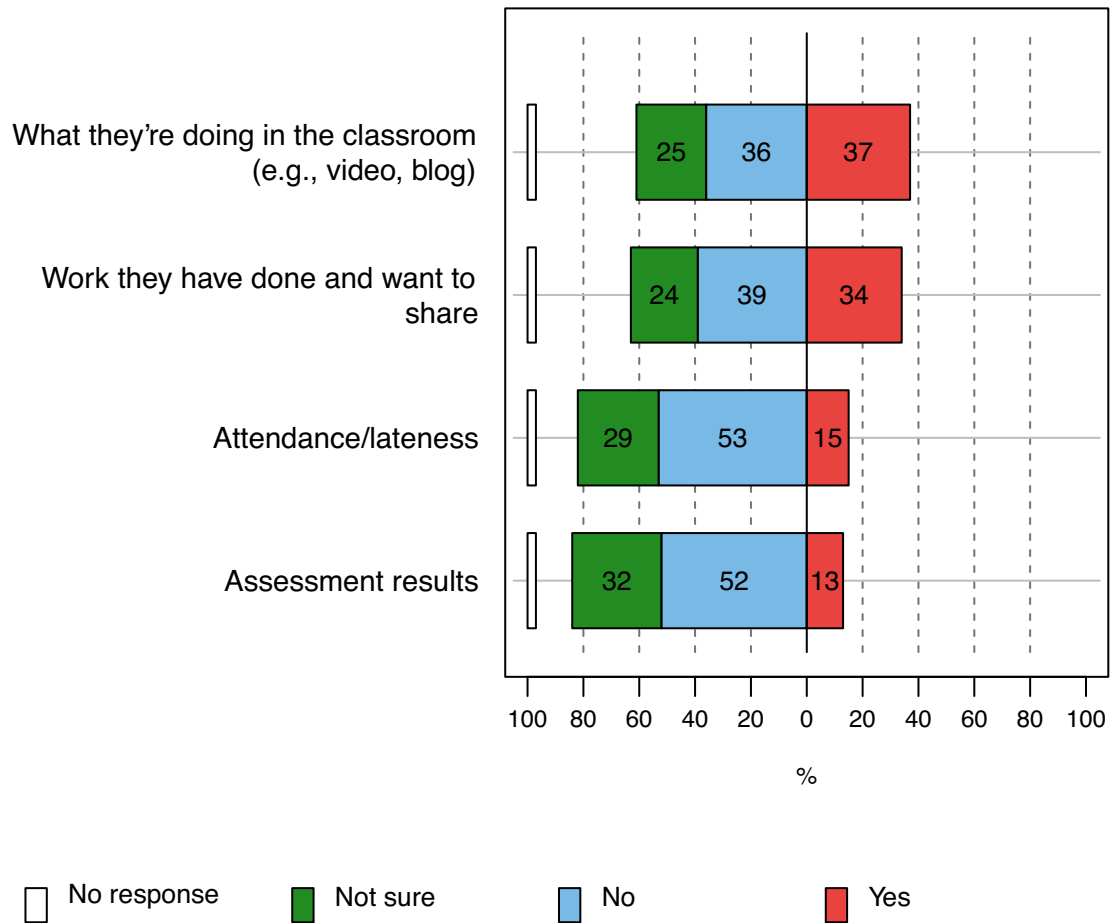
Many parents and whānau are now accessing their information about their child's schooling online—more about school events and trips than what was happening in the classroom.

Sixty percent of parents and whānau said they had online access to information about school events and trips, 21% did not, and 18% were unsure about this. Fewer than half of parents and whānau whose child attended a decile 2 school had online access to this information (46%, increasing to 79% of those with a child at a decile 9–10 school).

Figure 13 shows that just over a third of parents and whānau said they had online access to information about the sorts of things their child is doing in the classroom, or could see work that their child wants to share online. Fewer said they had online access to information about their child's attendance or lateness, or assessment results online.

<sup>16</sup> For more detail about parents' comments on National Standards, see pp. 31–32 of Bonne, L. (2016). *National Standards in their seventh year*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-standards-their-seventh-year](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-standards-their-seventh-year)

FIGURE 13 Online information parents and whānau can access about their child (n = 504)



Around one-quarter of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2 school could access online information about what students are doing in the classroom (27%, compared with 52% of those with a child at a decile 9–10 school).

The device that 59% of parents and whānau used for online access to information about their child's schooling and school events and trips was their computer/laptop at home. Fewer said they used a mobile phone (39%) or a computer/laptop at work (13%). The devices used by parents and whānau for online access to this information did not vary significantly with school decile.

### How parents and whānau accessed information about the school

Table 5 shows that more parents accessed up-to-date information about their child's school non-digitally than digitally. Many were getting their information from paper newsletters, similar to 2013. Around two-thirds were getting information from their child, and over one-third got information about the school from other parents and whānau.

Accessing up-to-date information about the school in each of the digital forms included was reported by fewer than half of the parents and whānau responding, with relatively low rates of access for media, or the school's ERO review and annual reports. The proportion of parents and whānau getting information via emailed newsletters had increased in 2016. Otherwise, there were only small changes to the picture in 2013.

TABLE 5 **How parents and whānau accessed information about the school: Non-digitally (shaded) and digitally, 2013 and 2016**

Information sources	2013	2016
	(n = 684) %	(n = 504) %
Paper newsletter	68	72
Their child	*	65
School's website	55	49
Email newsletter	33	42
Other parents and whānau	41	37
Class blog	13	13
Social media	*	11
School's latest ERO report	15	10
Local/community newspaper	12	9
School's annual report	9	5
Via cell phone texts or apps	*	4
'Find a School' website	1	4

\*Not asked

How parents and whānau accessed school-related information was associated with the school's decile. High decile schools were making more use of digital media. Eighty-three percent of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2–5 school got up-to-date information about the school from paper newsletters, compared with 57% of those with a child at a decile 7–10 school.

In contrast, 10% of those with a child at a decile 2 school got information from emailed newsletters, increasing to 91% of those associated with a decile 9–10 school. Likewise, parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2 school were less likely to get information from the school website (30%, compared with 63% for decile 9–10 schools), or class blog (5%, compared with 30% for decile 9–10 schools).

### **Did parents and whānau have all the information they wanted about their child's school?**

Twenty percent of parents and whānau indicated there was information about their child's school that they would like to have but did not already have. Some of this was related to students' learning. Eleven percent wanted to know more about what was taught at their child's school (its curriculum) and more about overall student achievement. The availability of extra support for learning was something 10% of parents and whānau wanted to know more about, and 6% wanted more information about te reo Māori learning options.

Some parents and whānau wanted more information about the school as an organisation: its use of funds (9%); board decisions (7%); school policies such as discipline (6%); the school's progress on its annual targets (6%); the school's vision and strategic plan (5%); or its values (3%). Seven percent wanted more information in general.

The majority (57%), however, wanted no additional information about the school, and 20% were unsure whether they did.

## Information about education in general

Apart from information parents and whānau received through the school, the most common sources of information about education in general were people they knew—friends, other parents, or family—followed by the internet, newspapers, and TV (see Table 6).

While the Ministry of Education and ERO continued to be used as information sources by around a fifth of the parents and whānau, and TV and radio use remained much the same, there were fewer parents and whānau using books and magazines to get information about education in general, and a decrease in those using internet searches and newspapers.

**TABLE 6 Parent and whānau sources of information about education in general (apart from their school), 2013 and 2016**

Information source	2013 ( <i>n</i> = 684) %	2016 ( <i>n</i> = 504) %
Friends	52	58
Other parents	53	52
Family	54	51
Internet searches	55	47
Newspapers	54	45
TV	46	44
Ministry of Education	20	22
Radio	22	21
Books	38	20
ERO	18	19
Magazines	16	8

Parents and whānau also got information about education from New Zealand School Trustees' 'Parent Place' (4%). A small group of parents and whānau (4%) worked in education themselves or knew others who did.

The only difference associated with decile here was that parents and whānau with a child at a school in the decile 2–4 range were more likely than others to get information from their family (60%, compared with 54% for decile 5, 40% for decile 7–8, and 47% for decile 9–10).

Overall, these figures show that in 2016 fewer parents and whānau were using some sources of education-related information, compared with 2013.

## 5.

# Parent and whānau interactions with their child's school

In this section we first report on parent and whānau participation in school activities. We then look at how parents and whānau perceive the role of the board of trustees, who are legally responsible for their school. Do they feel genuinely consulted, and feel they can have a say in areas of school life that concern them? Since 2016 was the year for triennial elections to school boards, did they vote, and what were their reasons for voting or not voting for those who would steer their school? Finally, what do parents and whānau see as the major issues facing their school, and what comments do they make about their child's schooling overall?

### Parent and whānau participation in school activities and events

Attending sport was a school activity 62% of the parents and whānau responding indicated that they had been involved in, a much higher proportion than in previous surveys (see Table 7). A similar proportion contributed to fundraising, with some increase since 2013. Around half of parents and whānau reported taking part in school trips, responding to school surveys (indicating school consultation), or attending school performances.

**TABLE 7 School activities in which parents and whānau had participated during the year**

School activity	2010 (n = 550) %	2013 (n = 684) %	2016 (n = 504) %
Attending sport	41	39	62
Fundraising	53	51	61
School trips	50	43	52
Responded to school survey(s)	48	46	52
Attending school plays/choir/orchestra, etc.	*	*	45
Coaching/helping with sports	16	18	23
Classroom help	16	15	17
PTA/school council/BOT	13	12	13
Attending Kapa Haka	*	*	10
Canteen/school lunches	8	*	8
Consultation	*	12	8
Coaching/helping with school plays/choir/orchestra, etc.	*	*	6
Building repairs and maintenance	4	3	5

\*Not asked

Very few parents and whānau (<3%) indicated they had coached or helped with Kapa Haka, helped in the library, attended, coached, or helped with a Polynesian group, or supported student events such as assembly or a school disco.

Parents and whānau whose child attended a decile 9–10 school were more likely to take part in a number of school activities. For example, higher proportions of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 9–10 school had taken part in:

- fundraising (81%, compared with around 62% for deciles 3–8, and 37% for decile 2 schools)
- attending sports (80%, compared with 61% for decile 3–8 schools, and 46% for decile 2 schools)
- classroom help (32%, compared with 23% for decile 7–8, 7% for decile 3–5, and 15% for decile 2 schools).

### **Involvement in school consultation**

Just over half (54%) of parents and whānau thought their school genuinely consults with them about new directions or issues, and a quarter were unsure. One-fifth of parents and whānau thought the school did not genuinely consult them about these things. This is a similar pattern to 2013.

For 18% of parents and whānau, there were areas of school life in which they wanted to have a say and felt they could not, and a further 15% were unsure about this. These areas included: how children learn and what they learn, student behaviour, the school's homework policy, and the child's class/teacher (9%–11% each); how the board made funding decisions, or the school's policy on uniforms/dress (7% each); how students' cultural identity is supported (5%); or school timetabling (2%).



### Parent and whānau views of the board's role

Seventy-nine percent of parents and whānau thought a key aspect of the board of trustees' role was providing strategic direction for the school. Fewer thought a key aspect was representing parents and whānau in the school (62%) or supporting the principal (57%). Overseeing the school's finances was seen as a key element of the board's role by just under half of parents and whānau. Employing the principal was selected by just under a quarter of parents and whānau (23%) as a key aspect of their board's role. Few parents and whānau thought their boards acted as an agent of government (12%).

Forty-one percent of parents and whānau felt they had enough contact with their school's trustees, with 28% unsure. A further 28% felt they did not have enough contact with trustees. This is a pattern we have seen in national surveys since the 1990s. Earlier comments indicated that some parents and whānau who felt they did not have enough contact with their school's trustees saw this as due to their own lack of time.

### Participation in board of trustees elections

Triennial elections for boards of trustees were held in June 2016, and parents and whānau had the opportunity to vote in their school's board of trustee elections, 2 or 3 months prior to completing this survey. Forty-four percent of parents and whānau responding had voted in these elections, and 46% had not voted. About 10% either indicated they were unsure they had voted or did not answer this question.

Reasons for not voting were mainly because all the candidates seemed good, or that the parent did not get around to it.<sup>17</sup> Nine percent of parents and whānau were from schools that did not hold an election.

### No single major issue facing schools, from parent and whānau perspectives

Parent and whānau views of the major issues facing their child's school in 2013 and 2016 are summarised in Table 8. In 2016, less than one-fifth of parents and whānau identified any single issue. The most noticeable difference compared with the 2013 survey responses was in the proportion of parents and whānau who thought funding was one of the major issues facing their child's school (17% in 2016, compared with 39% in 2013), although it was still in the top three issues identified by parents and whānau (as it is for trustees and principals). Otherwise, there were relatively small differences between parent views in 2016 and 2013.

---

<sup>17</sup> Further information about parent and whānau interaction with school boards can be found in Stevens, E., & Wylie, C. (2017). *The work of school boards—trustees' perspectives: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-survey-trustees-perspectives](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-survey-trustees-perspectives)

**TABLE 8 Major issues facing their schools, parent and whānau views, 2013 and 2016**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>2013 (n = 684) %</b>	<b>2016 (n = 504) %</b>
Staffing levels/class sizes†	24	18
Student behaviour	17	17
Funding	39	17
Attracting and/or keeping good teachers‡	*	13
Parent and whānau engagement	17	11
Student achievement levels	12	11
Property maintenance or development	15	9
Achievement of students with additional (special) learning needs	8	9
Motivating students	13	9
Too much being asked of schools	12	9
Good quality professional learning and development	*	7
Cost of maintenance and replacement of digital technology	*	7
Māori student achievement	7	7
Providing a balanced programme	12	6
Principal's leadership	8	6
Adequacy of digital technology and internet access	10	5
Some staff resistant to change	7	5
Too much assessment	*	4
Responding to cultural diversity	7	4
Declining school roll	8	4
Pasifika student achievement	4	3
Partnerships with iwi and hapū	*	3
Joining a Community of Learning	*	2
Dealing with inappropriate use of technology (e.g., cell phones, social networking sites)	*	2

† In 2013, the item was 'large class sizes'.

‡ In 2013, these items were asked separately; 28% of parents indicated 'keeping good teachers' and 11% thought 'keeping good teachers' were major issues.

\* Not asked

## Parent and whānau comments about their child's schooling

Parents and whānau were invited to make a comment about their youngest child's schooling and 30% ( $n = 151$ ) did so. Almost two-thirds of the comments expressed a positive experience:

I have watched my daughter's confidence in herself soar, due to teachers encouraging her in areas of singing/arts/drama. She is a very sensitive child and does her best to do well at school. But her love is not academic, her love is for the Arts. Thanks to the teachers supporting my child in this area, she has blossomed in her learning and now enjoys the academic side of things. I could not have asked for more from her school and I appreciate the time and effort each staff member has made to encourage her as an individual.

We love [School x]. Our youngest boy at school can be a handful at times but his teacher is amazing. He is another kid when she is around. He has improved in his reading, maths and writing. Very happy with the choice in schools.

I can't rate this school high enough. The principal has developed and fostered a sense of pride in [this school]. I can't wait for my year 4 daughter to attend. All the teachers seem to have bought into principal's belief. My son has absolutely flourished at [this school].

Seven percent of all parents and whānau ( $n = 35$ ) voiced concern that students might not be getting what they need from school:

We feel there is a lack of help for those children who are below average in a subject but not struggling enough for remedial help, e.g., reading recovery. We also feel there should be a programme for maths recovery.

I wish she had opportunities to learn music, singing and other arts. I would also like to see all the children becoming more involved in garden and other outdoor activities which provide 'real life' learning opportunities (not just sports). I would like to see Subway and junk food taken off the school lunch options and proper healthy eating promoted. Children should also learn more about cooking real food.

Of particular concern is cutting Teacher Aide hours; this has direct impact on achievement, particularly those students who need additional support. A flow on from this is disruptive behaviour in classroom, and as our roll continues to grow exponentially it will only get worse.

A few parents and whānau (5%,  $n = 25$ ) offered suggestions for improving school or education more generally:

Would like to see more of an 'open door policy' to classrooms (more like it is in early childhood centres).

All schools need to change how they teach. All learning is important, however schools are not doing enough to reach all our children and engage all our children. Schools need less focus on National Standards and more on the wellbeing of our children.

I don't believe children should be starting school at 5. I think if they do start at 5 it should be more holistic. I believe that a lot of a child's creativity is lost once they start school.

The following themes were identified in comments made by 3% of parents and whānau:

- Concerns about funding:

The school is under-funded and under-supported for the needs of complex children. Staff do not have necessary training. Professional development is minimal. Children with special needs have not been considered a worthwhile investment to this point.

One thing that has really raised my interest this year is the amount of money we are asked for on a weekly basis for trips/performances/fundraising, in addition to the school donation. I feel there is not much choice in the matter of whether we want our child to participate. I believe \$25 for a class trip for one child, then \$10 for another, then \$5 to watch a play at school (within a fortnight) is over the top.

Would love to have enough funding for an extra remedial reading teacher so that children can get extra tutoring in junior to senior years. Would save thousands of \$\$\$ [and] pay dividends in the end.

- Concerns about teachers:

There are some teachers that are dreaded by pupils and parents but there seems to be no performance appraisal of teachers or no input sourced from parents. Why can a poorly regarded teacher continue as they do without any consequence or improvement? Every other form of employment does not stand for poor performance. Some teachers have obvious favourites [and] not all children are treated equal. It comes down to who your parents are.

Am concerned that some teachers have a bias against boys and against Polynesian students even though so much is done at senior leadership level to be culturally sensitive.

Not 100% confident in teaching ability of his teacher. Appears to not cope well with challenging behaviour.

The majority of the issues I have with the school are due to my child's teacher refusing to engage with us (her parents), or keep us properly appraised. Refusal to address our concerns, or to believe our child's diagnosis of ASD and ADHD. Treats us as if we are not worth her time.

- Negative experiences of their child's school:

Several times my wife and I have been into the school and been treated rudely by the two office ladies. They have proven to be rude, blunt and unfriendly which is not a good look for the school.

Kids of parents [on] BOT always seem to have preferential treatment; bullying isn't addressed when it involves those kids.

The behaviour and language used in this school is the worst I have heard and seen. My child has been punched by other students, spat on and had water thrown on ... Students push and shove when I take my child home at the bell. They swear like I have never heard before and physically abuse students. I have seen this occur and observed teachers watching and in earshot and they have done nothing. Principal is not effective.

## 6.

# Discussion

In 2016, there was a generally positive picture from parents and whānau from this cross-section of primary and intermediate schools. Parents and whānau showed trust in schools and teachers, in the main. Most felt welcome at their child's school and comfortable talking with their child's teachers. Overall, their view was that the school was providing their child with experiences that helped them develop positive attitudes to learning, and the skills they needed for learning and managing their wellbeing. Compared with 2013, slightly more parents and whānau thought their child's school was respectful and inclusive of their child's cultural identity. For the majority of parents and whānau, their child attended their first choice of school, although this was less likely for parents and whānau whose child was at a decile 2 school.

Parents and whānau participated in the life of their child's school in various ways including attending sport, and helping with fundraising and school trips. Fewer than half had voted in the board of trustees election in 2016. Parents and whānau were more likely to see the board's role as providing strategic direction for the school than representing parents.

In 2016, many parents and whānau had online access to information about school events and trips. It was less common for parents and whānau to have online access to information about the sorts of things their child is doing in the classroom, or work that their child wants to share online. Although in 2016 slightly more parents and whānau got information about the school from emailed newsletters, a greater proportion still got this information from paper newsletters.

More parents and whānau were getting clear information about their child's achievement in terms of National Standards, but this increase did not extend to other learning areas of the curriculum. This echoes what many teachers and principals said about the narrowing effect of National Standards on the taught curriculum, and the associated challenges for also maintaining a focus on developing children's key competencies.

Looking at parent and whānau use of, and access to, digital channels for seeking and receiving information, a wider social digital divide related to income was evident. For example, the rate of parent and whānau online access to information about what their child is doing in the classroom and receiving school newsletters by email were lowest for those with a child at a decile 2 school. The Government has made a considerable investment to ensure schools have the infrastructure and connectivity that is needed to support learning with digital technologies. However, this does not address the unequal distribution of online access to information for parents and whānau, which sees some parents and whānau more enabled than others to be partners in their child's learning.

Most parents and whānau were getting the information they wanted about education in general from their personal connections—family, friends, and other parents and whānau. Getting information from family was particularly strong for parents and whānau with a child at a decile 2 school. Parent and whānau responses to questions about the sources of education information they used suggested that, overall, parents were seeking out information from fewer sources, compared with 2013.

