



Report prepared for London Councils

Parental Views on Education

September 2015

LONDON
COUNCILS

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Executive summary

- 1.1.1 This report presents the findings of a London Councils commissioned project to investigate parents' views on accountability in education services. This is the third wave of this research study, and findings are compared throughout the report to results from the first and second waves of this research, which were conducted in September 2013 and August 2014.
- 1.1.2 The total sample size of this study was 1,002 parents of children aged 4-16 living in Greater London and fieldwork was undertaken between 21st August and 7th September 2015. The data has been weighted to be representative of the London population by gender, ethnicity, social grade and inner and outer London location.
- 1.1.3 One-in-four parents (25%) rank the ethos or feel of a school as the number one most influential factor for them in choosing their child's preferred school. Overall, this factor is ranked higher than any other.
- 1.1.4 Nearly three quarters (71%) of London parents feel that producing well rounded young people is one of the most important skills and attributes for our education system to focus on. This factor is selected more often than any other.
- 1.1.5 Secondly, 63% of parents state that academic achievement relative to a students' own ability is a highly important attribute for the education system to focus on, showing the importance parents place on the education system supporting children and young people to fulfil their potential.
- 1.1.6 The majority of parents (74%) correctly identify that the Local Borough Council has the power to influence or intervene with maintained schools if they are underperforming. This was on par with the proportion of parents who identified this in the 2013 and 2014 surveys.
- 1.1.7 A third believe Local Borough Councils have the power to influence/ intervene with underperforming Academies (33%), three out of ten a Free schools (31%) and 10 per cent a fee paying school.

- 1.1.8 As found in the 2013 and 2014 surveys, there remains a degree of confusion from parents of children in Academies and Free schools as to the influence that local authorities have. In fact 38% of parents with a child in an Academy believe that local authorities have the power to influence or intervene if an Academy was underperforming. Furthermore 57% of parents with a child in a Free school believe that local authorities have the power to intervene in underperforming Free schools.
- 1.1.9 Those who thought local authorities had power over failing schools were then asked which, if any powers they felt they have:
- Six in ten (61%) report sending in inspectors;
 - Just over half (54%) report issuing warning notices;
 - Just over half (53%) report placing the school under special measures;
 - Four out of ten (41%) report restructuring schools;
 - Four out of ten (38%) shutting the school down;
 - A third (33%) report removing senior teaching staff;
 - Three out of ten (29%) restricting funding and;
 - A fifth (22%) restricting the number / quality of new teachers
- 1.1.10 After ascertaining parents' responses on powers they think local authorities have, a detailed description was provided of powers they actually have¹. Respondents were then asked over which schools, if any, they feel local authorities should have powers of influence and intervention. Again the majority (76%) state Maintained schools, seven out of ten (70%) state Free schools, seven out of ten Academies (67%) and four out of ten fee paying schools (37%). These findings are on par with those found in the 2013 and 2014 reports and show that a majority of parents in London still feel that local authorities should have powers of influence and intervention over Academies and Free schools.

¹ Local Authorities can issue warning notices to failing ****maintained**** schools in their area, upon which the school is obliged to act. Historically, this power has been rarely used as the council worked collaboratively with all schools in the area to improve performance; prior to the Education Act 2011 the local authority also had a duty to provide improvement services, this was

- 1.1.11 The vast majority (79%) of London parents feel it is important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local borough councils, and among those individuals two-in-five (41%) feel it is *very* important. While parents are significantly more likely to state this for Maintained schools, seven out of ten parents report that Free schools (71%) and Academies (70%) should have their spending scrutinised by local borough councils.
- 1.1.12 A new topic of research in this survey was to gain parents' initial views on Head Teacher Boards. The vast majority of parents (87%) expect that a Head teachers Board for London should include head teachers from London. Two thirds support this with certainty (65%), while 22% agree that head teachers from London should *probably* be included in a Head teachers Board for London.
- 1.1.13 A minority of London parents (17%) feel that head teachers from Maintained schools should be excluded from a Head teachers Board, with 7% stating they agree with certainty and 10% that they probably agree. Meanwhile, three-in-five (63%) do *not* believe this should be the case. Another fifth (20%) are unsure about whether or not head teachers from Maintained schools should be excluded from an HTB.
- 1.1.14 On the topic of school expansion, over three quarters of London parents agree (78%) that local borough councils should be able to influence schools in their area to find more places or expand, and a minority (12%) disagree. Furthermore, just over half (54%) of parents believe that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local borough council requires it. This figure represents a steady increase since 2013 when 44% agreed with this statement and 49% in 2014.
- 1.1.15 Six out of ten parents in London (59%), when asked at the end of the survey, think that the education system is under more central government control than they did previously. A further fifth (22%) thought the system was under more local control and 19% did not know.

removed by the 2011 Act. The 2011 Education Act also removed local authorities' power to issue these warning notices to ****Academies****. Now, if a council is concerned about the performance of an Academy the only formal action they can take is to write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask Government to intervene directly. The local authority is unable to intervene without Government support. Local Authorities do still, however, have the duty to hold all state funded schools in their area, including Academies, to account in terms of performance. They are obliged to take action where they are concerned about a school's performance but have no statutory powers over Academies.

- 1.1.16 Compared to the 2014 survey this is an eight percentage point increase in the proportion of parents who think the education system is under more central government control than previously.
- 1.1.17 Parents in London are for the first time in this series of research more likely to oppose the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools than support this policy. With 36% of parents in London opposing the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools and 29% in support – although there is not a majority view either way. A quarter (26%) neither support nor oppose, so there is still a large amount of uncertainty on the growth of Academies and Free schools.
- 1.1.18 This is a shift in opinion from the 2013 survey when 34% of parents in London were in support of the idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools and 29% opposed and a third (32%) were in the middle.

Key measures	2013	2014	2015	Change 2014/15 (+/-)
Standards, accountability and intervention				
An important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools – local borough council ²	82%	83%	74%	-9%
An important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools – Central Government ³	84%	84%	64%	-20%
An important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools - The school's board of Governors	90%	83%	82%	-1%
Schools over which the Local Authority has power of influence if underperforming - Maintained	73%	72%	74%	2%
Schools over which the Local Authority has power of influence if underperforming - Free school	37%	35%	31%	-4%
Schools over which the Local Authority has power of influence if underperforming - Academy	37%	34%	33%	-1%
Schools over which the Local Authority SHOULD have power of influence if underperforming - Maintained	77%	77%	76%	-1%
Schools over which the Local Authority SHOULD have power of influence if underperforming - Free school	62%	68%	70%	2%
Schools over which the Local Authority SHOULD have power of influence if underperforming - Academy	62%	63%	67%	4%
School places and admissions				
Proportion who think demand for school places is highest in London	95%	96%	98%	2%
Proportion who rate process of applying for their child to start primary or secondary school easy	78%	77%	79%	2%
Proportion who agree that local authorities should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand	76%	81%	78%	-3%
Funding and use of public funds				
Proportion who think local authorities should audit school spending – Academies	34%	34%	35%	1%
Proportion who think local authorities should audit school spending - Free schools	35%	34%	12%	-22%
Proportion who think local authorities should audit school spending - maintained schools	44%	41%	40%	-1%
Perspectives on the control of the education system in England				
The education system is under more central government control than previously	52%	51%	59%	8%
The education system is under more local control than	29%	27%	22%	-5%

² In 2013 and 2014 term Local Authority was used

³ In 2013 and 2014 term Department for Education was used

previously				
The idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools - support	34%	31%	29%	-2%
The idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools - oppose	29%	32%	36%	4%

Introduction

1 Background

- 1.1.1 This report presents the findings of a London Councils commissioned project to investigate parents' views on accountability in education services. This is the third wave of this research study, and findings are compared throughout the report to results from the first and second waves, which were conducted in September 2013 and September 2014.
- 1.1.2 There is widespread interest in the education system and each week there is a significant amount of opinion on the workings of the education system. This study has been running for three years and reflects the changing education policy in the line of questioning to parents in London.
- 1.1.3 The study tracks parental perceptions relating to complex and fundamental issues which are integral to the confidence parents have in the education system as a whole and how it can be relied on to produce the very best environment for the education of their children. These include complex and not often considered issues for parents which actually sit at the heart of how schools operate. For example: how schools are governed, who is ultimately accountable for performance (especially in the context of Academies and Free schools), what standards are expected, how parents can engage with the way that their child's school is run, standards in teaching, safety and welfare of pupils and how intervention into failing schools is managed.
- 1.1.4 The purpose of this research was to have an informed conversation with London parents through a survey and use this information to gain a richer understanding of their views. To deliver this objective a deliberative research approach was used where parents responding to the survey were presented with information throughout the survey that discussed some of the complex points of debate which relate to the various issues in the survey. The purpose of this information was to help parents understand some of the complexities and then gauge their opinion.
- 1.1.5 To ensure the information was not leading parents to a predetermined conclusion care was taken to present balanced information that outlined the pros and cons of the different policy positions with the goal of providing contextual information rather than leading respondents.

- 1.1.6 Throughout the report we have highlighted the information that respondents were shown so readers can see this information, in most cases this is presented in the footnotes.

2 Sample profile

- 2.1.1 The survey was carried out online and administered at random to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 450,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. Total sample size was 1,002 parents of children aged 5-16 living in Greater London and fieldwork was undertaken between 21st August and 7th September 2015.
- 2.1.2 The data has been weighted to be representative of the London population by gender, ethnicity, social grade and inner and outer London location. The table below provides a summary of the sample profile.

Gender	
Male	428
Female	574
Social grade ⁴	
AB	522
C1	229
C2	113
DE	122
Age	
18-34	126
35-44	415
45-54	393
55+	68
Ethnicity	
White	704
BME	223
Prefer not to say	75
Location	
Inner	324
Outer	678

⁴ As defined by the Market Research Society, social grades are a demographic classification based on the occupation of the head of the household. The categories are defined as follows: AB: upper middle and middle class; C1: lower middle class; C2 skilled working class; DE: working class and non-working class.

Total

1002

2.1.3 Where reference is made in the report to parents, this refers to parents in London. Further, where reference is made to the top five⁵ and bottom five⁶ performing London boroughs this refers to the average GCSE performance in terms of the percentage of pupils gain 5 or more GCSE's at A* to C.

⁵ Sutton, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Redbridge, Westminster (source: GCSE results by location of pupil residence, 2013/14)

⁶ Wandsworth, Newham, Waltham, Forest, Barking and Dagenham, Lewisham (source: GCSE results by location of pupil residence, 2013/14)

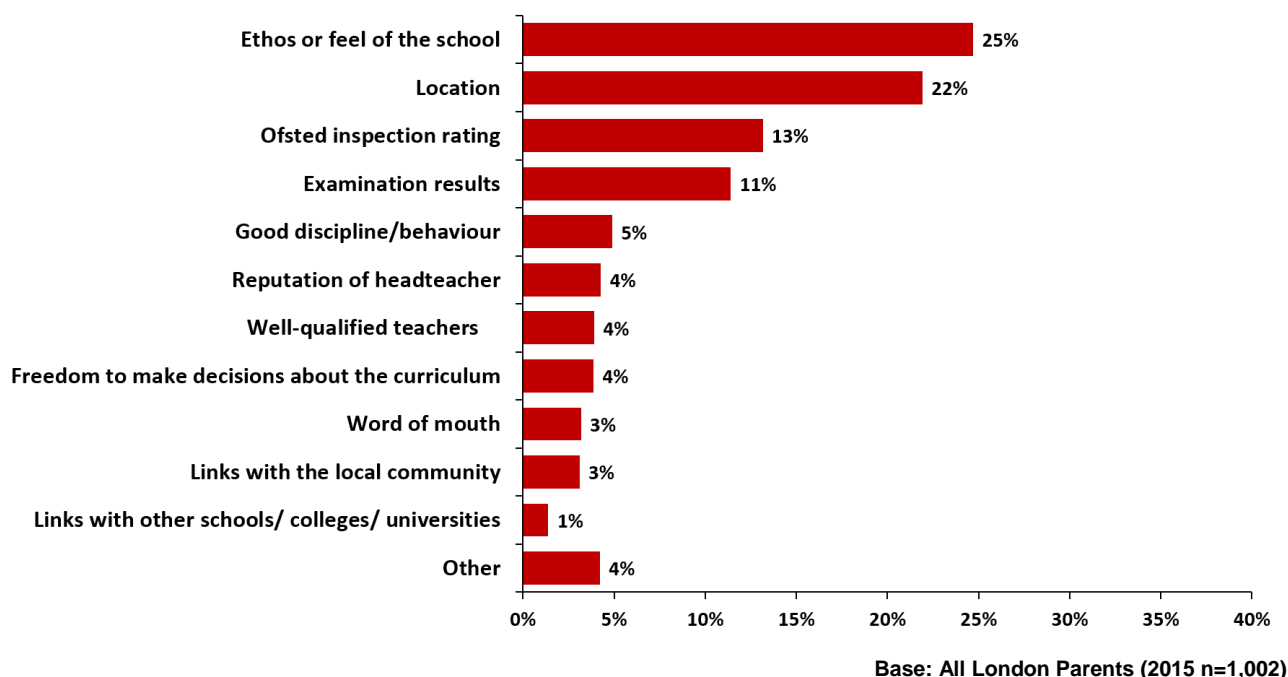
Section 1: School choice and education system priorities

The first section of this reports looks at the factors and attributes that are most important to parents for their child's school as well as for the education system overall.

3 Influential factors in choosing a school

- 3.1.1 One-in-four parents (25%) rank the ethos or feel of a school as the number one most influential factor for them in choosing their child's preferred school. Overall, this factor is ranked higher than any other.
- 3.1.2 Parents with a child at a Maintained school or Academy are somewhat more likely than those with a child at a Free school to rank the school's ethos/feel as number one (27% and 25% respectively, compared with 16%).
- 3.1.3 Following closely behind the ethos and feel, 22% of parents in London rank the location of a school as the most influential factor in choosing their child's preferred school.
- 3.1.4 Roughly one-in-ten parents rank the school's Ofsted inspection rating (13%) or examination results (11%) as the number one most important factor in their choice. Parents with a child in a primary/junior school are particularly likely to rank the Ofsted inspection rating as number one (16% compared with 9% of those with a child in a secondary school), while those with a child in a secondary school more often rank examination results as most important (15% compared with 9% of those with a child in a primary school).
- 3.1.5 Four per cent of London parents indicate that another factor is most influential for them in choosing their child's preferred school. When asked what this factor is a variety of responses were given, including wanting a specific type of school – often a religious school – or wanting a specialist course.

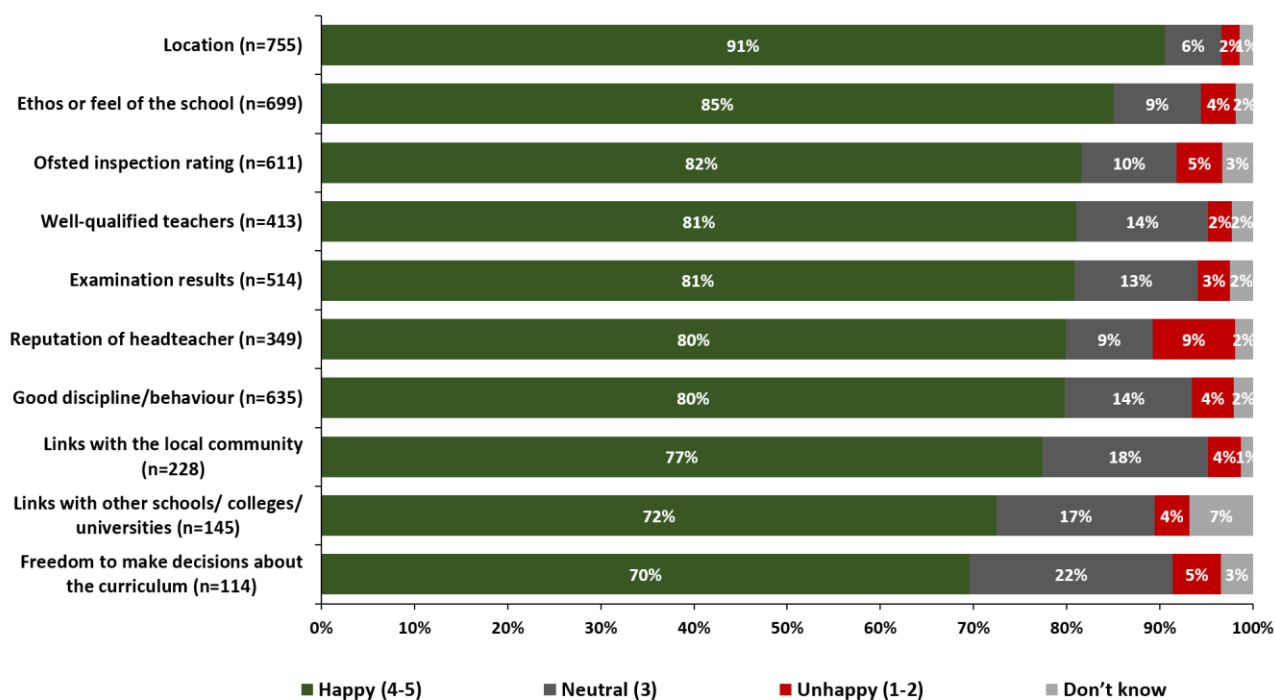
Figure 1: Ranking of most influential factors when choosing their child's preferred school (% ranked first)



4 Parents' happiness with their child's school

- 4.1.1 Among the London parents who gave the school's ethos or feel a ranking of importance between 1 and 5, the vast majority (85%) indicate they're happy with the extent to which their child's current school provides this. This is consistent across parents with children in all types and stages of school.
- 4.1.2 Location – the second most influential factor overall for parents in choosing their child's preferred school – is also linked with very high levels of happiness, with 91% indicating they're happy with the location of their child's school. Similarly, this perception is consistent across all types and stages of school.
- 4.1.3 For all factors, the vast majority of parents are happy with how their child's current school is performing. Overall, happiness levels are lowest for freedom to make decisions about the curriculum (70%) and highest for location (91%).

Figure 2: Extent of happiness about child's current school providing each of these factors (scale of 1-5)



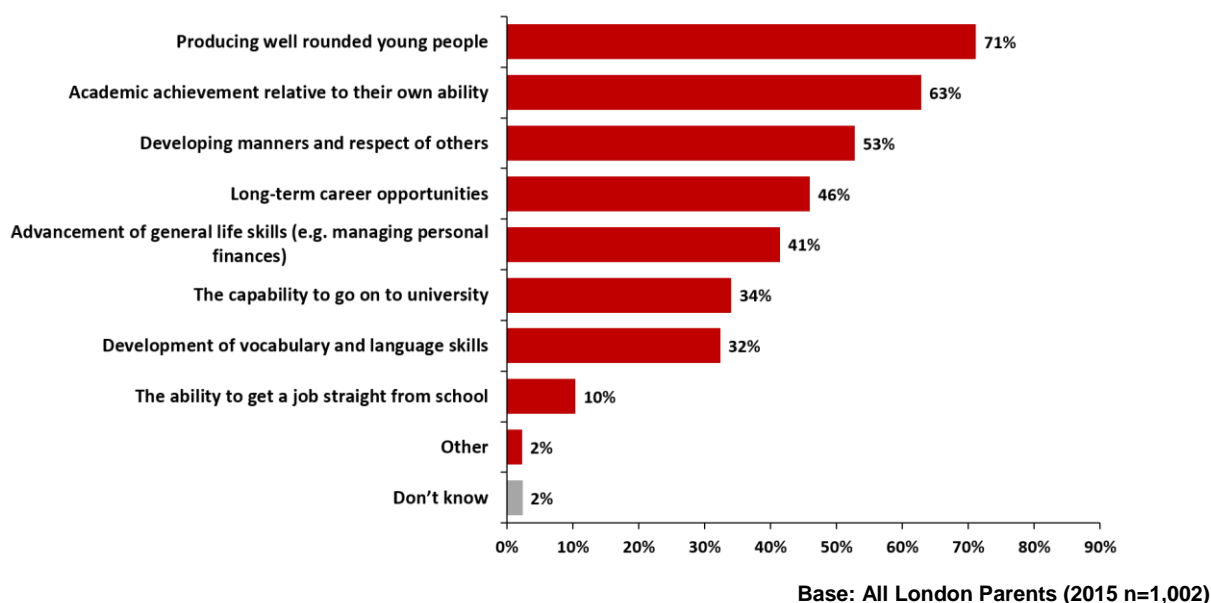
Base: All London Parents who ranked each factor 1 to 5 for importance (bases vary)

5 Important factors for the education system to focus on

- 5.1.1 Nearly three quarters (71%) of London parents feel that producing well rounded young people is one of the most important skills and attributes for our education system to focus on. This factor is selected more often than any other.
- 5.1.2 Secondly, 63% of parents state that academic achievement relative to a students' own ability is a highly important attribute for the education system to focus on, showing the importance parents place on the education system supporting children and young people to fulfil their potential.

- 5.1.3 For these two attributes given the highest priority overall – producing well rounded young people and having academic achievement be relative to students’ own ability – parents of children at Maintained schools and Academies are significantly more likely than those with children at Free schools to believe they are one of the most important. Three quarters of parents with children at Maintained schools (75%) and Academies (73%) feel that producing well rounded young people is one of the most important skills for our education system to focus on, compared with 54% of parents with children at Free schools. Similarly, seven out of ten parents with children at Maintained schools (69%) and Academies (70%) feel that students’ academic achievement relative to their own ability is highly important, compared with 45% of parents with children at Free schools.
- 5.1.4 Broad aptitudes such as developing manners and respect for others (53%), advancing general life skills like managing personal finances (41%), and developing vocabulary and language skills (32%) are also important to many parents as something the education system should focus on.
- 5.1.5 It is relatively less important to parents that the education system focuses on the ability for students to get a job straight from school (10%), with this be a broadly consistent view from those parents with a child in primary school (9%) and in secondary school (12%).

Figure 3: Most important skills and attributes for our education system to focus on (selection of top four)



Section 2: Standards, accountability and intervention

The second section of this reports looks at attainment across schools, levels of education standards and who should be accountable when schools are underperforming or failing.

6 Attainment

- 6.1.1 Nine out of ten London parents (87%) rank London as the top performing region on GCSE attainment. An increase from the 81% of parents who reported this in the 2014 survey. London was followed by the South East (66%) and South West (35%) as being perceived as the top performing regions. These three regions were identified as the top performing regions in the 2013 and 2014 studies.
- 6.1.2 At the other end of the spectrum the North East hits the bottom of the scale (60%) followed by the North West (46%) and Yorkshire and Humber North West at 42 per cent. Just 7 per cent of London parents did rank London as one of the three worst performing regions in terms of GCSE performance, much lower than the third (32%) of London parents who reported this in the 2014 survey. Again a consistent picture with parents' assessment of education performance by region from 2013 and 2014.

Figure 4: Summary of top/ bottom performing regions⁷

Top 3			
	2015	2014	2013
London	87%	81%	77%
South East	66%	63%	65%
South West	35%	36%	42%
Bottom 3			
	2015	2014	2013
North East	60%	46%	46%

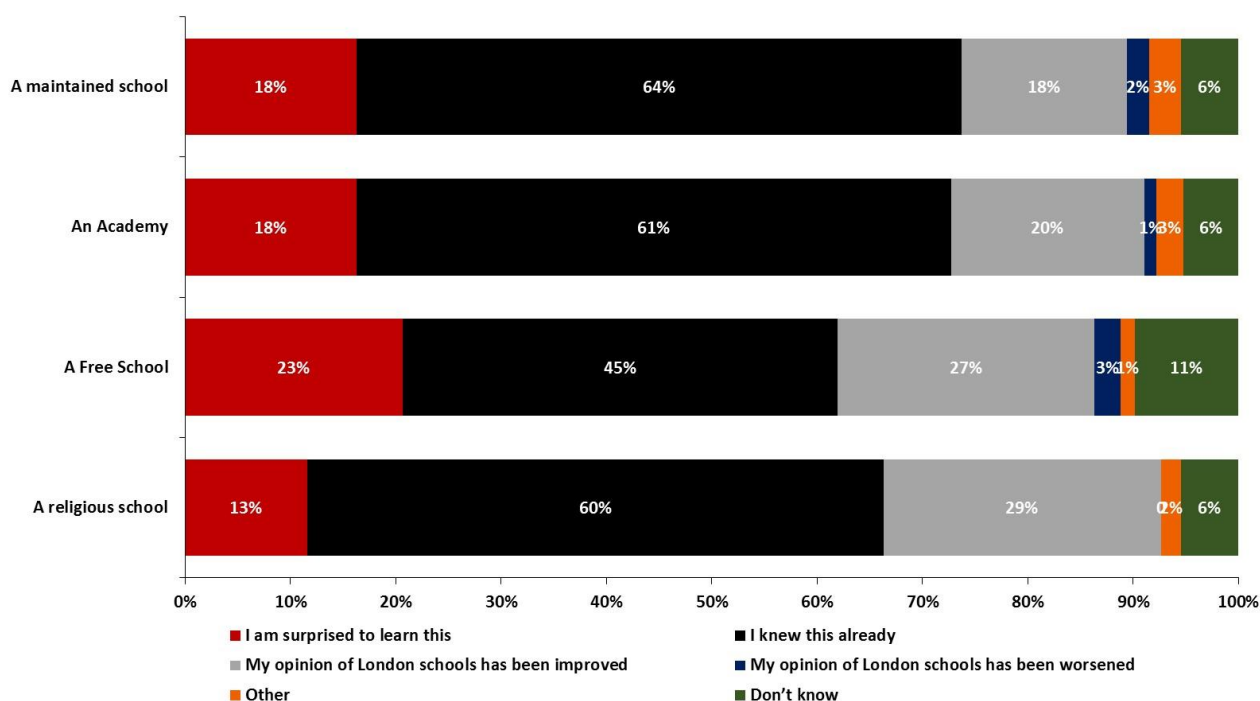
⁷ Schools are judged on, among other things, the proportion of students who achieve at least 5 GCSEs graded between A* and C. Thinking only about schools funded by the state (i.e. excluding fee paying schools), please choose the top/ bottom 3 performing regions in which you think their pupils achieved 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE last year?

North West	46%	36%	39%
Yorkshire & Humber	42%	39%	37%

Base: All London Parents (2015 n= 1,002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

6.1.3 London schools achieve higher results than the national average – once parents are provided with these facts⁸, six out of ten (60%) admitted to already knowing this, a fifth (20%) said it improved their opinion and a fifth (18%) were surprised to learn this.

Figure 5: Reactions to facts about the achievements of London schools



Base: All London Parents with a child in a maintained school (n=429), an Academy (n=327), a Free school (n=140) and a religious school (n=144)

⁸ London schools achieve higher results than the national average. In 2014, for example, 62 % of pupils in London achieved at least 5 GCSEs graded A* to C (including Maths and English) compared with 53% across the whole of England. London schools have been the best performing in the country since 2009.

- 6.1.4 Parents with a child in a Free school are significantly less likely to report that they already knew the facts about London's higher than average GCSE performance than parents with a child in other types of school. With parents with a child in a Free school being more likely than those with a child in a maintained school to be surprised by the facts on school attainment.
- 6.1.5 Also parents who are from a BME group are significantly more likely than white British parents to say that after reading the facts on school performance in London their opinion of London schools has been improved (25% from a BME group reporting this compared with 17% white British).

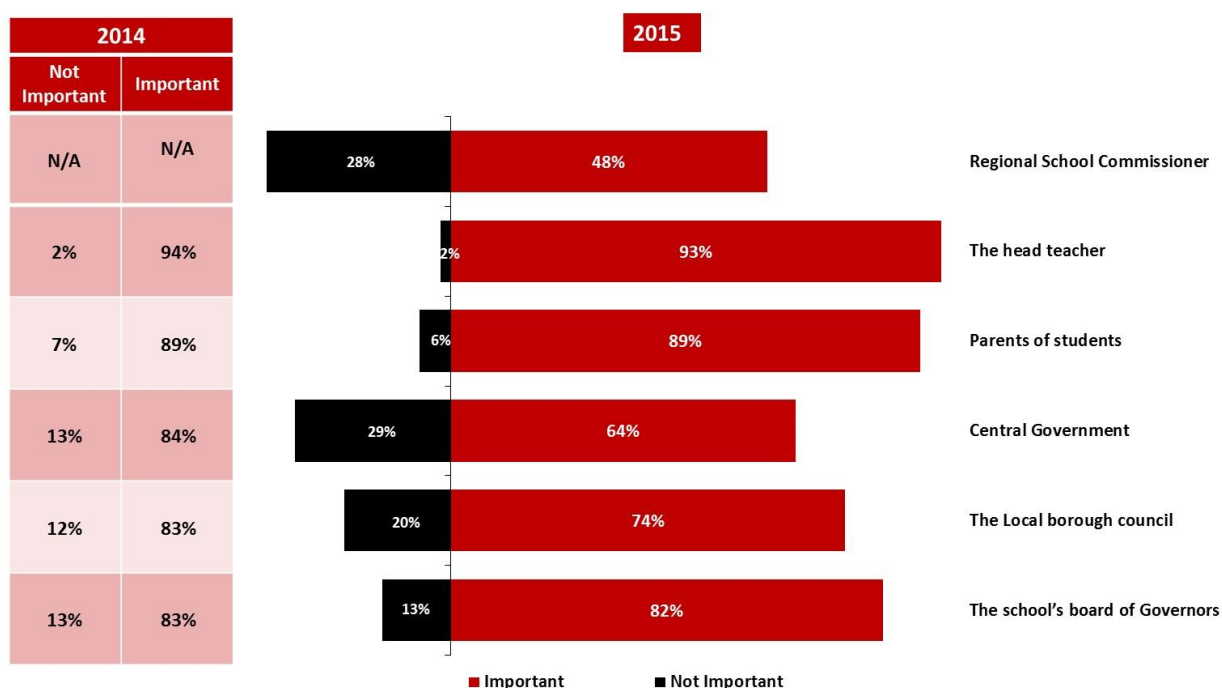
7 Ensuring standards in education

- 7.1.1 Almost all parents are in agreement (93%) that head teachers play an important role in ensuring high education standards in schools; this is also the case for parents of students themselves with 89% of parents reporting that parents play an important role in ensuring education standards are high.
- 7.1.2 When comparing data between 2014 and 2015, we see a very consistent picture in parents' views on who plays an important role in ensuring education standards. The proportion of London parents who report that the Local Borough Council⁹ plays an important role in ensuring education standards are high has fallen to 74% from 83%. Although this is still a sizeable majority of London parents. This survey used the term 'Local Borough Council' instead of 'Local Authority' which was used previously. The nine percentage point fall in the data may demonstrate how parents interpret these terms differently.
- 7.1.3 In the 2015 survey Regional School Commissioners' were added to the list of people/ organisations who play a role in ensuring education standards are high. A quarter of London parents (24%) did not know how important a role Regional School Commissioners' might play. With half (48%) reporting that they would play an important role in ensuring education standards are high.

⁹ Please note that in the 2014 study the term Local Authority was used instead of Local Borough Council

7.1.4 Interestingly, parents with a child in a Free school are significantly more likely than parents with a child in a maintained school or academy school to feel that Regional School Commissioners' might play an important role in ensuring standards are high – with two thirds of parents with a child in a Free school (66%) reporting this compared with 48% with a child in an Academy and 40% with a child in a maintained school.

Figure 6: Perceived levels of importance each group plays in ensuring high education standards¹⁰



Base: All London Parents (2015 n= 1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

Note: Figures for don't know have not been shown. The word of Local Borough Council has been used in 2015 when previously (2014) study Local Authority was used. Department for education was used in 2014 with Central Government used in 2015

7.1.5 Parents from a BME group are significantly more likely than those from the white British group to report that Central Government plays an important role in ensuring education standards are high (72% compared with 61%).

¹⁰ London has seen strong improvement in GCSE results and some groups have argued that collaboration between schools, and leadership from within schools and by the local authority played a key role in this improvement.

Although in recent changes to the education system the role of Local Authorities has been diminished and Academies and Free schools have much more flexibility to deliver outside of local authority control.

8 Intervention from Local authorities

8.1.1 The majority of parents (74%) correctly identify that the Local Borough Council has the power to influence or intervene with maintained schools if they are underperforming. This was on par with the proportion of parents who identified this in the 2013 and 2014 surveys.

Figure 7: Schools the Local Borough Council has the power to influence¹¹

	2013 Total (n=1019)	2014 Total (n=1052)	2015 Total (n=1002)	Location		Type of School			
				Inner (n=324)	Outer (n=678)	Maintained school (n=429)	Academy (n=327)	Free School (n=140)	Religious school (n=144)
Academy	37%	34%	33%	31%	34%	31%	38%	29%	37%
Free school	37%	35%	31%	31%	32%	24%	29%	57%	34%
Maintained school	73%	72%	74%	71%	76%	86%	74%	47%	75%
Fee paying school	15%	15%	10%	10%	10%	8%	9%	18%	8%
None of the above	9%	11%	11%	12%	10%	7%	11%	9%	11%

Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

8.1.2 Matching the trend from 2013 and 2014, parents with a child at a maintained school are significantly more likely than parents with a child at an Academy or Free school to identify that Local Borough Councils have the power to influence or intervene with maintained schools if they are underperforming (86% compared with 74% and 47% respectively).

8.1.3 A third believe Local Borough Councils have the power to influence/ intervene with underperforming Academies (33%), three out of ten a Free schools (31%) and 10 per cent a fee paying school.

¹¹ Please imagine the following types of school fell within the boundary of your Local Authority. In which, if any, do you think the Local Authority has the power to influence or intervene if the school were underperforming?

8.1.4 As found in the 2013 and 2014 surveys, there remains a degree of confusion from parents of children in Academies and Free schools as to the influence that local authorities have. In fact 38% of parents with a child in an Academy believe that local authorities have the power to influence or intervene if an Academy was underperforming. Furthermore 57% of parents with a child in a Free school believe that local authorities have the power to intervene in underperforming Free schools.

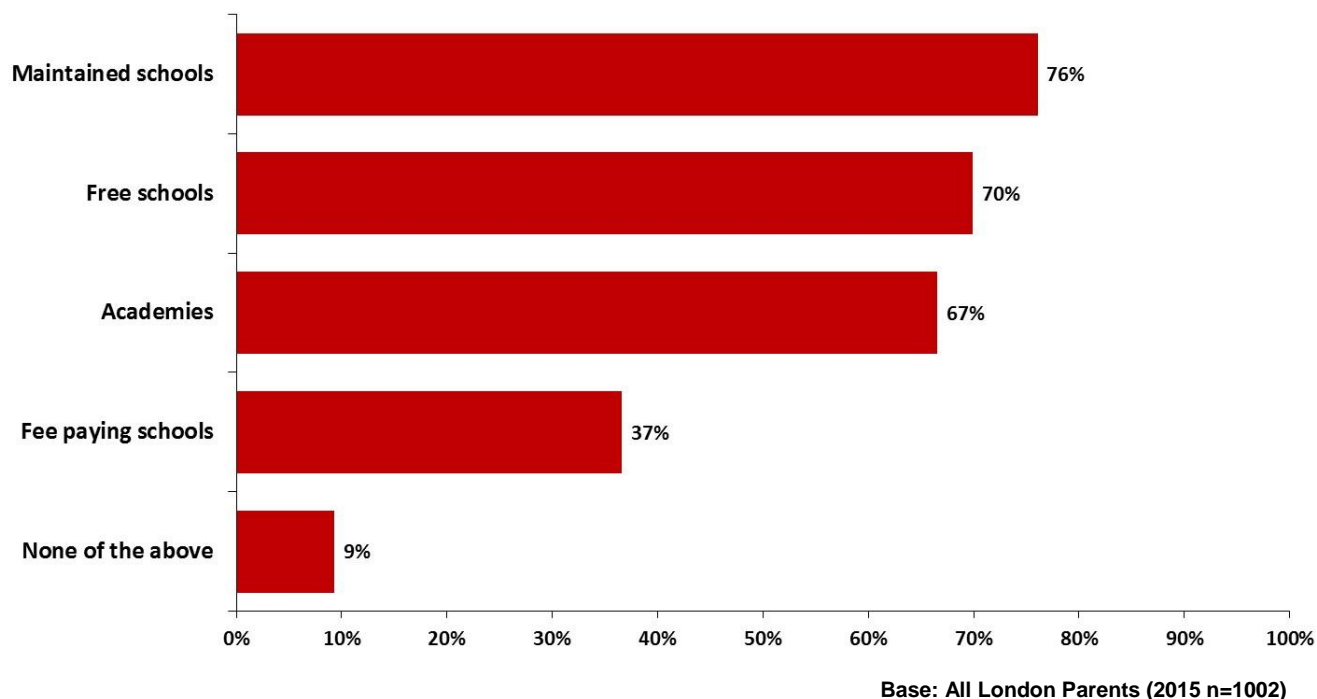
8.1.5 Those who thought local authorities had power over failing schools were then asked which, if any powers they felt they have:

- Six in ten (61%) report sending in inspectors;
- Just over half (54%) report issuing warning notices;
- Just over half (53%) report placing the school under special measures;
- Four out of ten (41%) report restructuring schools;
- Four out of ten (38%) shutting the school down;
- A third (33%) report removing senior teaching staff;
- Three out of ten (29%) restricting funding and;
- A fifth (22%) restricting the number / quality of new teachers

8.1.6 After ascertaining parents' responses on powers they think local authorities have, a detailed description was provided of powers they actually have¹². Respondents were then asked over which schools, if any, they feel local authorities should have powers of influence and intervention. Again the majority (76%) state Maintained schools, seven out of ten (70%) state Free schools, seven out of ten Academies (67%) and four out of ten fee paying schools (37%).

¹² Local Authorities can issue warning notices to failing ****maintained**** schools in their area, upon which the school is obliged to act. Historically, this power has been rarely used as the council worked collaboratively with all schools in the area to improve performance; prior to the Education Act 2011 the local authority also had a duty to provide improvement services, this was removed by the 2011 Act. The 2011 Education Act also removed local authorities' power to issue these warning notices to ****Academies****. Now, if a council is concerned about the performance of an Academy the only formal action they can take is to write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask Government to intervene directly. The local authority is unable to intervene without Government support. Local Authorities do still, however, have the duty to hold all state funded schools in their area,

Figure 8: Schools the Local Borough Council has the power to influence¹³



8.1.7 These findings are on par with those found in the 2014 report and show that a majority of parents in London feel that local authorities should have powers of influence and intervention over Academies and Free schools.

9 Accountability

9.1.1 Parents were then asked who they think is held to account for the performance of different types of school. While parents views on who is accountable for different types of schools varies, head teachers and the school's board of Governors are most often cited as being held to account for school performance.

9.1.2 Over two in five parents in London (44%) think that the Local Borough Council is held to account for the performance of maintained schools.

Figure 9: Who parents think is held to account for the performance of different types of school

including Academies, to account in terms of performance. They are obliged to take action where they are concerned about a school's performance but have no statutory powers over Academies.

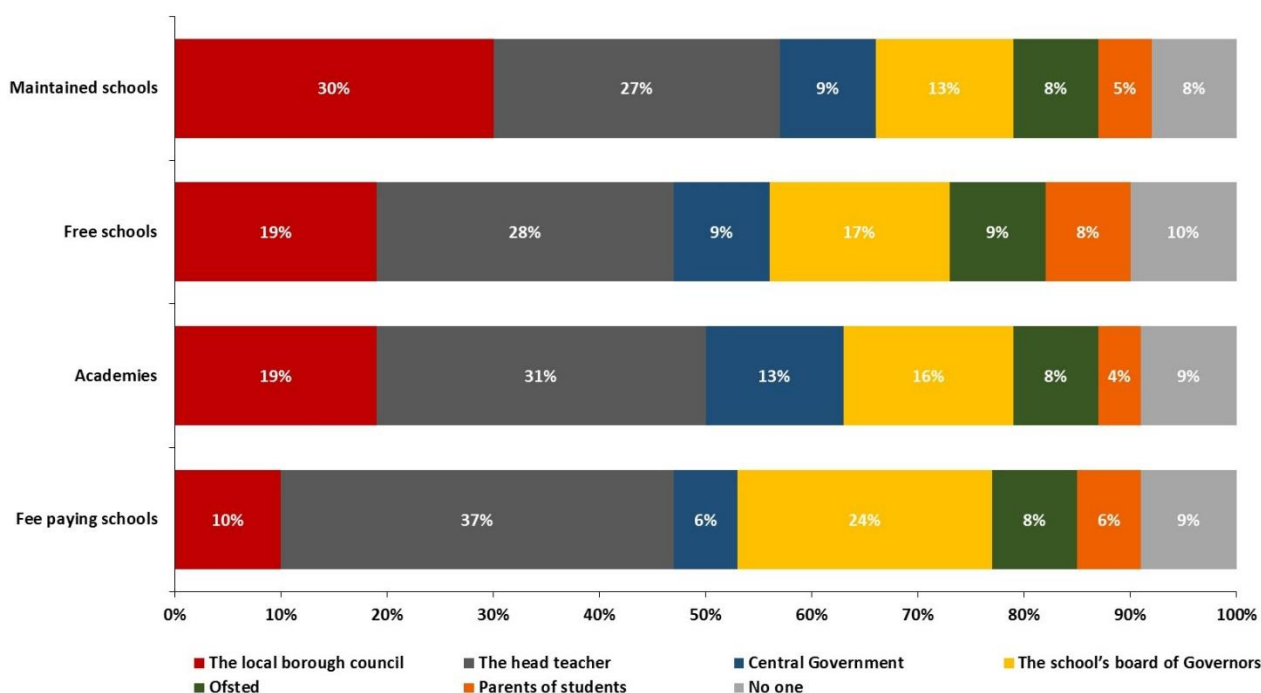
¹³ Please imagine the following types of school fell within the boundary of your Local Authority. In which, if any, do you think the Local Authority has the power to influence or intervene if the school were underperforming?

	The local borough council	The head teacher	Central Government	The school's board of Governors	Ofsted	Parents of students	Regional School Commissioner	No one
Fee paying schools	6%	64%	7%	49%	10%	18%	7%	7%
Academies	15%	61%	27%	43%	13%	15%	10%	7%
Free schools	15%	57%	18%	44%	13%	25%	9%	8%
Maintained schools	44%	57%	20%	42%	15%	14%	11%	5%
Religious school	19%	60%	10%	51%	13%	18%	10%	8%

Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

9.1.3 Parents were also asked who they trust to hold schools accountable for their performance. Again, head teachers have the largest percentage across all school types, particularly fee paying schools (37%). The Local Borough Council is more trusted to hold maintained schools to account (30%) than Academies and Free schools (both 19%) and fee paying schools (10%).

Figure 10: Trusted to hold schools account for their performance



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

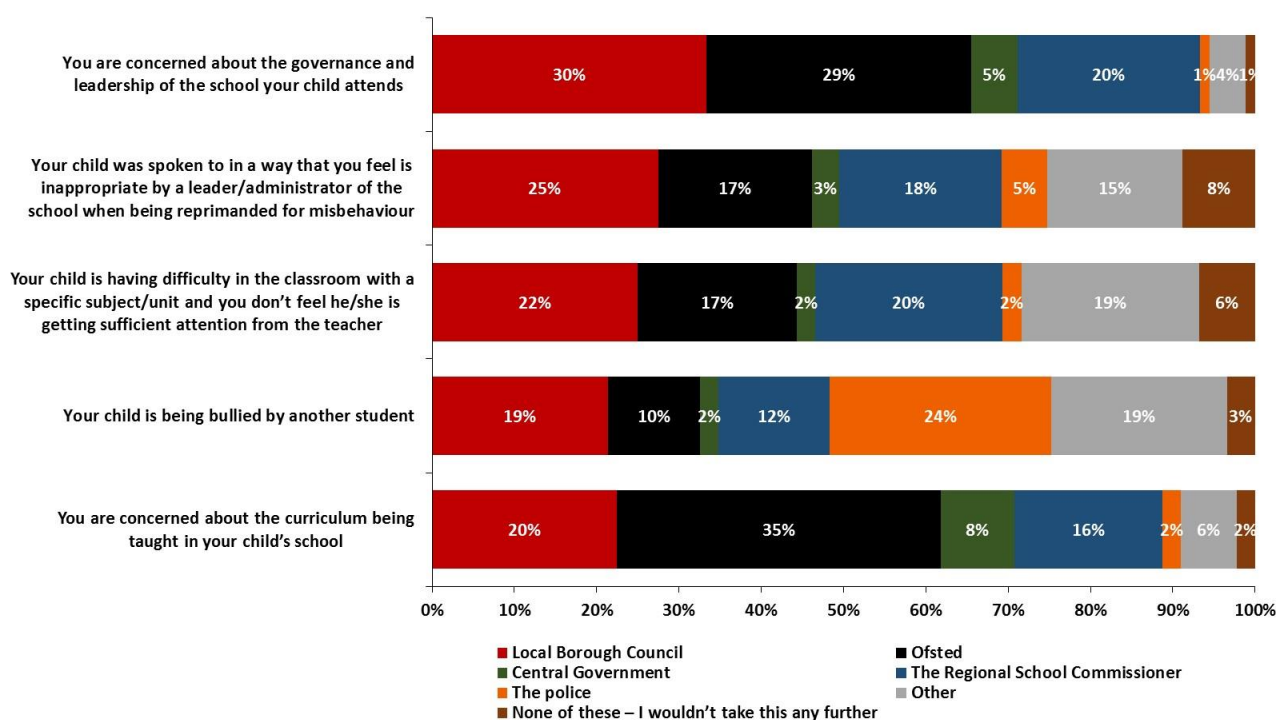
- 9.1.4 When analysing specifically among parents with a child in each of the school types, parents with a child at a maintained school are most likely to report that they trust the Local Borough Council to be accountable for maintained schools performance, with 34% reporting this.
- 9.1.5 London parents with a child at a Free school state that they are most likely to trust the headteacher to be accountable for Free School performance, with a quarter (26%) stating this. This was followed by Central Government (17%) with those parents with a child at a free school much more likely to report that they trust Central Government to be accountable for free schools performance than the proportion of parents with a child at a maintained school (6%) or Academy (11%) who state this.

10 Whistleblowing

- 10.1.1 When London parents were asked who they would trust to handle a series of hypothetical concerns related to their child's school, London parents are most likely to report that they would trust their Local Borough Council to resolve complaints regarding; inappropriate treatment of their child by school staff (25%) and if their child is having difficulty in the classroom with a specific subject (22%).
- 10.1.2 With regards to concerns about the governance and leadership of a school, parents would be equally likely to trust their Local Borough Council (30%) or Ofsted (29%) to resolve these concerns. With regards to concerns of bullying, a quarter of parents (24%) would trust the police the most to resolve their complaint.
- 10.1.3 In a situation where parents in London had concerns about the curriculum being taught in their child's school. A third of parents in London (35%) would trust Ofsted the most to resolve their complaint and a fifth would trust their Local Borough Council most.
- 10.1.4 Parents whose children attend Maintained schools are significantly more likely than those with a child at an Academy or Free school to say they would most trust their Local Borough Council if...

- ...their child was having difficulty in the classroom, with 27% from maintained schools reporting this compared with 21% from Academy schools and 13% from Free schools
- ...their child was spoken to in a way that you feel is inappropriate by a leader/administrator of the school, with 31% from maintained schools reporting this compared with 24% from Academy schools and 19% from Free schools
- ...they are concerned about the governance and leadership of the school their child attends, with 37% from maintained schools reporting this compared with 27% from Academy schools and 19% from Free schools

Figure 11: First point of contact with a complaint about an issue at their child's school



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

Note: Figures for 'Don't know' have not been shown

Section 3: Regional School Commissioners

This third section of this reports looks at London parents' reactions to topics surrounding the recent appointment of Regional School Commissioners (RSCs). The questions reported on within this section include a large amount of deliberative text that was shown to inform respondents throughout the survey process.

11 Accountability

11.1.1 Figure 12 shows the detailed information that respondents were shown about the introduction of RSCs.

Figure 12: Question Introduction Text

In 2014, the Department for Education introduced a new role known as Regional School Commissioners (RSCs), of which there are eight in England. RSCs are responsible for a significant part of the education system. They have powers to approve new Academies/Free schools and intervene in underperforming Academies/Free schools in their area to change a school's leadership. The Department for Education is seeking to give more powers to RSCs, soon they will be responsible for forcing maintained schools considered to be 'coasting' by the Government to convert into Academies.

RSCs have been introduced as part of shifting day-to-day decision-making for Academies away from Whitehall. It is a structure designed to allow a greater localised decision making process on issues concerning performance and approving new schools.

RSCs do not report into local borough councils for fulfilling their roles, instead, they act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and are accountable to the Schools Commissioner.

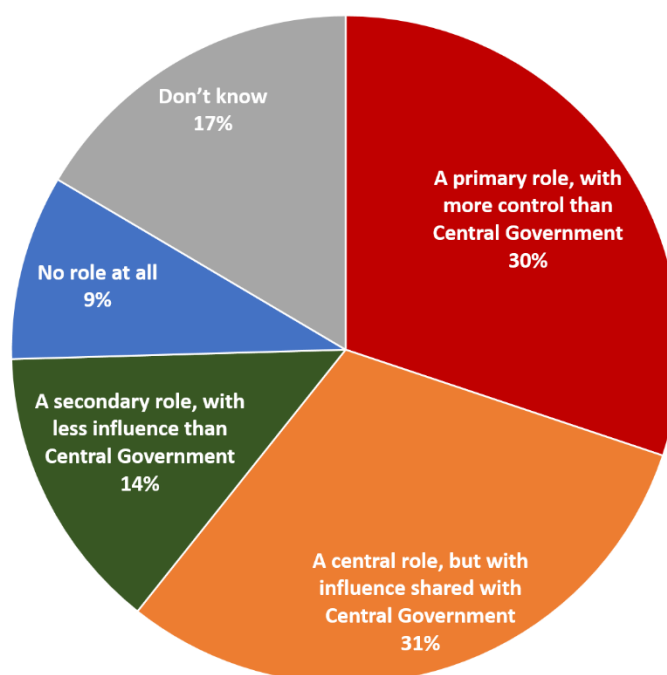
11.1.2 Three out of ten (30%) London parents expect that local borough councils should play a primary role in ensuring that Regional School Commissioners are held to account to improve the performance of existing Academies or schools forced to become Academies. These parents have stated that they expect local borough councils to have more control in this matter than Central Government.

11.1.3 An equal proportion of parents (31%) expect that local borough councils should have a central role in holding RSCs to account, but with influence shared with Central Government.

11.1.4 Less frequently, parents indicate that they expect local borough councils to have a secondary role in holding RSCs to account, with less influence than Central Government (14%). Further, a small proportion believe they should have no role in this at all (9%).

11.1.5 Parents with children in all types of schools are in relatively equal agreement on expecting local borough councils to have a primary, central or secondary role in holding Regional School Commissioners to account. However, parents of children at Maintained schools (12%) and Academies (10%) are significantly more likely than those with children at Free schools (1%) to expect local borough councils to have no role at all.

Figure 13: Expected role for local borough council to play in ensuring RSCs are held to account



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

12 Head teachers Boards

12.1.1 Figure 14 shows the detailed information that respondents were shown about RSCs and Head teachers Boards (HTBs).

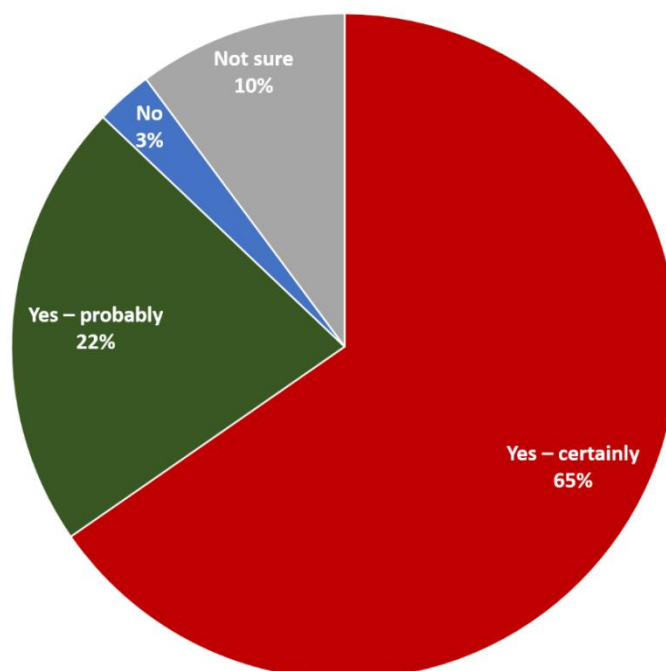
Figure 14: Question Introduction Text

RSCs will cover up to 27 local authority areas spread out across the country. For example, with the RSC for North East London and East of England covering Barking and Dagenham up to Norfolk.

Each RSC gets support from a Head teachers Board (HTB). HTBs are made up of academy head teachers who advise and challenge RSCs on the decisions they make for the geographical areas they cover. The HTB generally meets 1 to 2 times each a month. Currently, there is no requirement for each HTB to include any maintained schools, although RSCs can force these schools to convert to academy status. Additionally, HTBs that inform RSCs work in London are not required to have London head teachers as part of their membership.

- 12.1.2 The vast majority of parents (87%) expect that a Head teachers Board for London should include head teachers from London. Two thirds support this with certainty (65%), while 22% agree that head teachers from London should *probably* be included in a Head teachers Board for London.
- 12.1.3 A very small proportion of parents (3%) disagree with the concept, and 10% are unsure.
- 12.1.4 Parents with children at Maintained schools (90%) and Academies (91%) are more likely than those with children at Free schools (79%) to believe that head teachers from London should be included in a Head teachers Board for London.

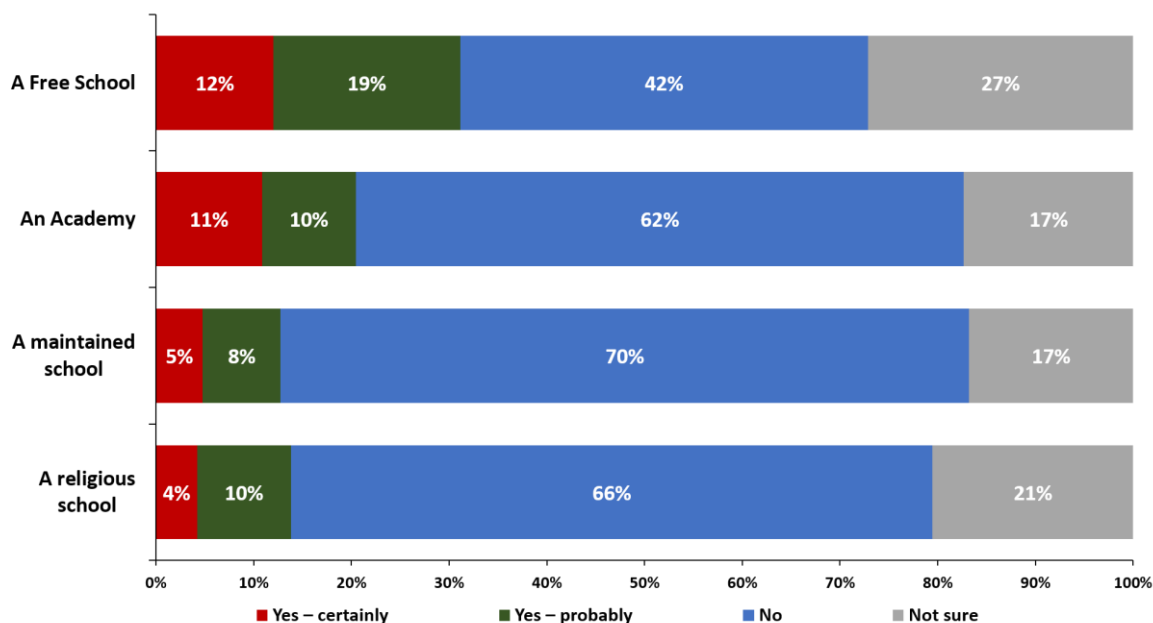
Figure 15: Expectation for head teachers from London to be included in a Head teachers Board for London



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

- 12.1.5 A minority of London parents (17%) feel that head teachers from Maintained schools should be excluded from a Head teachers Board, with 7% stating they agree with certainty and 10% that they probably agree. Meanwhile, three-in-five (63%) do *not* believe this should be the case. Another fifth (20%) are unsure about whether or not head teachers from Maintained schools should be excluded from an HTB.
- 12.1.6 Parents whose children attend a Maintained school are particularly likely to disagree with the suggestion that head teachers from maintained schools should be excluded from an HTB (70% compared with 62% and 42% respectively for parents with children at Academies and Free schools).
- 12.1.7 Conversely, parents whose children attend a Free school much more commonly *agree* that head teachers from Maintained schools should be excluded from a Head teachers Board (31% compared with 13% and 20% respectively for parents with children at Maintained schools and Academies).

Figure 16: Expectation for head teachers from maintained schools to be excluded from a Head teachers Board



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002; Maintained school n=429; Academy n=327; Free school n=140; Religious school n=144)

Section 4: School places and admissions

The fourth section of this report looks at the level of demand for school places, ease of the schools applications process and expansion of schools. Again, the questions reported on within this section include a large amount of deliberative text to inform respondents. As a result this has been displayed as an image within the section rather than a footnote (as in the previous sections).

Figure 17: Question Introduction Text

Demand for school places

Councils have a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children and young people in their jurisdiction. As demand increases, funding levels in London don't keep pace and the easier and less costly ways of creating school places are used up, councils are finding it more difficult to find enough places to meet this demand.

England is experiencing a sharp rise in the population, this rise has been biggest in London. In the 10 years between 2001 and 2011, the London population grew by 11%; this equates to 24% of the national population growth in that period. London in particular has seen this result in a huge pressure on primary and secondary school places; London represents a 24% of all need in England for school places.

Process of finding new school places

The local borough council acts as the admissions authority for all maintained schools in their area. This means that they preside over appeals from parents and, importantly, ensure that every child in their area has a place by forcing schools under its control to take more children.

Under the 2011 Education Act, all new build schools are to become Academies or Free schools. Existing and new build Academies and Free schools act as their own admissions authorities and can decide not to expand when they have reached full capacity. The local borough council has some influence in being able to put pressure on Academies and Free schools to take more children but ultimately they can appeal to the Department of Education.

Academies are required through their funding agreements to participate in the local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements, except Free schools, in the first year of opening.

When a school becomes an Academy it becomes its own admissions authority, which means that it will manage its own admissions process, including periodic consultation, regularly publishing the school's admission arrangements and conducting the admission process as part of wider Local Authority coordination.

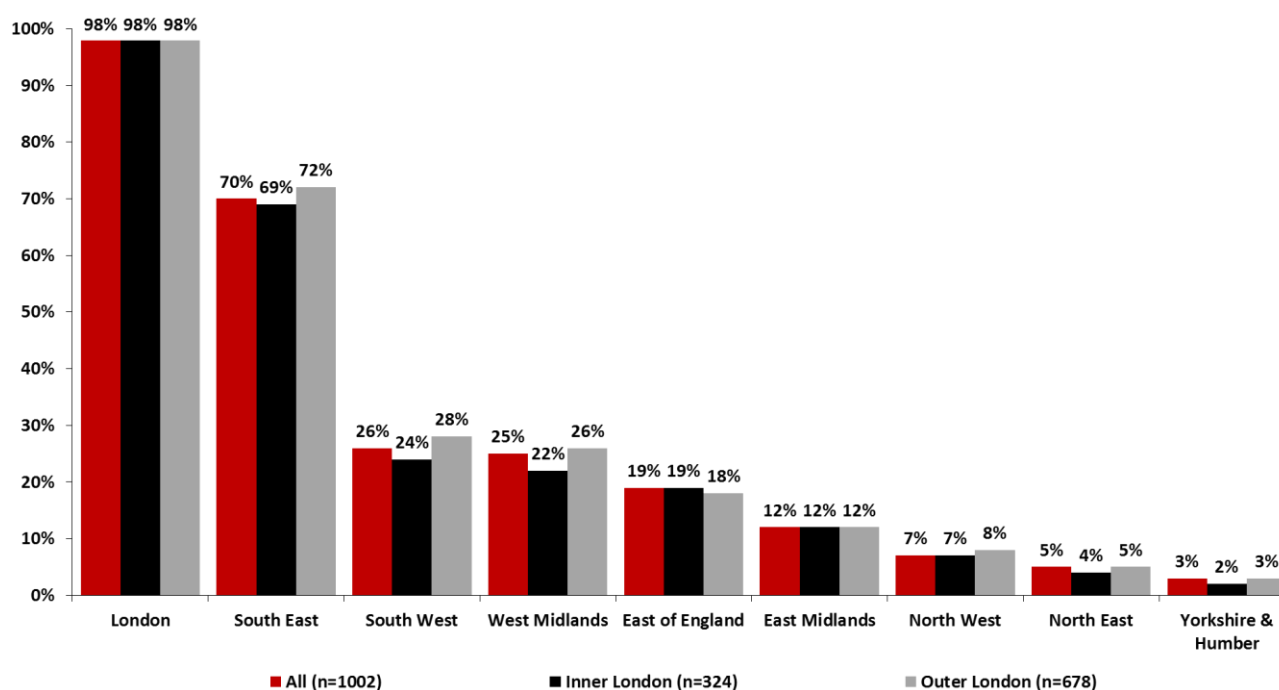
13 School places

13.1.1 London (98%) and the South East (70%) are believed by London parents to clearly be the top two regions where demand¹⁴ for school places is the highest. These perceptions are on a par with findings from the 2013 & 2014 study.

13.1.2 London and the South East is also the regions demand is by far seen as the highest for parents residing within both Inner and Outer London (London: 98% in both Inner and Outer London) followed by South East (69% and 72% respectively).

13.1.3 Whilst the South East is the second most competitive region for all parents, those in the highest social grade (AB) are most likely to mention this region (78% vs 68% for C1's, 60% for C2's and 61% for DE's).

Figure 18: Regions in which parents think the level of demand for school places is highest



¹⁴ By demand, we mean the volume of children needing places at school compared with the number of places available.

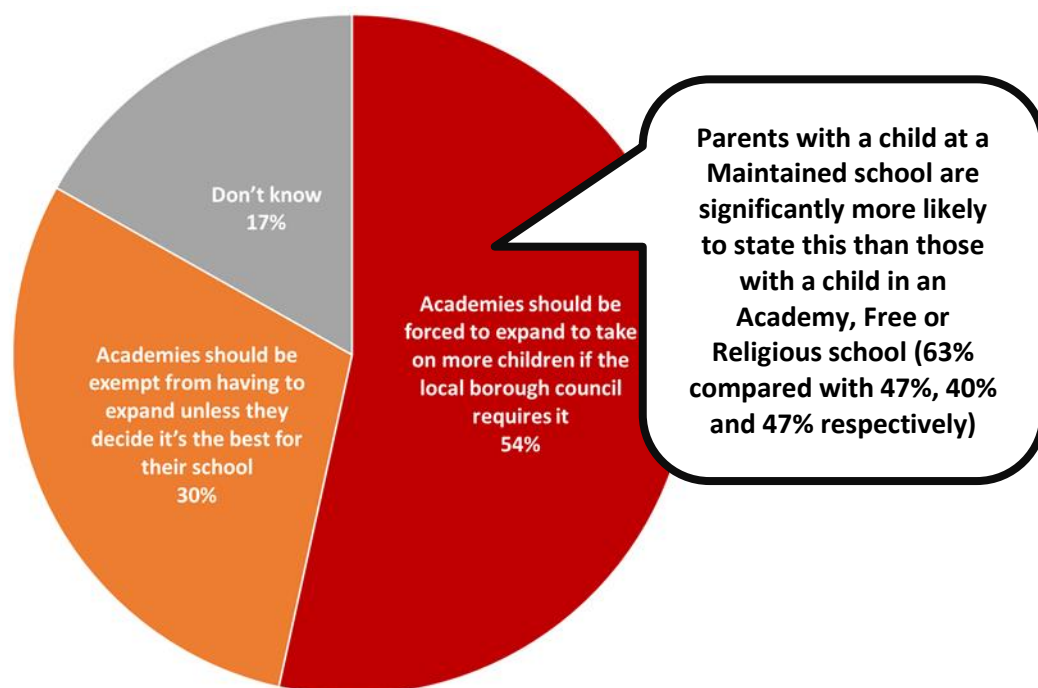
- 13.1.4 Following the detailed information parents were provided with about demand for school places and the process of creating new school places, they were then asked *'To what extent do you agree or disagree that local borough councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand?'*
- 13.1.5 Over three quarters of London parents agree (78%) that local borough councils should be able to influence schools in their area to find more places or expand, and a minority (12%) disagree.
- 13.1.6 Across all school groups, parents are much more likely to agree that local borough councils should have the ability to influence the expansion of all schools in their area than to disagree. However, as per figure 19, since 2014 there has been a significant drop in agreement among parents of children who attend Religious schools (85% in 2014 vs 72% in 2015) with levels returning to that of 2013.

Figure 19: To what extent do you agree or disagree that local borough councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand?

	2014		2015	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
All London Parents (2014 n=1052; 2015 n=1002)	81%	11%	78%	12%
White (2014 n=723; 2015 n=704)	81%	12%	79%	11%
BME (2014 n=299; 2015 n=223)	83%	9%	77%	14%
Maintained school (2014 n=363; 2015 n=429)	83%	11%	83%	9%
Academy (2015 n=198; 2015 n=327)	81%	11%	77%	12%
Free School (2014 n=163; 2015 n=140)	84%	5%	78%	17%
Religious school (2014 n=103; 2015 n=144)	85%	10%	72%	10%

- 13.1.7 On the topic of school expansion, just over half (54%) of parents believe that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local borough council requires it. This figure represents a steady increase since 2013 when 44% agreed with this statement and 49% in 2014.
- 13.1.8 Parents with a child in a Maintained school are significantly more likely to take this viewpoint than those with a child in an Academy, Free or Religious school (63% compared with 47% 40% and 47% respectively).
- 13.1.9 Conversely 30% believe that Academies should be exempt from having to expand unless they decide it's the best for their school. This represents a gradual decrease since 2013 when the proportion of parents who felt this way was 38% and 33% in 2014.

Figure 20: Views on Academy expansion



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

13.1.10 Figure 21 shows the detailed information respondents were provided with in 2015 in terms of creating school places.

Figure 21: Question Introduction Text

Local borough councils have a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places. To meet this duty, local borough councils prioritise creating school places in areas of basic need. This is determined by looking at where there will be more children than school places in a local area. Where there is a shortfall, the local borough council seeks to secure places nearest to those areas to support parent's access schools nearest to them. Following the Education Act 2011, Local borough councils do not have any control over where new schools are set up in the local borough.

Instead, for all new schools, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education to approve where new schools should be set up in each local borough. New schools, known as Free Schools, can be set up by a range of different individuals/organisations that include businesses, charities as well as community and faith groups. The Department of Education look for evidence that a specific school is wanted by local communities rather than basic need. This evidence takes the form of a survey that parents (or young people for 16-19 schools) sign a document expressing support for the school.

13.1.11 Almost two thirds of parents (63%) agree that Free Schools should be set up in areas of basic need (i.e. looking at shortfalls between future demand for school places compared with the existing capacity. A minority (17%) disagree with this.

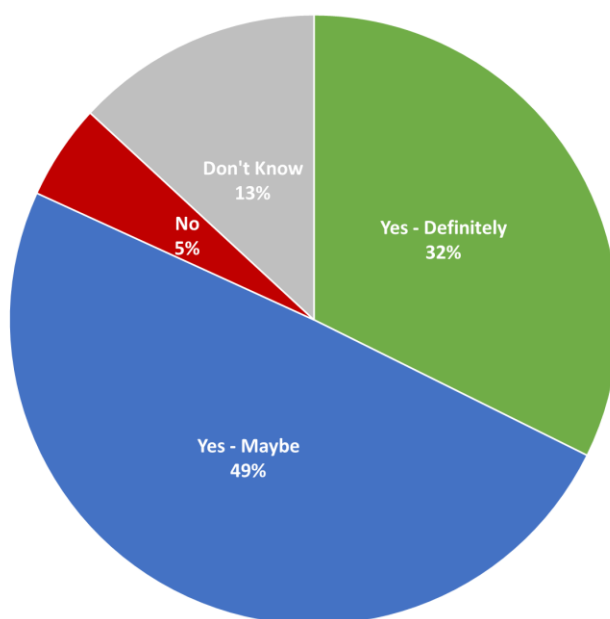
13.1.12 Parents residing within Outer London are significantly more likely to agree that Free Schools should be set up in areas of basis need (66% vs 58% in Inner London).

13.1.13 The vast majority of parents (80%) agree that local borough councils should have the final say in the location of new schools within their authority boundary. Only 9% disagree with this.

13.1.14 Parents of children who attend an Academy (83%) or a Maintained School (82%) are most likely to agree that local borough councils should have the final say.

13.1.15 As illustrated in Figure 22 almost a third of parents (32%) claim they would support a good local school becoming the sponsor of a new school if it was recommended by their local borough council. A further 49% may consider this. Only 5% of parents completely ruled this out.

Figure 22: Whether support a good local school becoming the sponsor of new school upon recommendation of local borough council



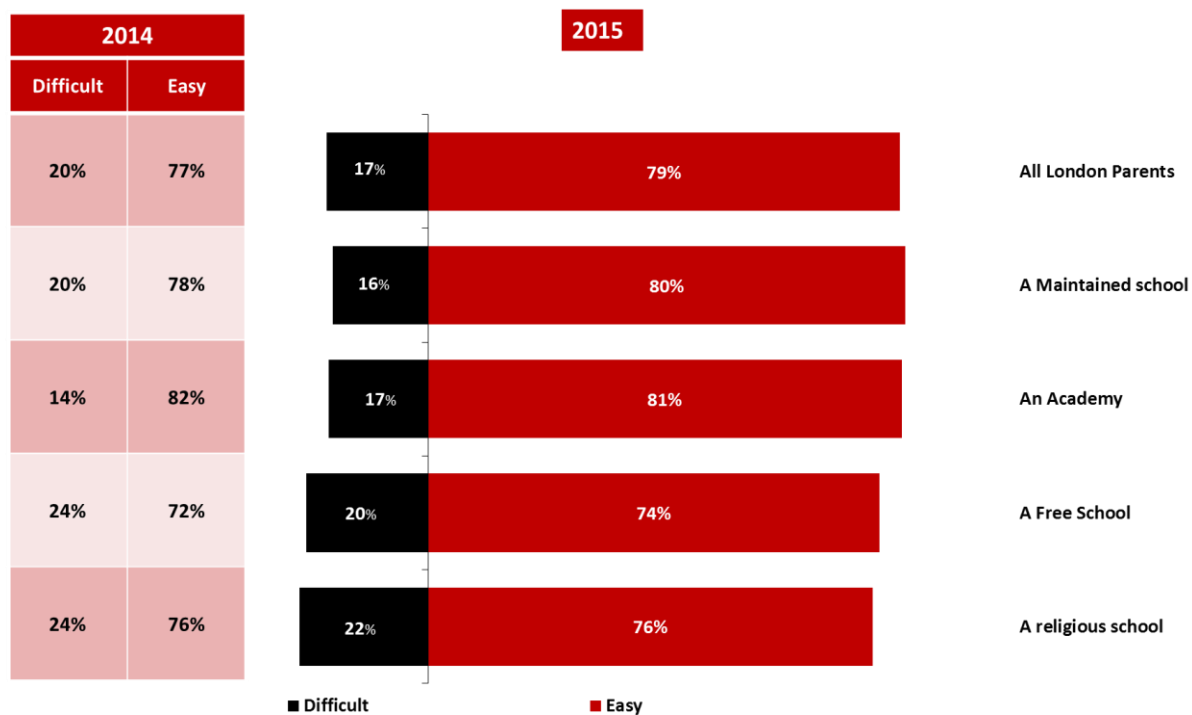
Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

14 Admissions

14.1.1 The majority of parents in London (79%) found the process of applying to primary or secondary school very/ fairly easy, while 17% found it fairly/ very difficult. This is slightly fewer than 2014 when 20% found the process fairly/very difficult.

14.1.2 Parents with a child in an Academy school or Maintained School are slightly more likely to find the process easy than those parents who have a child at a Free school (81% & 80% compared with 74% at Free Schools).

Figure 23: Ease of application process



Base: All London Parents (2015 n = 1002; 2014 n=1052), Maintained school (2015 n = 429; 2014 n=363), Academy school (2015 n = 327; 2014 n=198), Free school (2015 n = 140; 2014 n=163) and Religious school (2015 n = 144; 2014 n=103)

Section 5: School governance

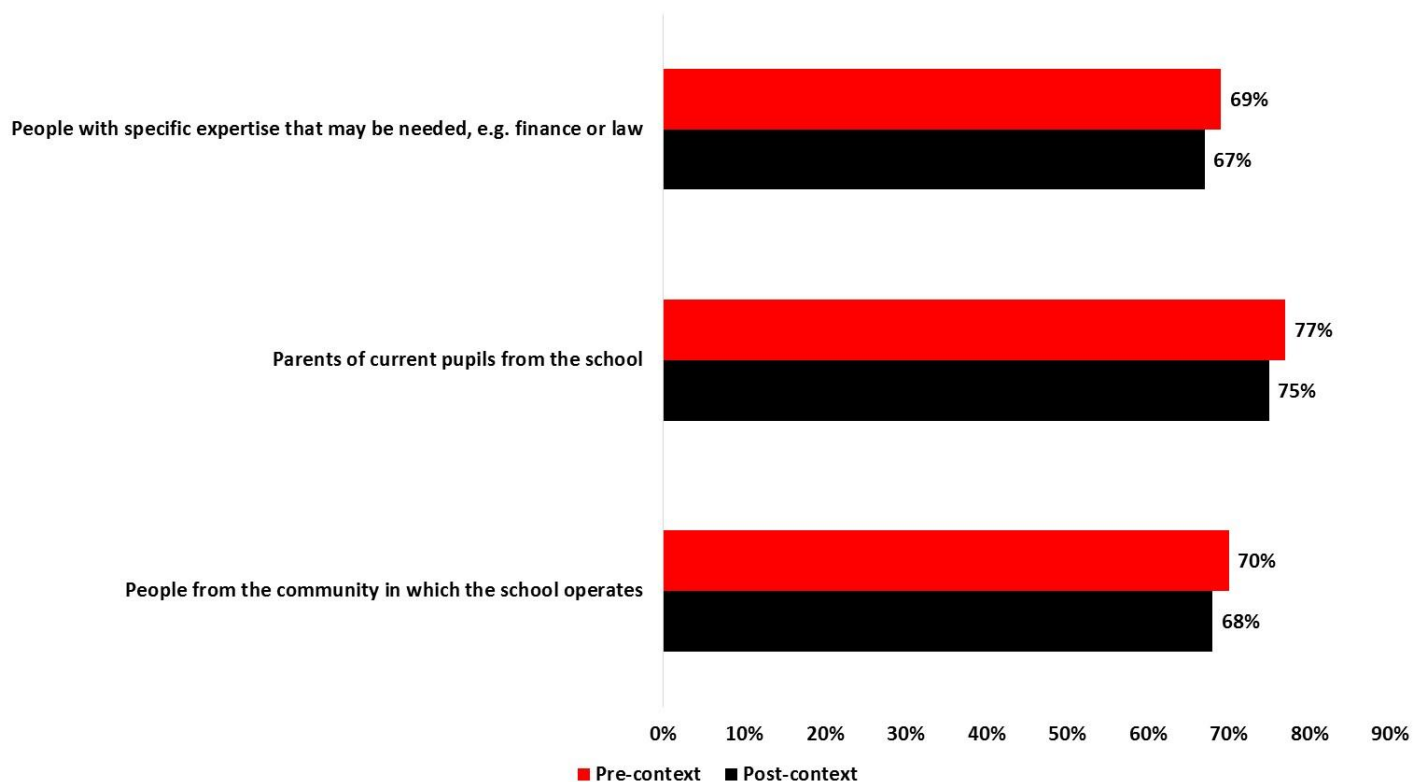
The fifth section of this report looks at the level of involvement between schools, the community and parents and school governance.

15 School governance

- 15.1.1 Parents in London were asked to rate how important they felt their children(s) school governing body had representation from people from the local community, parents of current pupils and people with specific expertise. This question was asked of parents firstly to get their top of mind reaction and then repeated after parents had been provided with contextual information about the school governance (please see appendix A for this information).
- 15.1.2 As figure 24 below shows broadly similar proportions of parents rated it important¹⁵ that school governing bodies had people with specific expertise (69%) and people from the community (70%). With three quarters of parents (77%) rating it important that their schools governing body includes parents of current pupils.
- 15.1.3 When this question was asked again to parents after reading the contextual information on school governance there were no changes in the views of parents on how important it is that school governing bodies have representation from each of the three different types of people.

¹⁵ Important is defined as a rating of 8, 9 or 10 out of 10

Figure 24: Composition of school governing body – measured on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all important and 10 is very important (proportion rating important shown)



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

Section 6: Funding and use of public funds

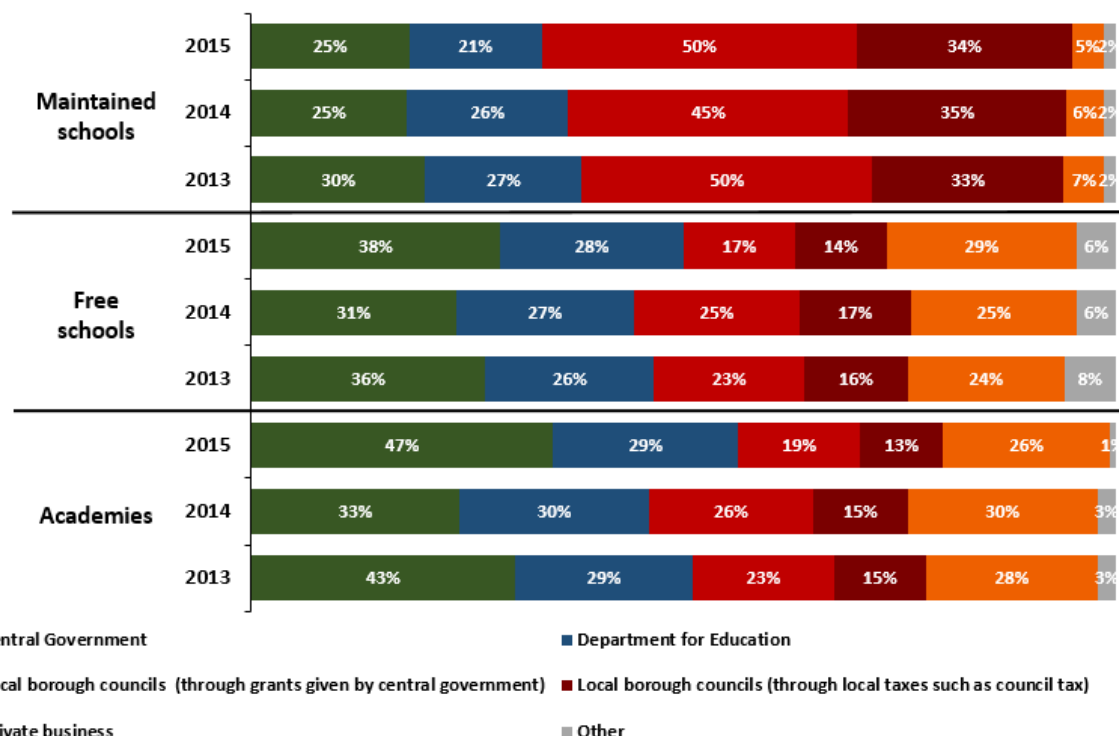
This sixth section of the report looks at London parents' perceptions of school funding processes, as well as their opinions on current and future accountabilities.

16 Perceptions on the providers of funding to schools

16.1.1 Half of parents in London believe that maintained schools are funded by local borough councils (through grants given by central government). A third of parents (34%) also think that funding for maintained schools is provided by local borough councils, but through local taxes such as council tax.

16.1.2 One-in-five parents also accurately state that maintained schools receive funding from the Department for Education (21%) and a quarter identify the Central Government more widely (25%) as a funding source; with just 5% thinking that private business provides funding to maintained schools.

Figure 25: Perceptions of who provides funding to Maintained schools, Free schools, and Academies



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

Note: Figures for 'Don't know' are not shown

- 16.1.3 In contrast, a quarter of parents (26%) think that Academies and one-in-three (29%) that Free schools receive funding from private business. Parents are significantly more likely to think that Academies receive funding through Central Government (47%) and the Department for Education (29%) than from local borough councils through either central government grants (19%) or through local taxes via the local authority (13%).
- 16.1.4 Just over a quarter of parents (28%) correctly state that Free schools receive funding from the Department for Education. Furthermore, around one-in-five think that Free schools receive funding from the local borough council via grants from central government (17%).

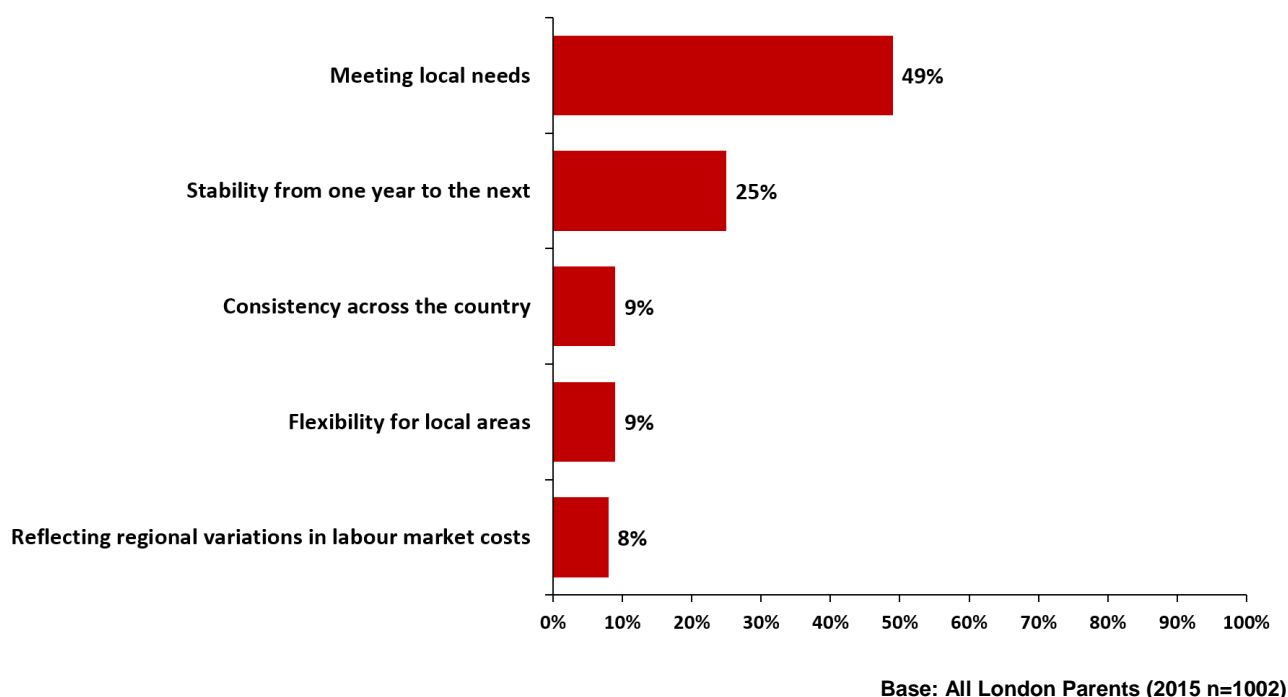
17 Objectives for allocating school funding

- 17.1.1 Respondents to the survey were provided with an introduction to school funding and informed that the Department for Education is seeking to reform the school funding system so that it is more transparent and easier to understand¹⁶.
- 17.1.2 Parents were then asked to rank what they think the most important objectives should be in allocating school funding. As figure 26 shows, meeting local needs is ranked as the most important objective by 49% of parents. Parents with children in either a Maintained school or an Academy identically believe meeting local needs is the most important objective in allocating school funding, with 52% of parents whose children attend both types of school reporting this. Parents of children at Free schools, however, are significantly less likely to report meeting local needs as a top priority, with 37% of parents selecting this as the number one priority.

¹⁶ The Department for Education funds schools to provide education to children and support them in fulfilling their potential. Funding for schools is allocated through the use of a formula that includes a range of determining indicators. The Department for Education is seeking to reform the school funding system so that it is transparent, easy to understand and sufficiently meets to needs of pupils in schools.

17.1.3 A quarter of parents (25%) rank stability from one year to the next as the most important objective in allocating school funding. Again, parents with children in Maintained schools and Academies report similar levels of priority, (23% for Maintained schools and 24% for Academies). The figure is marginally higher for parents who have children in Free schools, with one-in-ten (29%) reporting that stability from one year to the next should be the biggest priority in allocating school funding.

Figure 26: Ranking of most important objectives in allocating school funding (% ranked first)¹⁷



¹⁷ The Department for Education funds schools to provide education to children and support them in fulfilling their potential. Funding for schools is allocated through the use of a formula that includes a range of determining indicators. The Department for Education is seeking to reform the school funding system so that it is transparent, easy to understand and sufficiently meets to needs of pupils in schools.

	Ranked first	Ranked second	Ranked third	Ranked fourth	Ranked fifth
Meeting local needs	49%	21%	15%	9%	5%
Stability from one year to the next	25%	30%	24%	15%	6%
Flexibility for local areas	9%	23%	28%	26%	13%
Consistency across the country	9%	11%	16%	24%	39%
Reflecting regional variations in labour market costs	8%	13%	16%	25%	36%

Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

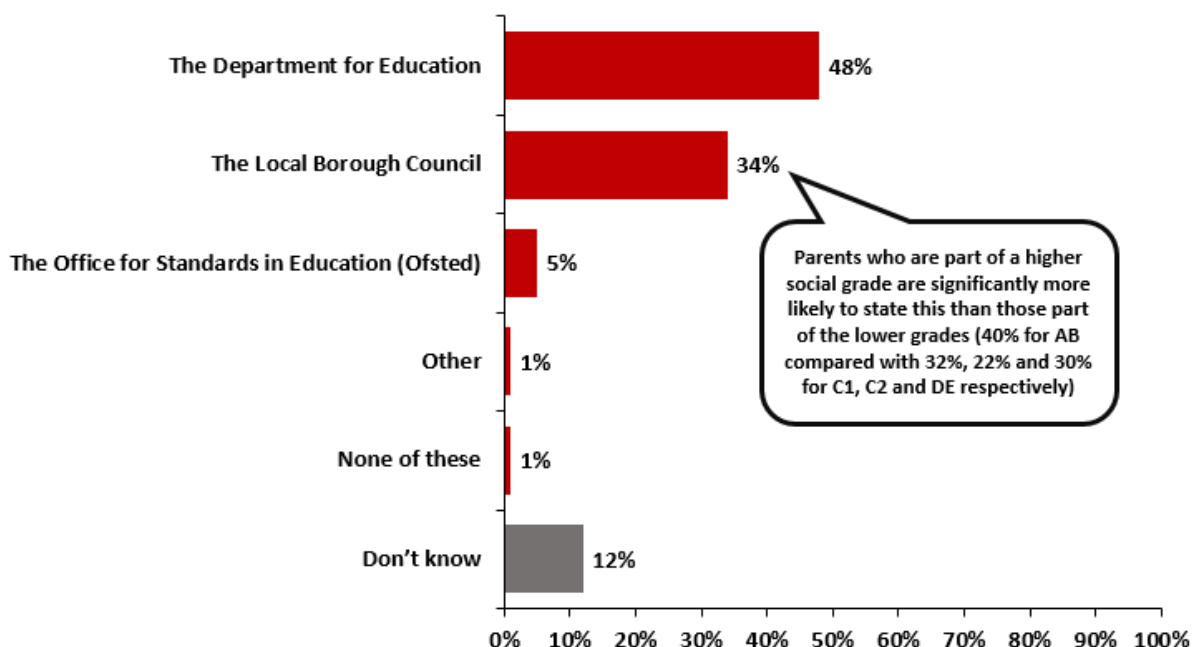
17.1.4 Relatively, parents place less importance on flexibility for local areas as an objective for allocating school funding, with one in ten parents (9%) ranking it as number one most important. Although parents with a child in a Free school are significantly more likely to feel local flexibility is an important objective, with 18% reporting this compared with just 7% with a child in an Academy and 8% for those with a child in a Maintained school.

18 Responsibility for school funding

18.1.1 Almost half of parents (48%) in London think that the Department for Education should have the primary responsibility for allocating funding to all schools. A third (34%) feel this responsibility should sit with the local borough council and just 5% that Ofsted should take this role.

18.1.2 As figure 27 shows, those parents from the highest social grade (AB) are significantly more likely to than those from other social grades to report that the local borough council should have primary responsibility for allocating funding to all schools (40% compared with 32%, 22% and 30% respectively for C1, C2 and DE).

Figure 27: Views on which party should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools



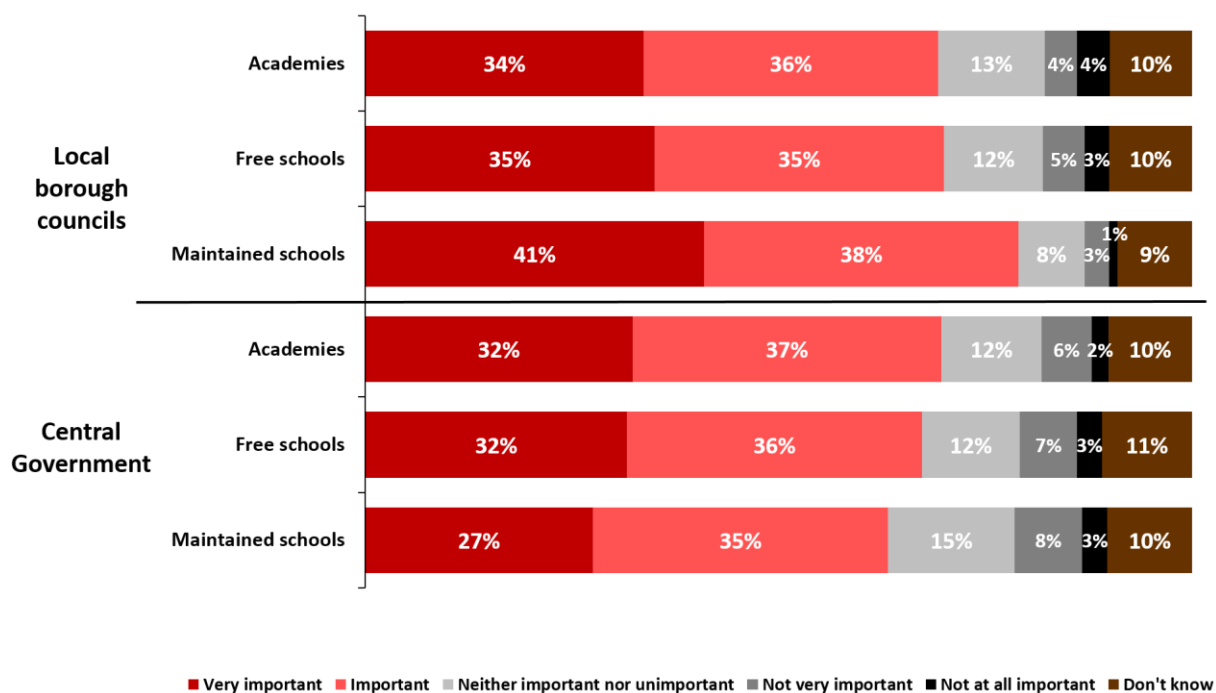
Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

19 Financial auditing of school spending

19.1.1 The vast majority (79%) of London parents feel it is important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local borough councils, and among those individuals two-in-five (41%) feel it is *very* important. While parents are significantly more likely to state this for Maintained schools, seven out of ten parents report that Free schools (71%) and Academies (70%) should have their spending scrutinised by local borough councils.

19.1.2 When considering the importance of Central Government scrutinising the spending of schools, the figures for Free schools and Academies are comparable to the proportion who believe it is important for local borough councils to scrutinise school spending, at 68% and 69% respectively. It is not consistent with figures for Maintained schools, however, with only 63% of parents believing that it is important for Central Government to scrutinise the spending of Maintained schools, significantly less than those who believe it is important for local borough councils to be scrutinising school spending.

Figure 28: Perceptions of the importance of different school types having their spending scrutinised by local and central government



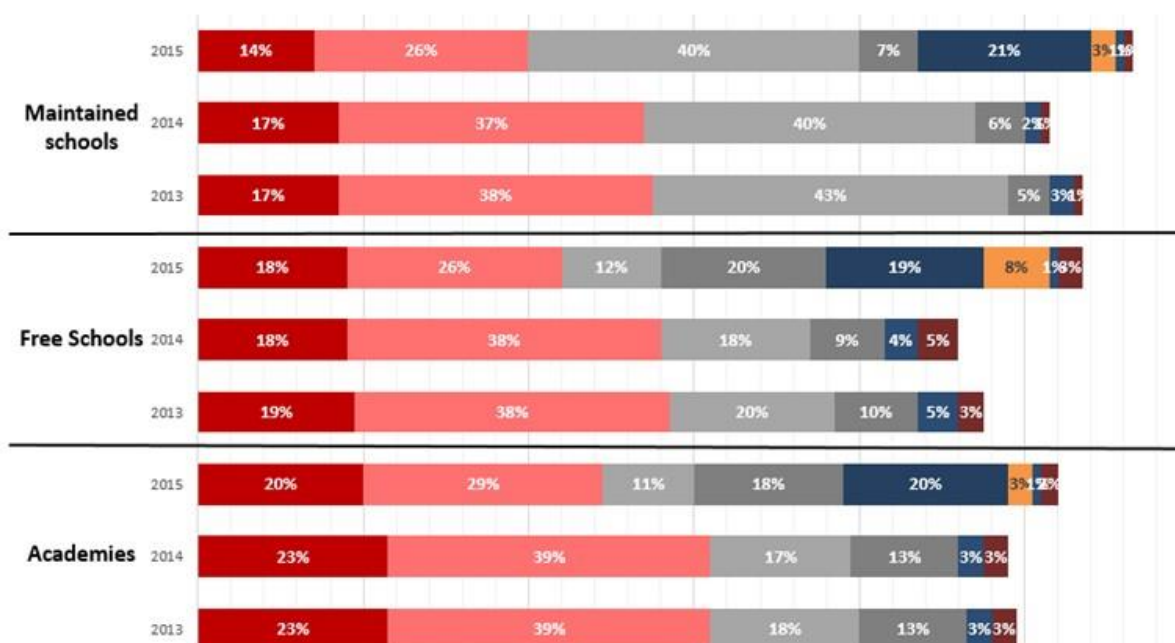
Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

Note: Figures for 'Don't know' are not shown

19.1.3 Two in five (40%) London parents believe that local borough councils audit Maintained schools to make sure they are spending their money in the right way (12% for free schools and 11% for Academies). Further, a quarter (26%) believe that the Department for Education audits Maintained schools. This figure for the Department of Education is significantly lower than those from 2013 and 2014, when over a third of parents believed that the Department for Education audits Maintained schools (38% and 37% respectively).

- 19.1.4 Parents are much less likely to be under the impression that local borough councils audit Free schools (12%) or Academies (11%) to make sure they are spending their money appropriately. In the case of both of these school types, parents are most likely, by a significant margin, to believe that the Department for Education conducts these audits (26% for Free schools and 29% for Academies). However, these figures have dropped since the 2014 study, when roughly two-in-five parents believed that the Department for Education conducts these audits (38% for free schools and 39% for academies).
- 19.1.5 Parents are least likely to report that the Central Government and private accountants are involved in audits for Maintained schools, and therefore more likely report that they are for Academies and Free schools (14% compared with 20% and 18% respectively for Central Government, and 7% compared with 18% and 20% respectively for private accountants).
- 19.1.6 In this year's research, parents and governors were also included as potential groups who could audit schools to make sure they are spending their money the right way. London parents are most likely to believe that parents audit Free schools (8% compared with 3% for Academies and Free schools). Further, roughly one-in-five parents believe that governors are responsible for auditing the spending of all types of schools (20% for Academies, 19% for Free schools, and 21% for Maintained schools).

Figure 29: Perceptions of where the accountability lies for auditing schools' spending



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

Note: Figures for 'Don't know' are not shown

19.1.7 For both Academies (35%) and Free schools (35%), parents most commonly feel that local borough councils should be the ones to ensure that money is spent responsibly, with a third reporting this in both cases. These figures are almost identical to those of parents who believe that the Department for Education should be ensuring money is spent responsibly in both Free schools (35%) and Academies (34%).

19.1.8 For Maintained schools, however, almost half of parents (45%) believe that local borough councils should ensure that schools are spending responsibly, significantly more than those who believe the Department for Education is to ensure responsible school spending (33%).

19.1.9 Around one third of parents believe governors should be ensuring school spending is deemed responsible. This finding is consistent across all three school types, with figures of 33%, 34% and 33% for Academies, Free schools and Maintained schools respectively. The figures for parents are significantly lower, with around one-in-six believing that parents themselves should be ensuring responsible school spending. Again, these results are consistent across the three school types, with the figures being 15%, 17% and 14% for Academies, Free schools and Maintained schools respectively.

Figure 30: Views on who should ensure each type of school is spending its money in a responsible way

	Academies	Free schools	Maintained schools
Department for Education	34%	35%	33%
Local borough councils	35%	36%	45%
Governors	33%	34%	33%
Central government	18%	16%	16%
Parents	15%	17%	14%
Private accountants	14%	16%	11%
Other	2%	1%	1%
No one	0%	1%	0%
Don't know	16%	16%	16%

Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

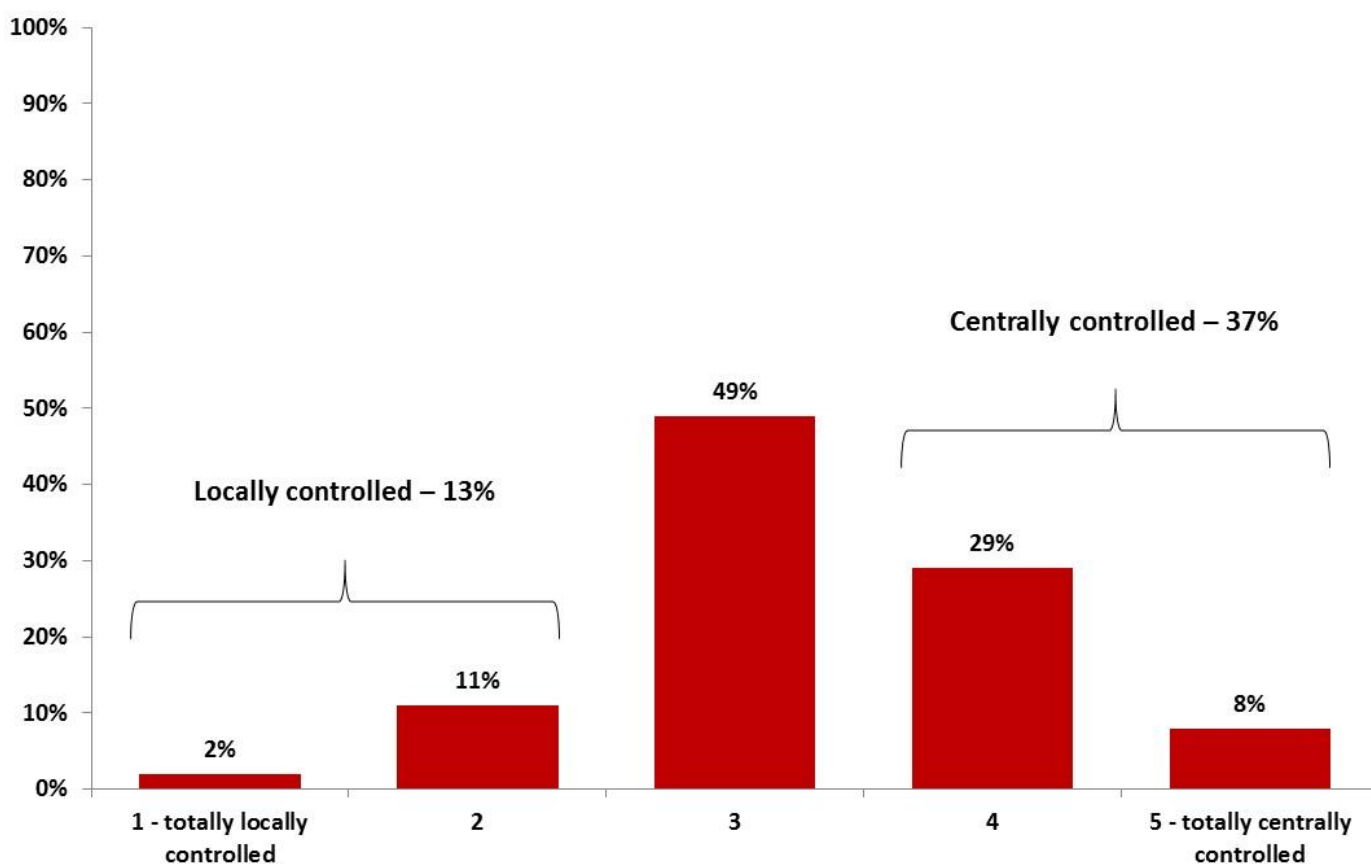
Section 7: Perspectives on the control of the education system in England

This research has been conducted using a deliberative method, where respondents are presented with information to inform them about education policy and the contrasting debates before being asked a variety of questions. The opening question to the survey asks parents to consider how centralised or localised the education system in England is before they have been presented with any further information. After working through the survey parents were asked the same question again, this section of the report analyses these findings.

20 How centralised or localised is the education system?

- 20.1.1 As figure 31 shows, nearly half of parents in London (49%), when asked at the outset of the survey, are in the middle ground on whether the English education system is centrally or locally controlled.
- 20.1.2 Although, at the outset of the survey, parents were more likely to feel that the education system was more centrally controlled (37%) than locally controlled (13%). This data on initial perceptions of how centralised or localised the education system has remained a consistent view from parents through the 2013 and 2014 studies.
- 20.1.3 There were no significant differences between different demographics of parents or parents with children in different types of schools on how centralised or localised the education system is.

Figure 31: Thinking of the education system in England, how centralised (i.e. under central government control) or localised (i.e. under local control) do you think the system currently is? – asked at start of the survey



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002)

20.1.4 At the end of the survey parents were then shown information which described two positions on how the introduction of Academies and Free schools has made the education system more centralised or has created more local decisions making¹⁸.

¹⁸ Some people feel that with the introduction of Academies and Free schools the education system in England is now more centralised as the remit of Local Authority power over these schools in its area has been diminished and the Secretary of State is directly responsible for individual schools.

Others feel that Academies and Free schools give more control to local people in the decisions made over the education the children receive.

20.1.5 Figures 32 and 33 show how the opinion of parents changed on how centralised or localised the education system is when they answered the same question at the end of the survey. This demonstrates that broadly the views of parents remained consistent to what extent they felt the education system was localised or centralised.

20.1.6 There has been a small movement towards the middle ground, with 52% of parents who rated the education system at 3 out of 5 – an increase of three percentage points from their opinion at the start of the survey. There was also a subsequent small reduction of two percentage points in the proportion of parents in London that feel the education system is locally controlled.

Figure 32: Thinking of the education system in England, how centralised (i.e. under central government control) or localised (i.e. under local control) do you think the system currently is? – asked at the end of the survey

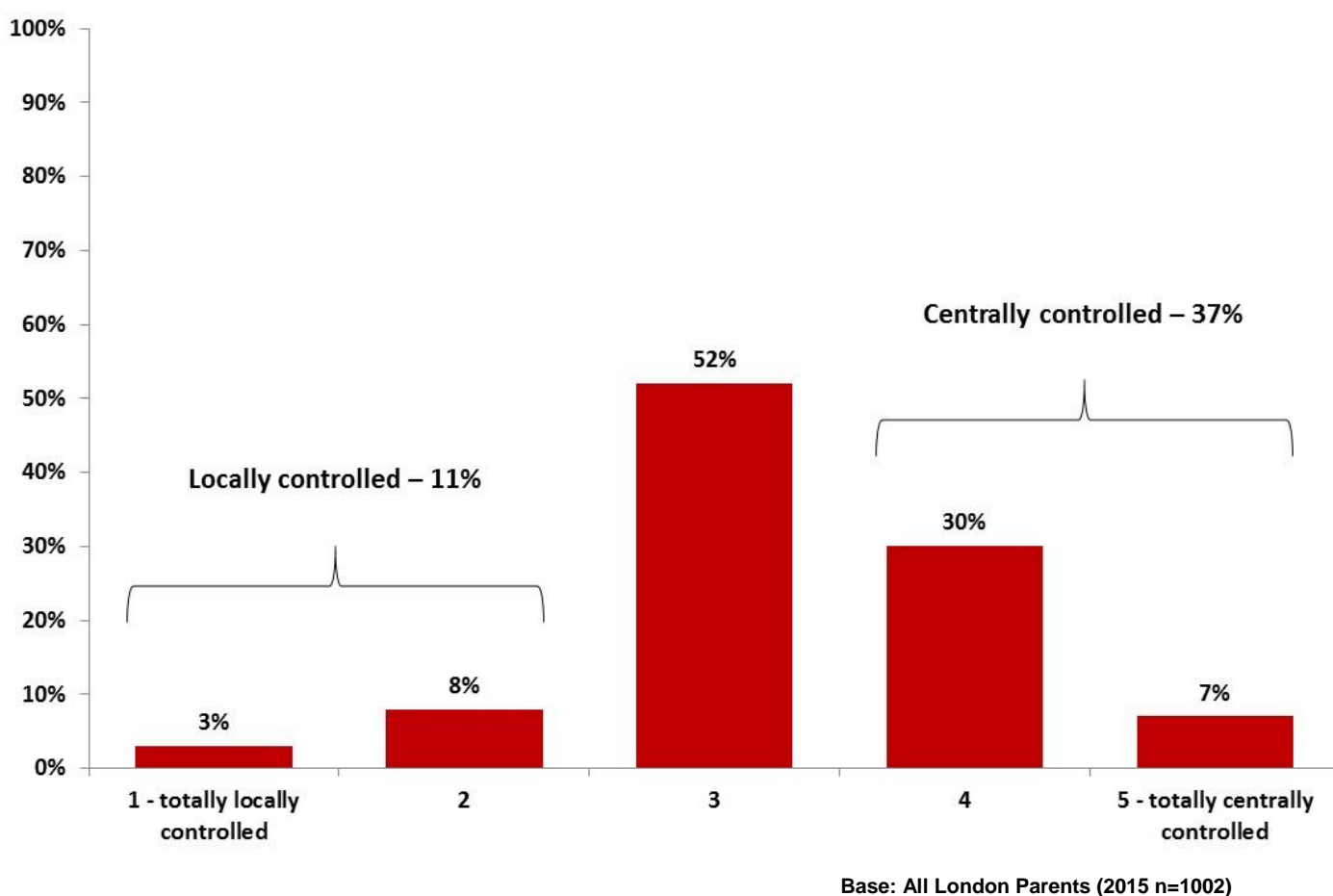
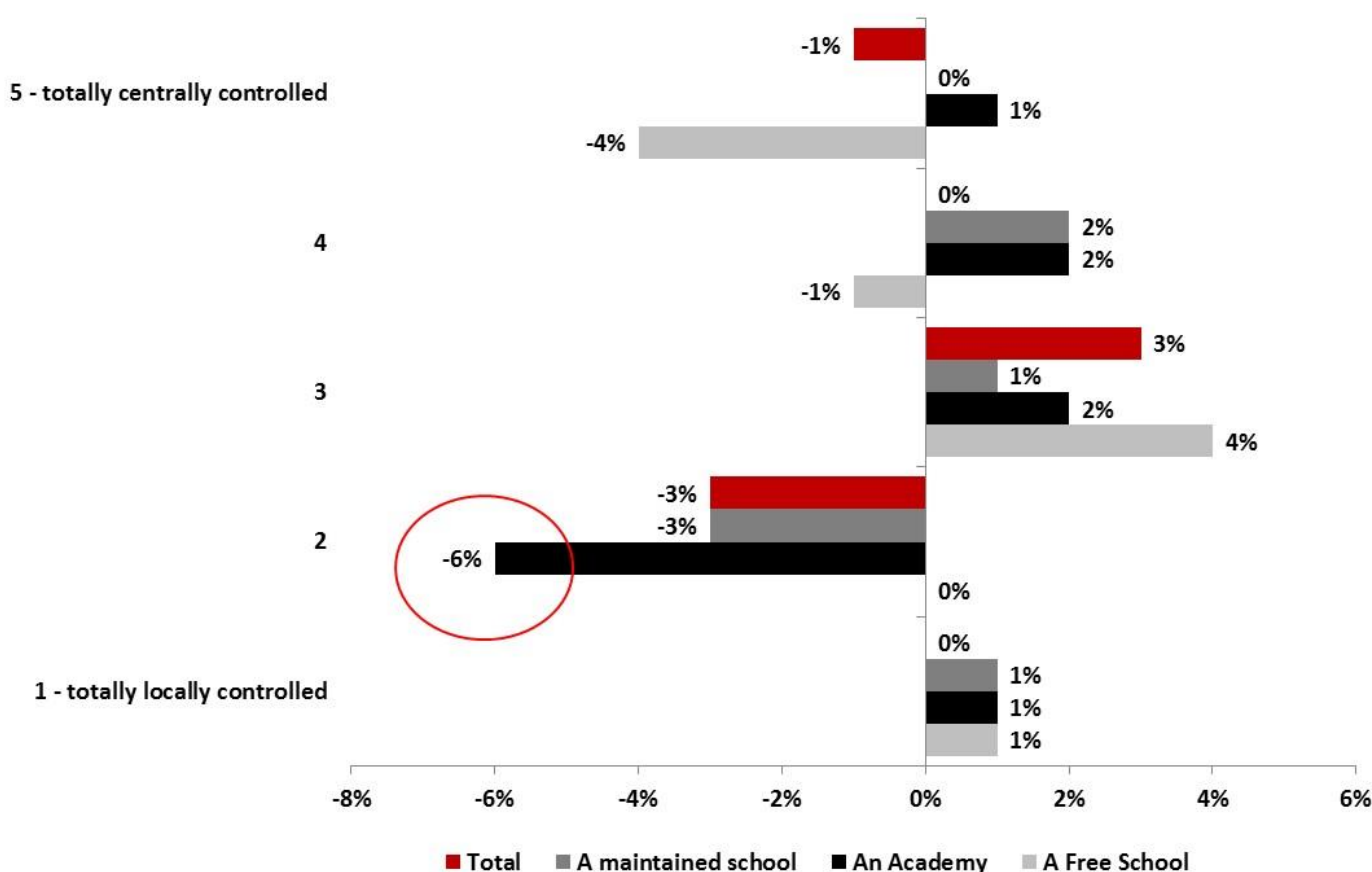


Figure 33: Thinking of the education system in England, how centralised (i.e. under central government control) or localised (i.e. under local control) do you think the system currently is? – change from start to end of the survey



Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1002), Maintained school (2015 n=429), Academy school (2015 n=327), Free school (2015 n=140)

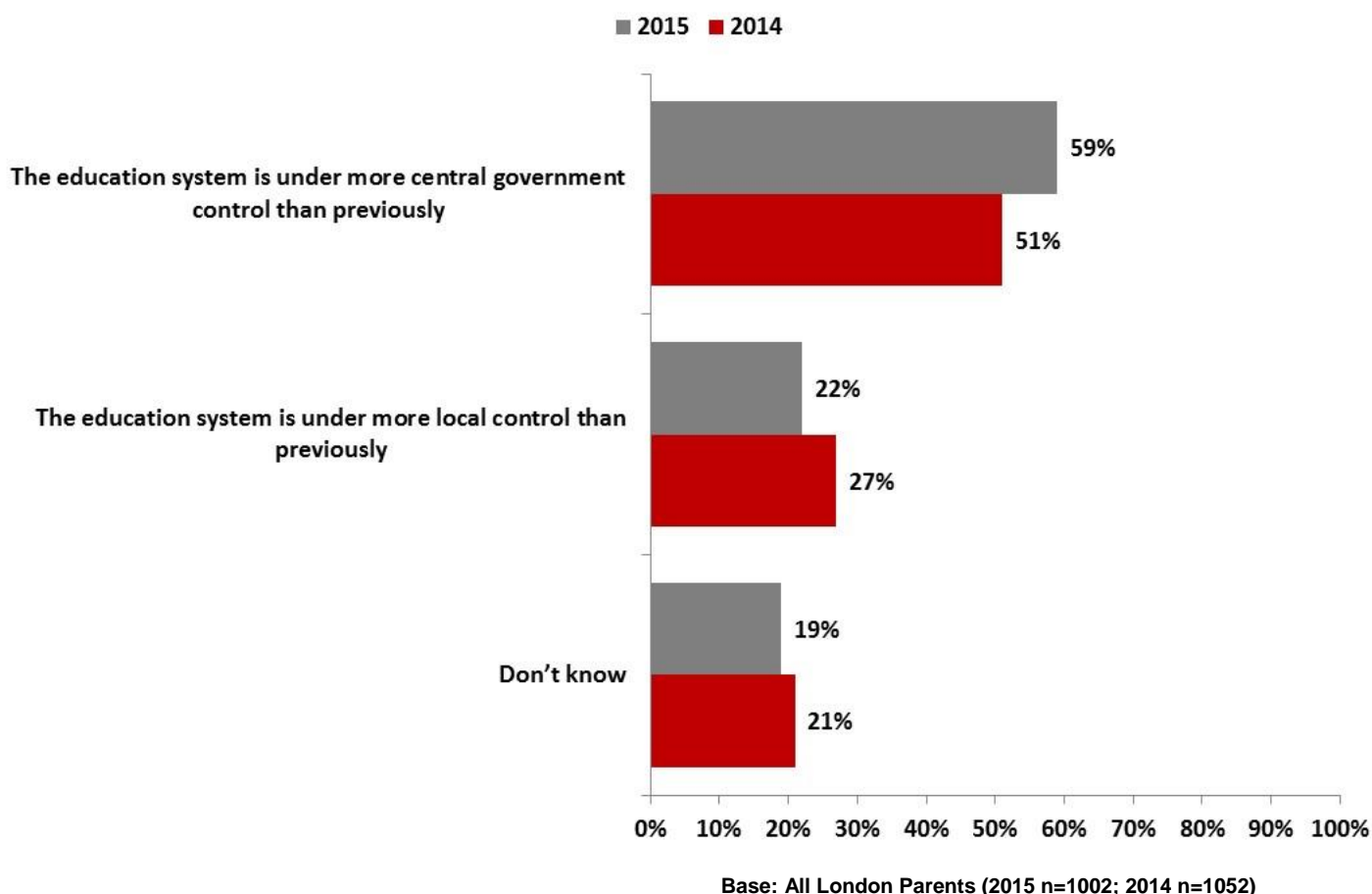
20.1.7 Figure 33 above also shows how the views of parents with children at different types of school changed over the course of the survey. Parents with a child at an Academy demonstrated the largest change in opinion with a six percentage point decrease in the proportion that rate the education system as 2 out of 5 (locally controlled) on the centrally or locally controlled scale.

20.1.8 Parents with a child in a free school were more likely to show a small movement from feeling the education system was totally centrally controlled (a reduction of four percentage points) to being in the middle ground (an increase of four percentage points).

20.1.9 Figure 34 below summarises this position with six out of ten parents in London (59%) when asked at the end of the survey thinking that the education system is under more central government control than they did previously. A further fifth (22%) thought the system was under more local control and 19% did not know.

20.1.10 Compared to the 2014 survey this is an eight percentage point increase in the proportion of parents who think the education system is under more central government control than previously.

Figure 34: Given what you have read throughout this survey and the questions you have answered, which of the following best describe how you think the English education system is currently run?

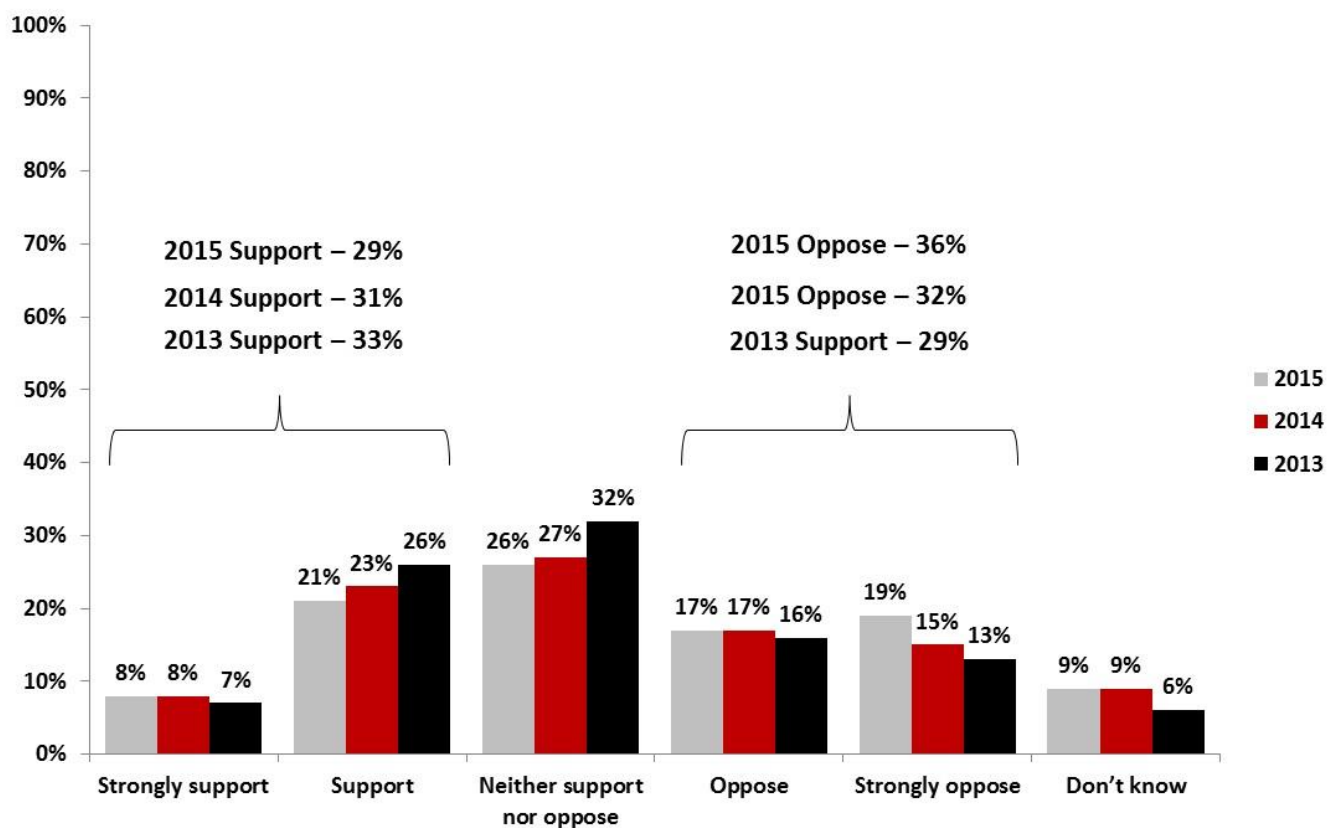


- 20.1.11 There is a clear difference in attitudes by social grade, with those parents from the highest social grade (AB and C1) significantly more likely than those from other social grades to report that they think the education system is under more central government control than they previously did. Six out of ten (65%) parents in the AB social grade and 60% in the C1 social grade report this compared with 49% of C2s and 47% of DEs.
- 20.1.12 By the type of school that children attend there is also a difference in attitudes. Around two thirds of parents with a child in a maintained school (65%) or an Academy (63%) think that the education system is under more central control than they did previously, significantly higher than the quarter (40%) of parents with a child in a Free school who think this.
- 20.1.13 Although parents with a child in a Free school (27%) are significantly more likely than those with a child in a maintained school (17%) or Academy (13%) to report that they do not know whether the education system is under more central or local control than they did previously.

21 London parents support for Academies and Free schools

- 21.1.1 Parents in London are for the first time in this series of research more likely to oppose the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools than support this policy. With 36% of parents in London opposing the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools and 29% in support – although there is not a majority view either way. A quarter (26%) neither support nor oppose, so there is still a large amount of uncertainty on the growth of Academies and Free schools.
- 21.1.2 This is a shift in opinion from the 2013 survey when 34% of parents in London were in support of the idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools and 29% opposed and a third (32%) were in the middle.

Figure 35: To what extent do you support or oppose the idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools?



Base: All London Parents (2015 n= 1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

21.1.3 Opposition to the idea of more Academies and Free schools remains higher from those from a higher social grade, with 42% of those from an AB and 38% from a C1 social grade in opposition to the idea of more Academies and Free schools compared with 21% of those from a C2 (21%) and 27% from a DE social grade.

21.1.4 By school type we also find that parents with a child in a maintained school are significantly more likely to oppose more Academies and Free schools than those parents with a child in an Academy or Free school. As can be seen below:

- Maintained schools – 19% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 48% oppose

- Academy schools – 42% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 32% oppose
- Free schools – 43% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 11% oppose

Appendix A – Section C contextual information

All schools are expected to have someone representing the local borough council (who is not an elected councillor). Those established before September 2012 are also expected to have a representative of the local community (someone with a connection to the community the school is in), whereas those established after 2012 have to include a co-opted member (that is one who is chosen for having specific skills but does not necessarily have any connection to the community the school is in).

Some people feel that each school should have its own board of governors whereas others feel that one board of governors should be allowed to oversee a number of schools. The arguments for each are outlined below:

Each school should have its own board of governors

Those who hold this view are concerned that with the introduction of Academy and Free Schools (who report directly to central government) and the emphasis on co-opted governors, communities have less say in the governance of their local schools, feeling they have fewer ways to influence the schools in their community and that these schools have less ties generally to their community.

They feel that a strong governing body is one where the governors have first-hand experience of the community in which the school is situated.

One governing body should be allowed to manage a number of schools

Those who hold this view feel that by being able to recruit governors from a larger geographical area (not being tied to the community in which one school is based), they can recruit a number of experts in certain areas (e.g. law or finance) which would allow them to manage more than one school.

They feel that having one body manage more than one school cuts down on the time and resources taken up by governance and provides more consistent standards across schools. Providing greater economies of scale in the running of schools and reduced duplication. They also feel it makes it easier for schools to learn from each other.