



Ask the Parents

Report prepared for
London Councils

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Executive summary

Introduction

- 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 fourth wave of the research study, and findings are compared throughout the report to results from the first, second and third waves of this research, which were conducted in September 2013, 2014 and 2015.
- 1.1.2 The total sample size of this study was 1,022 parents of children aged 5-16 living in Greater London and fieldwork was undertaken between 24th August and 7th September 2016. The data has been weighted to be representative of the London population by gender, ethnicity, social grade and inner and outer London location.

Standards, accountability and intervention

- 1.1.3 Four in five London parents (79%) think the local council plays an important role in ensuring high education standards in schools, a figure which has increased from 74% in 2015. Comparing the local council with other institutions, parents place higher importance on the headteacher (93%), parents of students (88%) and the school's board of Governors (80%), and relatively, less importance on Central Government (71%).
- 1.1.4 One in two parents (49%) believe that the local council is held to account for the performance of Maintained schools. While coming second to the headteacher (62%), this figure is significantly higher than for Central Government (26%) and Ofsted (20%). When considering Academies and Free schools, parents are significantly less likely to believe that the local council is held to account for their performance.
- 1.1.5 The majority of parents (73%) correctly identify that the local 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, 2014 and 2015 surveys. Roughly a third believe local councils have the power to influence/ intervene with underperforming Academies (31%) and Free schools (34%), and 14 per cent with fee paying schools.

- 1.1.6 As found in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 surveys, there remains a degree of confusion among parents of children in Academies and Free schools as to the influence that local authorities have. A third (32%) of parents with a child in an Academy believe that local councils have the power to influence or intervene if an Academy were to be underperforming. Furthermore, two thirds (65%) of parents with a child in a Free school believe that local councils have the power to intervene in underperforming Free schools.
- 1.1.7 Those who thought local councils have power over underperforming schools were then asked which, if any, powers they think they have. Consistent with 2015, the top three powers they are perceived to have are:
- Sending in inspectors (60%)
 - Placing the school under special measures (54%)
 - Issuing warning notices (52%)
- 1.1.8 After ascertaining parents' responses on powers they think local councils have, a detailed description was provided of those they actually have¹. Parents were then asked over which schools, if any, they feel local councils *should* have powers of influence and intervention. Consistently, a majority state Maintained schools (75%), while seven out of ten state Free schools (70%) and Academies (70%) and a third fee paying schools (34%). These findings are on par with those found in previous years, showing 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 borough councils 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 borough council also had a duty to provide improvement services, this was removed by the 2011 Act. The 2011 Education Act also removed power from local borough councils 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. Local borough councils do still, however, have the duty to hold all state funded schools in their area, including Academies and Free schools, 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 and Free schools.

- 1.1.9 One-in-three parents (32%) trust local councils to be held to account for the performance of Maintained schools, which is higher than trust in all other institutions and stakeholders, including the headteacher (27%). Parents are somewhat less likely to primarily trust local councils to be held to account for Academies (19%) and Free schools (20%), although this is still stated by one in five.
- 1.1.10 Thinking about who they would trust most to handle various hypothetical concerns related to their child's school, London parents report that they would trust their local council more than any other organisation to resolve complaints regarding the school's governance or leadership (39%) and inappropriate treatment of their child by school staff (34%). For issues related to their child having difficulty in the classroom with a specific subject, parents would be equally likely to trust their local council (26%) or Ofsted (26%), and when it comes to concerns about the curriculum being taught, parents become more likely to say they would trust Ofsted (46%) the most to resolve their complaint, compared with roughly a quarter (24%) would trust their local council most.
- 1.1.11 When asked which organisation they would turn to if their child's school showed signs of declining education standards, over a third (34%) of parents opt for their local council. This is second only to Ofsted at 47%, and far outstrips Central Government, an option chosen by only 7% of parents.

School places and admissions

- 1.1.12 Parents in London place high importance on the role of local councils' in determining the location of schools and in finding new schools places. The vast majority of parents (75%) agree that local councils should have the final say in the location of new schools within their authority boundary, while only 11% disagree with this.
- 1.1.13 Furthermore, four in five London parents (82% - up 4 percentage points from last year) agree that local councils should be able to influence schools in their area to find more places or expand, while a minority (9%) disagree. Half (50%) of parents believe that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local council requires it.

1.1.14 A new topic in this survey was London parents' views on grammar schools and the concept of selecting pupils by ability. Findings indicate that parents are relatively split between various standpoints. We do find half of London parents (52%) state their opposition to the establishment of new grammar schools in some way; one quarter (26%) believe that the government should stop schools selecting by academic ability and existing grammar schools should be opened to children of all abilities, and another quarter (26%) feel that the government should retain the existing grammar schools but not allow more selective schools or new grammar schools to be built. Meanwhile, nearly one third (31%) of parents believe that the government should encourage more schools to select by academic ability and in fact build more grammar schools.

Funding and the use of public funds

1.1.15 When asked who they think should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools, close to half (43%) of London parents state that the Department for Education should have this role, while 38% feel the local council should. However, this balance has shifted slightly since 2015 in the direction of the local council. Twelve months ago, 48% of parents believed that the Department for Education should have the primary responsibility for allocating funding to all schools, in contrast with 34% who felt the responsibility should sit with the local council.

1.1.16 The vast majority (79%) of London parents feel it is important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local councils, and among those parents, two-in-five (44%) feel it is very important. These findings are consistent with 2015. Although parents are most likely to state this for Maintained schools, they feel nearly equally strongly about it being important for local councils to be able to scrutinise the spending of Academies (72%) and Free schools (73%).

1.1.17 Consistent with 2015, London parents are roughly equally likely to believe that local councils and the Department for Education should be ensuring that Academies (41% and 40% respectively) and Free schools (40% and 41% respectively) are spending their money in a responsible way.

- 1.1.18 Notably, since last year there has been a significant increase in the proportion of London parents who believe that local councils should be ensuring Academies spend their money responsibly, from 35% in 2015 to 41% in 2016.
- 1.1.19 The majority of London parents believe that the current level of funding and/or resources their child's school receives is sufficient (33%) or adequate (31%) for what it needs to operate effectively, a quarter (25%) feel it is insufficient. Parents with children in a Maintained school (32%) are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy (20%) or Free school (16%) to feel the current level of funding and/or resources is insufficient.
- 1.1.20 Among parents who indicate they are aware of pressures on funding in their child's school, the most commonly reported impact is parents paying for activities more than previously, with one-in-two (49%) stating this. Parents with children in a Maintained school are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy to report paying for activities more than previously as a consequence of funding pressures.
- 1.1.21 The majority of London parents (71%) feel that the UK government should increase the amount of money it spends on education and schools. A quarter (25%) believe the government should increase funding by a great deal and nearly half (46%) by a fair amount. Only a very small proportion (2%) believe the UK government should decrease the amount of money it spends, and a minority feel it should be kept the same as now (17%).

The control of the education system in England

- 1.1.22 Opposition from parents in London to the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools continues to grow. The proportion of parents opposing the growth in Academy and Free schools has increased by five percentage points from the 2015 survey. Four out of ten parents in London now oppose the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools, with 26% in support – although there is not a majority view either way. A fifth (22%) neither support nor oppose, so there is still a large amount of uncertainty on the growth of Academies and Free schools.

- 1.1.23 For the first time parents in London were asked if they support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor Academies, and half of parents in London (50%) support the idea. Under a fifth (16%) of parents in London oppose this idea, but there is a fair degree of uncertainty with a third of parents (34%) not knowing if they support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor academies.
- 1.1.24 The majority of parents in London are currently opposed to the idea of forcing Academy conversion on schools and the idea of expanding the policy of forced Academy conversion to more schools – with 54% and 55% respectively in opposition to these ideas.
- 1.1.25 When asked at the end of the survey, more than a third (37%) of parents in London state that they believe the education system in England is more under central government control than local control, while 13% feel the system is more under local control. The remaining half (50%) indicate that they believe the system is more or less equally under central and local control.

Key measures

Standards, accountability and intervention	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change 2015/16 (+/-)
Local council* has an important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools	82%	83%	74% ↓	79% ↑	+5%
Central Government** has an important role in ensuring education standards are high in schools	84%	84%	64% ↓	71% ↑	+7%
Believe local council is held to account for the performance of Maintained schools	N/A	N/A	44%	49% ↑	+5%
Believe local council is held to account for the performance of Free schools	N/A	N/A	15%	19% ↑	+4%
Believe local council is held to account for the performance of Academies	N/A	N/A	15%	16%	+1%
Local council should have power of influence over Maintained schools if underperforming	77%	77%	76%	75%	-1%
Local council should have power of influence over Free schools if underperforming	62%	68% ↑	70%	70%	0%
Local council should have power of influence over Academies if underperforming	62%	63%	67%	70%	+3%
Trust local council to be held to account for the performance of Maintained schools	N/A	N/A	30%	32%	+2%
Would trust local council most to resolve complaints regarding governance or leadership at their child's school	N/A	N/A	30%	39% ↑	+9%

*In 2013 and 2014 the term 'Local Authority' was used, and in 2015 and 2016 the term 'local borough council' was used (applies all throughout)

**In 2013 and 2014 the term 'Department for Education' was used

School places and admissions	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change 2015/16 (+/-)
Agree that local councils should have the ability to influence all schools in their area to find more school places or expand	76%	81% ↑	78%	82% ↑	+4%
Agree that local councils should have final say in the location of new schools within their authority boundary	N/A	N/A	80%	75% ↓	-5%
Agree that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local council requires it	44%	49% ↑	54% ↑	50% ↓	-4%

Funding and use of public funds	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change 2015/16 (+/-)
Local council should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools	N/A	34%	34%	38%	+4%
DFE should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools	N/A	49%	48%	43% ↓	-5%
Important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local councils	N/A	N/A	79%	79%	0%
Important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by Central government	N/A	N/A	63%	67%	+4%
Believe local councils should audit Academy school spending	34%	34%	35%	41% ↑	+6%
Believe local councils should audit Maintained school spending	44%	41%	45%	53% ↑	+8%

The control of the education system in England	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change 2015/16 (+/-)
The education system is under more central government control than previously	52%	51%	59% ↑	57%	-2%
The education system is under more local control than previously	29%	27%	22% ↓	21%	-1%
The idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools - support	34%	31%	29%	26%	-3%
The idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools - oppose	29%	32%	36%	41% ↑	+5%

↑ = statistically significant increase from previous year

↓ = statistically significant decrease from previous year

Introduction

1 Background

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of a London Councils commissioned project undertaken to investigate parents' views on accountability in education services. This is the fourth wave of this research study, and findings are compared throughout the report to results from the previous three waves, which were conducted in September 2013, 2014 and 2015.
- 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 650,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. The total sample size was 1,022 parents of children aged 5-16 living in Greater London and fieldwork was undertaken between 24th August and 7th September 2016.

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 unweighted sample profile.

Gender	
Male	438
Female	584
Social grade ²	
ABC1	802
C2DE	220
Age	
18-34	167
35-44	408
45-54	367
55+	80
Ethnicity	
White	676
BME	238
Prefer not to say	108
Location	
Inner	361
Outer	661
Total	1022

² 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.

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 five³ and bottom five⁴ 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.

³ Kingston upon Thames, Sutton, Barnet, Bromley, Westminster (source: SFR01_2016_LA_Tables)

⁴ Bexley, Haringey, Enfield, Barking and Dagenham, Lewisham (source: SFR01_2016_LA_Tables)

Section 1: Standards, accountability and intervention

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

3 Attainment

3.1.1 Nine out of ten London parents (92%) rank London as the top performing region on GCSE attainment, a steady increase from the 87% of parents who reported this in the 2015 survey and the 81% in the previous year. London is followed by the South East (62%) and South West (33%) as being perceived as the top performing regions. These three regions were identified as the top performing regions in the 2015, 2014 and 2013 studies.

3.1.2 When parents were asked to rank those areas they thought perform worst at GCSE, the North East hits the bottom of the scale (58%) followed by the North West (41%) and Yorkshire and Humber at 39 per cent. Again this is a consistent picture with parents' assessment of education performance by region from the last 3 years. Just 5 per cent of London parents 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.

Figure 1: Summary of top/ bottom performing regions⁵

	Top 3			
	2016	2015	2014	2013
London	92%	87%	81%	77%
South East	62%	66%	63%	65%
South West	33%	35%	36%	42%
	Bottom 3			
	2016	2015	2014	2013
North East	58%	60%	46%	46%

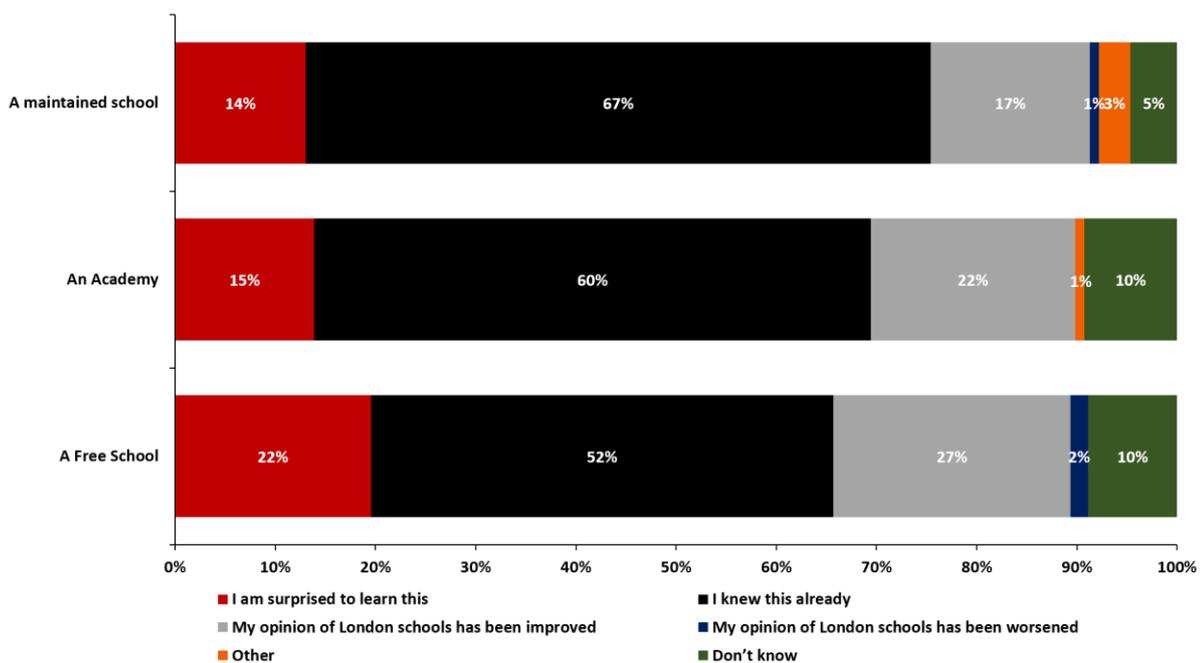
⁵ One of the things schools are judged on is the proportion of students who achieve at least 5 GCSEs graded between A* and C. Thinking only about schools funded by the state (i.e. excluding fee paying schools), please choose the top/ bottom 3 performing regions in which you think their pupils achieved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

North West	41%	46%	36%	39%
Yorkshire & Humber	39%	42%	39%	37%

Base: All London Parents (2016 n= 1,022; 2015 n= 1,002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

3.1.3 London schools achieve higher results than the national average – once parents are provided with these facts⁶, six out of ten (61%) admit to already knowing this, a fifth (21%) say it improved their opinion and 15% say they were surprised to learn this.

Figure 2: Reactions to facts about the achievements of London schools



Base: All London Parents with a child in a maintained school (n=497), an Academy (n=353), and a Free school (n=176)

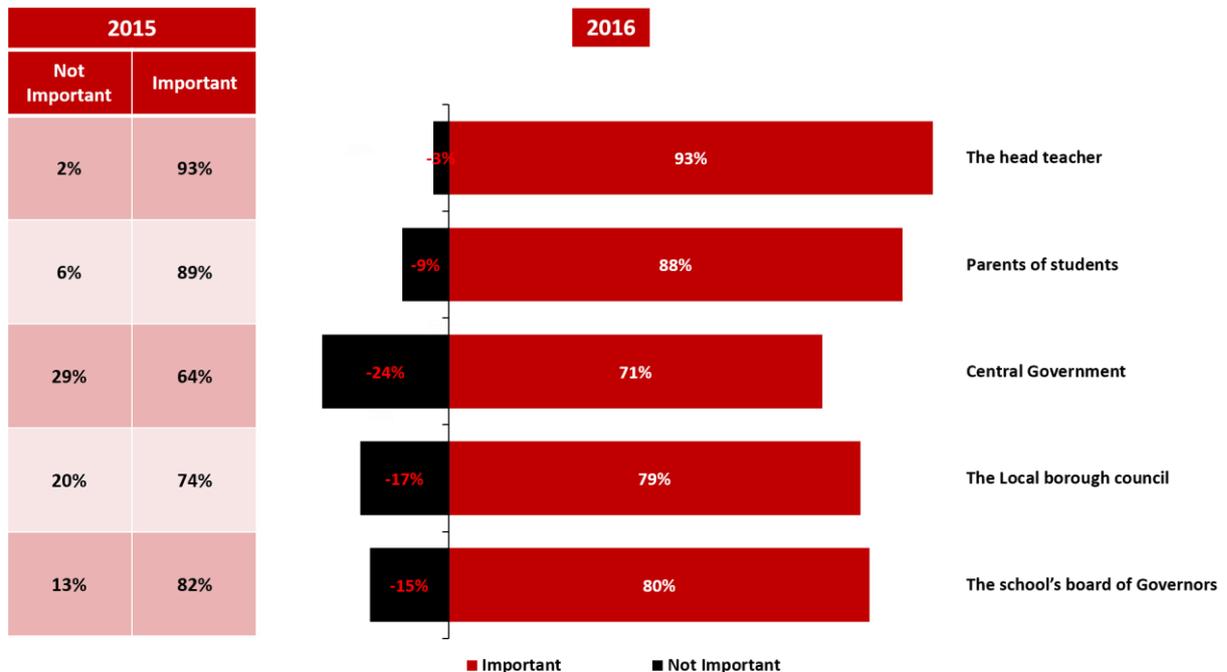
⁶ London schools achieve higher results than the national average. In 2015, for example, 60.9% of pupils in London achieved at least 5 GCSEs graded A* to C (including Maths and English) compared with 53.8% across the whole of England. London schools have been the best performing in the country since 2009.

- 3.1.4 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. Parents with a child in a Free school are also more likely to be surprised by the facts on school attainment than those with a child in a Maintained school.
- 3.1.5 In addition, 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 (27% from a BME group reporting this compared with 18% white British).

4 Ensuring standards in education

- 4.1.1 Almost all parents are in agreement (93%) that headteachers play an important role in ensuring high education standards in schools.
- 4.1.2 When comparing data between 2015 and 2016, 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 council plays an important role in ensuring education standards has risen from 74% to 79%.
- 4.1.3 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 (78% compared with 69%).

Figure 3: Perceived levels of importance each group plays in ensuring high education standards⁷



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022; 2015 n= 1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

Note: Figures for don't know have not been shown.

5 Accountability for school performance

5.1.1 Across all school types, London parents are most likely to believe that the headteacher would be held to account for the performance of a school. Parents take this view about the governance of fee-paying schools in particular, with 69% stating this, followed by religious schools at 65%. The headteacher is also believed to be held to account for school performance at Maintained schools (62%), Academies (61%), and Free schools (59%) by more than half of parents.

⁷ 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.

- 5.1.2 London parents are most likely to believe that parents of students are accountable for school performance of when considering Free schools, with nearly a third (29%) saying they think parents are held to account for the performance of this type of school. Comparatively, roughly one-in-five believe that parents of students are held to account for the performance of Maintained schools (17%), Academies (18%), religious schools (20%), and fee-paying schools (21%).
- 5.1.3 Parents of children at Free schools are more likely to emphasize the accountability of parents at all schools, with 29% claiming parents had a role in academies, 35% at Free schools, 23% at Maintained schools, 29% at religious schools, and 31% at fee-paying schools.
- 5.1.4 London parents are significantly more likely to recognise the accountability of the local council over the performance of Maintained schools, at almost half (48%), compared to 16%, 19%, 20%, and 10% at academies, Free schools, religious schools, and fee-paying schools respectively.
- 5.1.5 Parents of children at Maintained schools are the most aware of the jurisdiction of the local councils, recognising these organisations' roles in Maintained schools more than any other group of parents (56%), but less likely to recognise the role of local councils in any other type of school than any other parents.
- 5.1.6 In the same way parents are more likely to hold Central government responsible for the performance of academies, at 33% compared to 23%, 26%, 17% and 10% at Free schools, Maintained schools, religious schools, and fee-paying schools respectively.

6 Intervention from local councils

- 6.1.1 The majority of parents (73%) correctly identify that the local 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 2015, 2014 and 2013 surveys.

Figure 4: Schools the local borough council has the power to influence⁸

	2013 Total n=1019	2014 Total n=1052	2015 Total n=1002	2016 Total n=1022	Location		Type of School		
					Inner (n=361)	Outer (n=661)	Maintained school (n=497)	Academy (n=353)	Free School (n=176)
Academy	37%	34%	33%	31%	31%	34%	31%	38%	29%
Free school	37%	35%	31%	34%	31%	32%	24%	29%	57%
Maintained school	73%	72%	74%	73%	71%	76%	86%	74%	47%
Fee paying school	15%	15%	10%	14%	10%	10%	8%	9%	18%
None of the above	9%	11%	11%	11%	12%	10%	7%	11%	9%

Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022; 2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

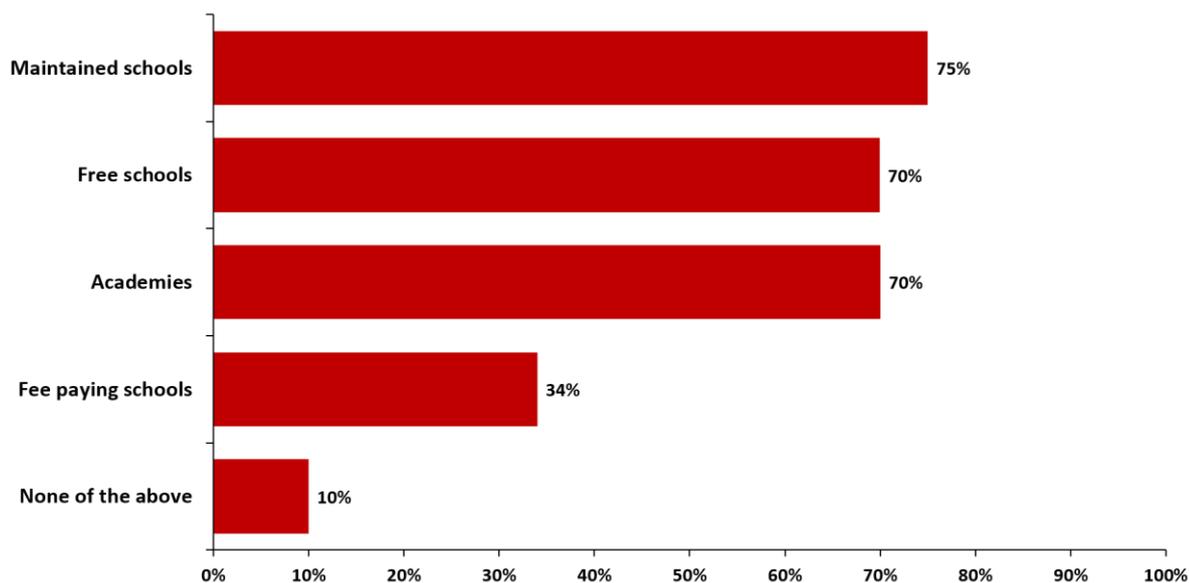
- 6.1.2 Matching the trend from 2015 and 2014, parents with a child at a Maintained school are significantly more likely than parents with a child at an Academy or Free school to identify that Local councils have the power to influence or intervene with Maintained schools if they are underperforming (82% compared with 69% and 48% respectively).
- 6.1.3 Three out of ten parents believe local councils have the power to influence/ intervene with underperforming Academies (31%), a third Free schools (34%) and 14 per cent a fee paying school.

⁸ 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?

- 6.1.4 As found in the 2015 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 32% of parents with a child in an Academy believe that local authorities have the power to influence or intervene if an Academy was underperforming, even though in reality that is not statutorily the case.
- 6.1.5 Almost two thirds (65%) of parents with a child in a Free school hold the incorrect belief that local authorities have the power to intervene in underperforming Free schools, an increase from 57% in 2015.
- 6.1.6 Those who thought local authorities had power over failing schools were then asked which, if any, powers they felt they have:
- Six in ten (60%) report sending in inspectors;
 - Just over half (54%) report placing the school under special measures;
 - Just over half (52%) report issuing warning notices;
 - Four out of ten (39%) report restructuring schools;
 - A third (33%) shutting the school down;
 - Three out of ten (32%) restricting funding;
 - Three out of ten (31%) report removing senior teaching staff end;
 - A fifth (21%) restricting the number / quality of new teachers
- 6.1.7 After ascertaining parents' responses on powers they think local authorities have, a detailed description was provided of powers they actually have⁹. Respondents were then asked over which schools, if any, they feel local authorities should have powers of influence and intervention. Again the majority (75%) state Maintained schools, seven out of ten (70%) state Free schools, seven out of ten Academies (70%) and a third fee paying schools (34%).

⁹ 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

Figure 5: Schools the local borough council SHOULD HAVE the power to influence¹⁰



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

6.1.8 These findings are on par with those found in the 2015 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.

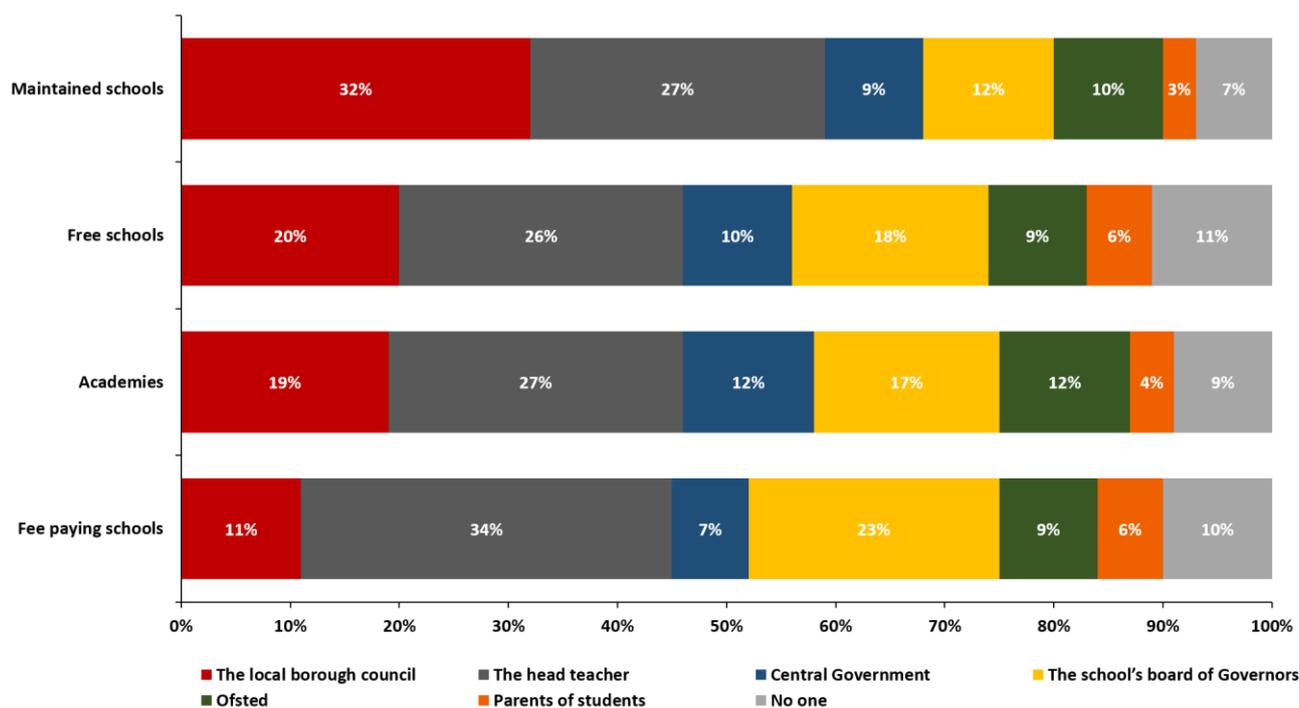
write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask Government to intervene directly. The local authority is unable to intervene without Government support. Local Authorities do still, however, have the duty to hold all state funded schools in their area, including Academies, to account in terms of performance. They are obliged to take action where they are concerned about a school's performance but have no statutory powers over Academies.

¹⁰ Please imagine the following types of school fell within the boundary of your Local Authority. Over which, if any, of the following schools do you feel local borough councils should have powers of influence and intervention? Please tick all that apply.

7 Accountability

7.1.1 Parents were also asked who they trust to hold schools to account for their performance. Headteachers are ranked top when it comes to most school types, and particularly for fee-paying schools (34%), with the exception of Maintained schools. London parents are most likely to trust the local council to be held accountable for the performance of Maintained schools, with one-in-three (32%) stating this. It is less often that parents primarily trust the local council to be held accountable for the performance of Academies (19%) and Free schools (20%).

Figure 6: Trusted to be held accountable for school performance



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

7.1.2 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 council to be accountable for Maintained schools performance, with 34% reporting this.

7.1.3 London parents with a child at a Free school state that they are equally likely to trust the headteacher and the local council to be accountable for Free school performance, with a quarter (26%) stating this for each. These are followed by Central Government (15%), meaning that those parents with a child at a Free school are much more likely to report that they trust Central Government to be accountable for Free schools performance than parents with a child at a Maintained school (7%) or Academy (10%).

8 Whistleblowing

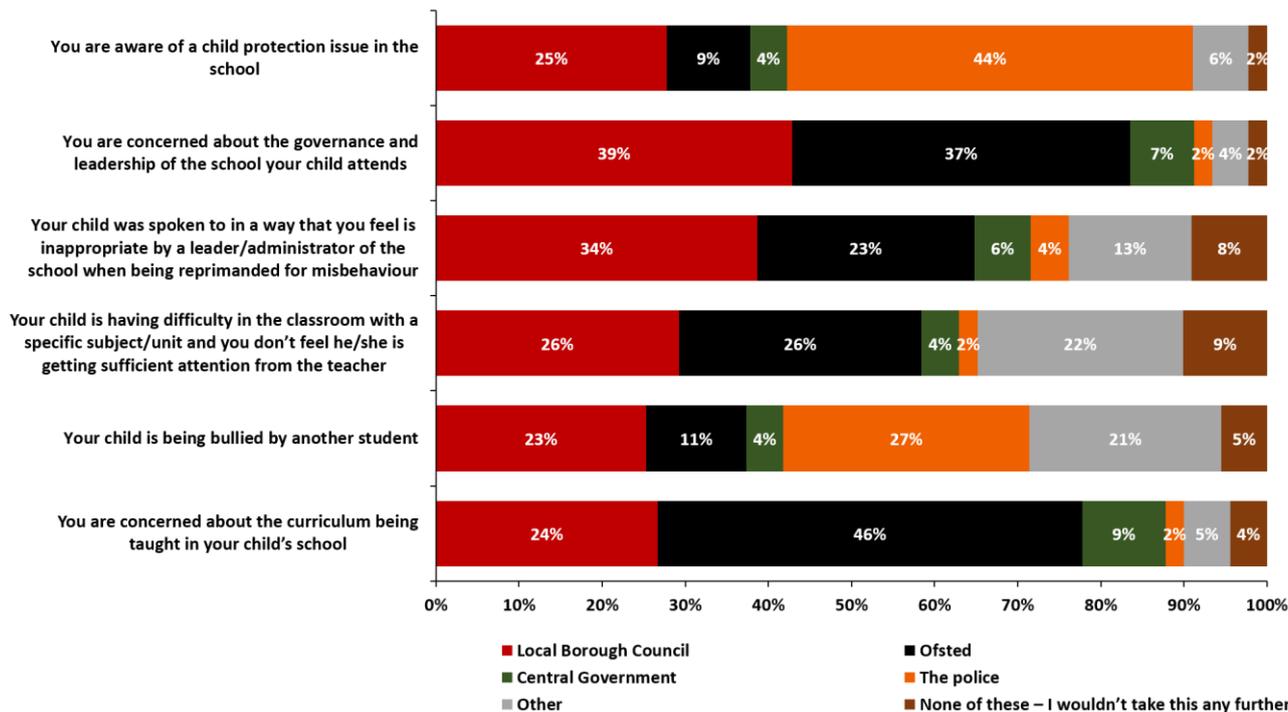
8.1.1 When London parents are asked who they would trust most to handle a series of hypothetical concerns related to their child's school, they indicate that they would trust their local council more than any other organisation to resolve complaints regarding the school's governance or leadership (39%) and inappropriate treatment of their child by school staff (34%).

8.1.2 For issues related to their child having difficulty in the classroom with a specific subject, parents would be equally likely to trust their local council (26%) or Ofsted (26%) to resolve these concerns. When it comes to a situation where they were to have concerns about the curriculum being taught in their child's school, nearly half of parents in London (46%) would trust Ofsted the most to resolve their complaint, while roughly a quarter (24%) would trust their local council most.

8.1.3 Thinking about hypothetical concerns regarding the bullying of their child by another student, over a quarter of parents (27%) would trust the police the most to resolve their complaint. This is followed closely by their local council (23%).

8.1.4 When considering issues related to child protection, the police (44%) are trusted more than any other organisation or institution by a significant margin. Secondly, a quarter of parents (25%) would most trust their local council to resolve the complaint.

Figure 7: Most trusted organisation/institution for help resolving a complaint about an issue at their child's school

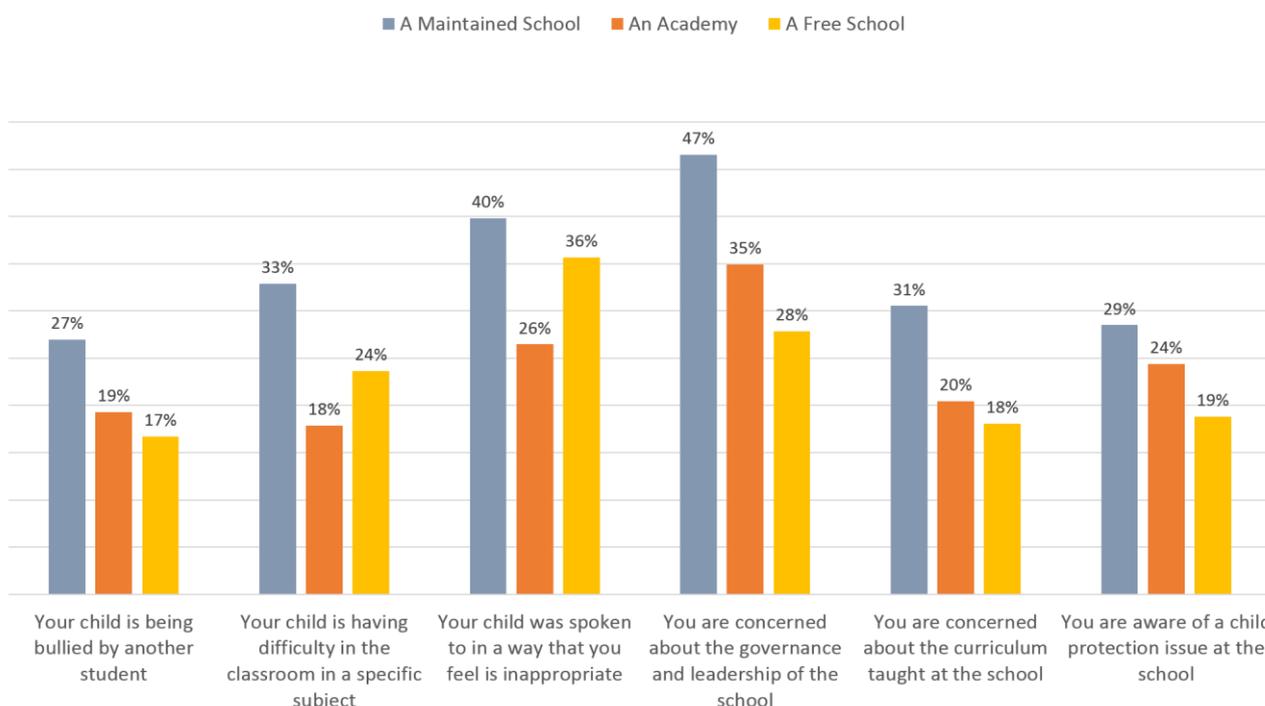


Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

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

8.1.5 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 council to resolve any of the six hypothetical situations they might have a complaint about.

Figure 8: Likelihood of contacting the local borough council about an issue at their child's school



Base: All London Parents with a child in a Maintained school (n=497), an Academy (n=353), and a Free school (n=176)

9 Intervention in declining schools

- 9.1.1 When asked which organisation they would turn to if their child's school showed signs of declining education standards, over a third (34%) of parents opt for their local council. This is second only to Ofsted at 47%, and far outstrips Central Government, an option chosen by only 7% of parents.
- 9.1.2 Parents of children at a Maintained school are significantly more likely to state that they would take the issue of education standards to the local council than those of children at Academies or Free schools (41% compared to 31% and 21% respectively).
- 9.1.3 Parents were also asked about important attributes of an organisation that ought to intervene if a school showed signs of declining standards. The attributes most frequently deemed important by parents are: the ability to respond quickly, access to a team of improvement support, and the ability to draw upon experience of successfully improving other schools (each chosen by 57%).

- 9.1.4 Parents of children at Maintained schools are significantly more likely than those of children at Free schools to deem local knowledge of the area/community as being important (51% compared with 32%). They are also marginally more likely to state this than parents of children at Academies (45%).
- 9.1.5 Parents of children who attend a Maintained school are also most likely to believe that close links with other local service providers is an important attribute of an organisation who should intervene if a school is showing signs of declining standards (40% compared with 32% among Academy parents and 23% among Free school parents).

Section 2: School places and admissions

The second 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 9: 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.

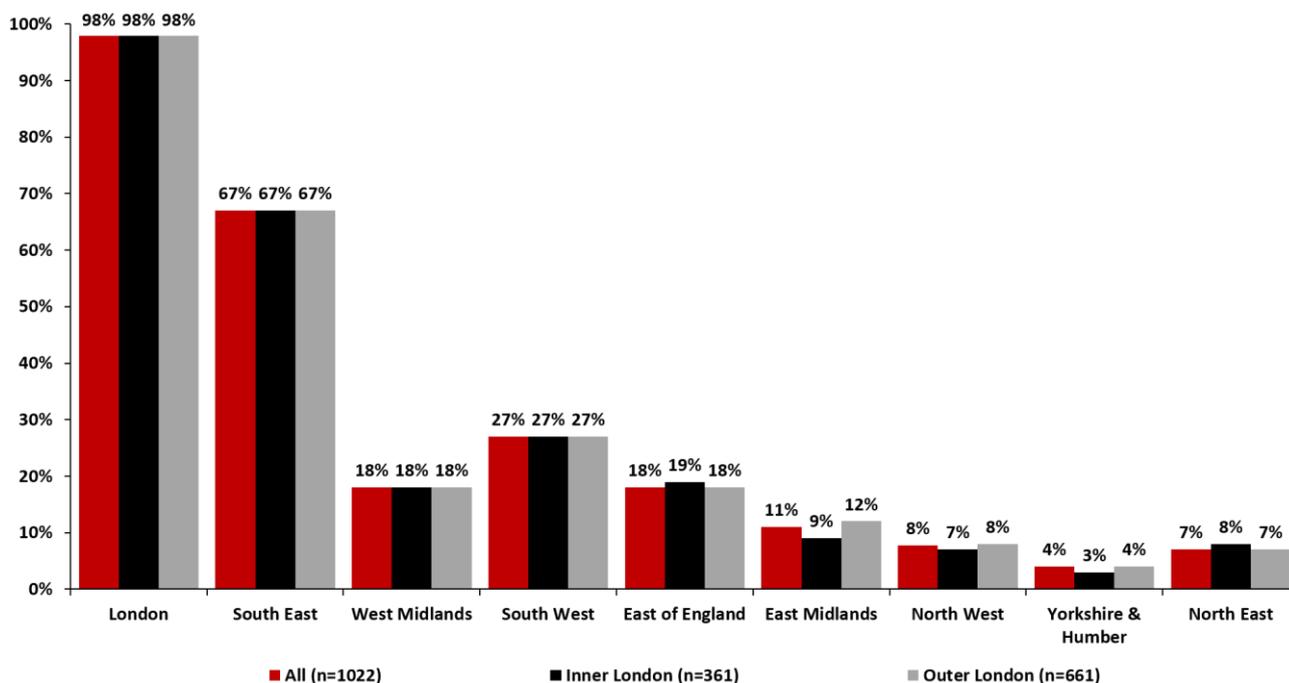
10 School places

10.1.1 London (98%) and the South East (67%) are believed by London parents to be the top two regions where demand¹¹ for school places is the highest. These perceptions are on a par with findings from the 2014 and 2015 studies.

10.1.2 Parents residing within Inner and Outer London are equally likely to see London and the South East as the regions where demand for places is highest.

10.1.3 Whilst the South East is ranked the region with the second highest demand for school places overall by all parents, those in the highest social grade (ABC1) are most likely to mention this region (73% vs 58% for C2DE's).

Figure 10: Regions in which parents think the level of demand for school places is highest



¹¹ By demand, we mean the volume of children needing places at school compared with the number of places available.

10.1.4 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?'*

10.1.5 Over four fifths of London parents agree (82%) that local councils should be able to influence schools in their area to find more places or expand, and a minority (9%) disagree.

10.1.6 Across all school groups, parents are much more likely to agree that local councils should have the ability to influence the expansion of all schools in their area than to disagree. As figure 11 shows, the group expressing the greatest increase in agreement with this statement is that of parents of children in Maintained schools.

Figure 11: 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?'

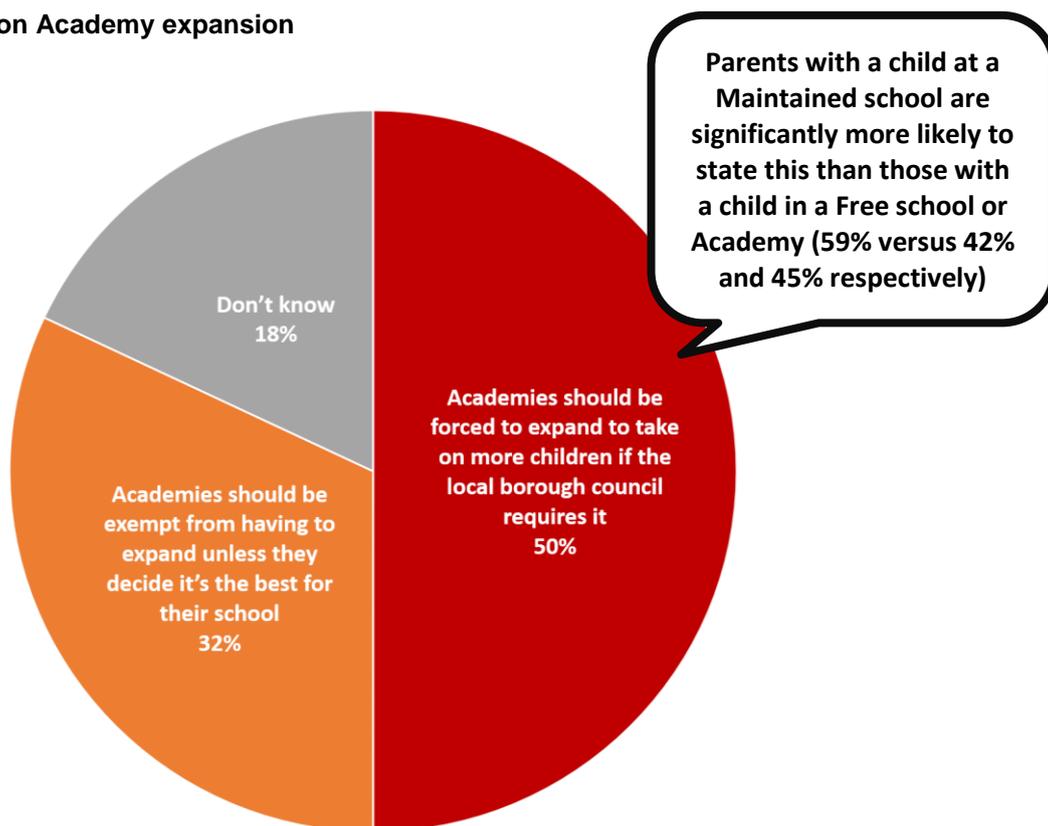
	2016		2015		2014		2013	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
All London Parents (2016 n=1022; 2015 n=1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)	82%	9%	78%	12%	81%	11%	76%	14%
White (2016 n=676; 2015 n=704; 2014 n=723; 2013 n=739)	82%	11%	79%	11%	81%	12%	74%	15%
Other ethnicity (2016 n=238; 2015 n=223; 2014 n=299; 2013 n=245)	80%	7%	77%	14%	83%	9%	80%	11%
Maintained school (2016 n=497; 2015 n=429; 2014 n=363; 2013 n=296)	88%	7%	83%	9%	83%	11%	78%	15%
Academy (2016 n=353; 2015 n=327; 2014 n=198; 2013 n=178)	80%	11%	77%	12%	81%	11%	73%	19%
Free School (2016 n=176; 2015 n=140; 2014 n=163; 2013 n=192)	78%	9%	78%	17%	84%	5%	81%	10%

10.1.7 On the topic of school expansion, 50% of parents believe that Academies should be forced to expand to take on more children if the local council requires it. This figure represents a small decrease from 2015 when 54% of parents agreed. On the whole however, the number of parents agreeing with this statement has steadily increased since 2013 when 44% agreed and 49% in 2014.

10.1.8 Parents with a child in a Maintained school are significantly more likely to take this viewpoint than those with a child in an Academy or Free school (59% compared with 45% and 42% respectively).

10.1.9 Conversely 32% of London parents believe that Academies should be exempt from having to expand unless they decide it's the best for their school. This continues the gradual decrease since 2013 when the proportion of parents who felt this way was 38%.

Figure 12: Views on Academy expansion



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

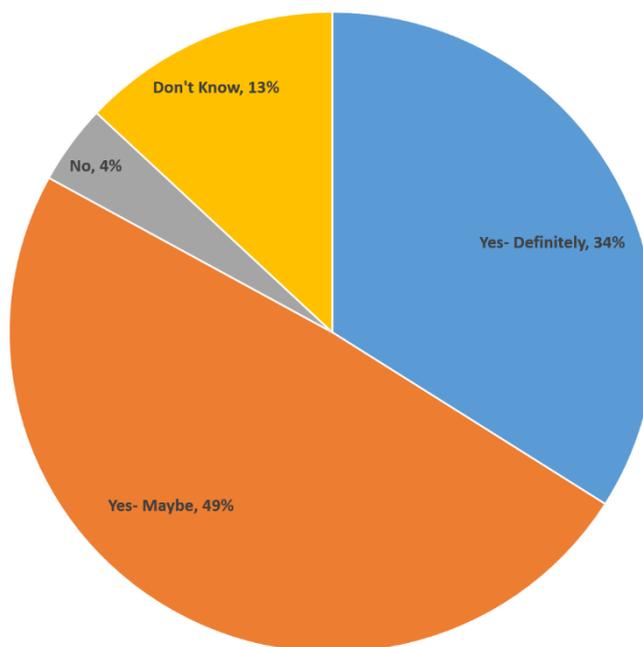
Figure 13: Question Introduction Text

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.

- 10.1.10 Almost two thirds of parents (65%) 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. These findings are consistent with 2015, when 63% of parents agreed with the statement and 17% disagreed.
- 10.1.11 The vast majority of parents (75%) agree that local councils should have the final say in the location of new schools within their authority boundary. Only 11% disagree with this.
- 10.1.12 Parents of children who attend an Academy (76%) or a Maintained School (77%) are most likely to agree that local councils should have the final say.
- 10.1.13 As illustrated in figure 14, over a third of parents (34%) claim they would support a good local school becoming the sponsor of a new school if it was recommended by their local council. A further 49% may consider this, and only 4% of parents completely ruled it out.

Figure 14: Whether support a good local school becoming the sponsor of new school upon recommendation of local borough council



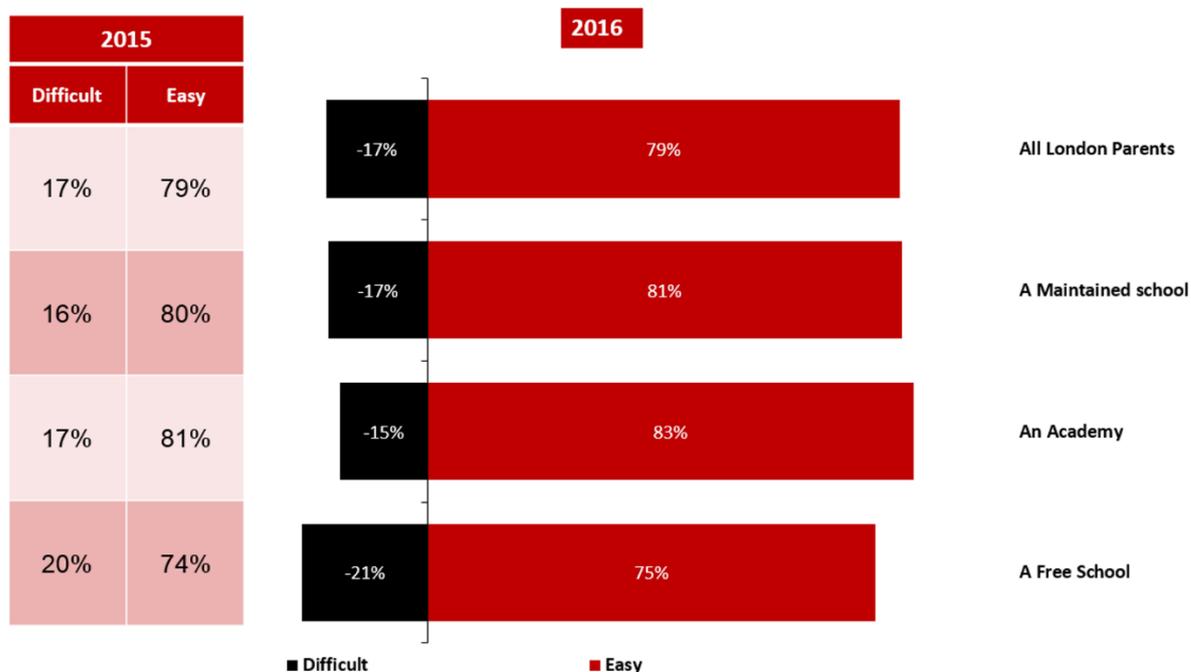
Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

11 Admissions

11.1.1 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.

11.1.2 Parents with a child in an Academy school or Maintained School are slightly more likely to have found the process easy than those parents who have a child at a Free school (83% & 81% compared with 75% at Free schools).

Figure 15: Ease of application process



Base: All London Parents (2015 n = 1002; 2016 n = 1022), Maintained school (2015 n = 429; 2016 n=497), Academy school (2015 n = 327; 2016 n=353), and Free school (2015 n = 140; 2016 n=176)

12 Grammar Schools

12.1.1 Findings indicate that there mixed views among London parents on the topic of grammar schools and the concept of selecting pupils by ability, as they are split between various standpoints.

12.1.2 Half (52%) indicate some level of opposition to any further growth of selective schools; one quarter (26%) believe that the government should stop schools selecting by academic ability and existing grammar schools should be opened to children of all abilities, and another quarter (26%) feel that the government should retain the existing grammar schools but not allow more selective schools or new grammar schools to be built. In other words, a

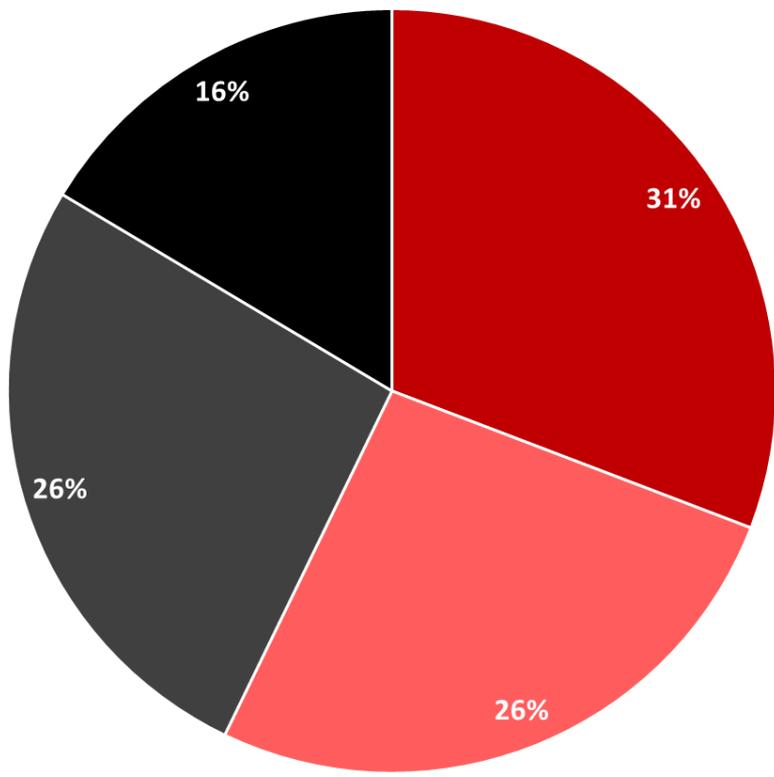
majority of London parents (52%) state their opposition to the establishment of new grammar schools.

12.1.3 Conversely, however, nearly one third (31%) of parents believe that the government should encourage more schools to select by academic ability and in fact build more grammar schools.

12.1.4 Parents within a higher social grade (ABC1) are significantly more likely to support the building of more grammar schools (35% compared to 26% of C2DEs). Meanwhile parents living in Inner London are more likely to oppose schools selecting by academic ability, at 31% compared to 23% of parents in Outer London.

12.1.5 The parents of children in Maintained schools are fairly evenly split in their views on grammar schools, with 32% supporting the creation of new grammars and 30% opposing them to such an extent that they seek the closure of existing grammar schools.

Figure 16: Best reflection of parents' views on grammar schools and selecting pupils by ability



- The government should encourage more schools to select by academic ability and build more grammar schools
- The government should retain the existing grammar schools, but should not allow more selective schools or new grammar schools to be built
- The government should stop schools selecting by academic ability and the existing grammar schools should be opened to children of all abilities
- Not sure

Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

Section 3: Funding and use of public funds

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

13 Objectives for allocating school funding

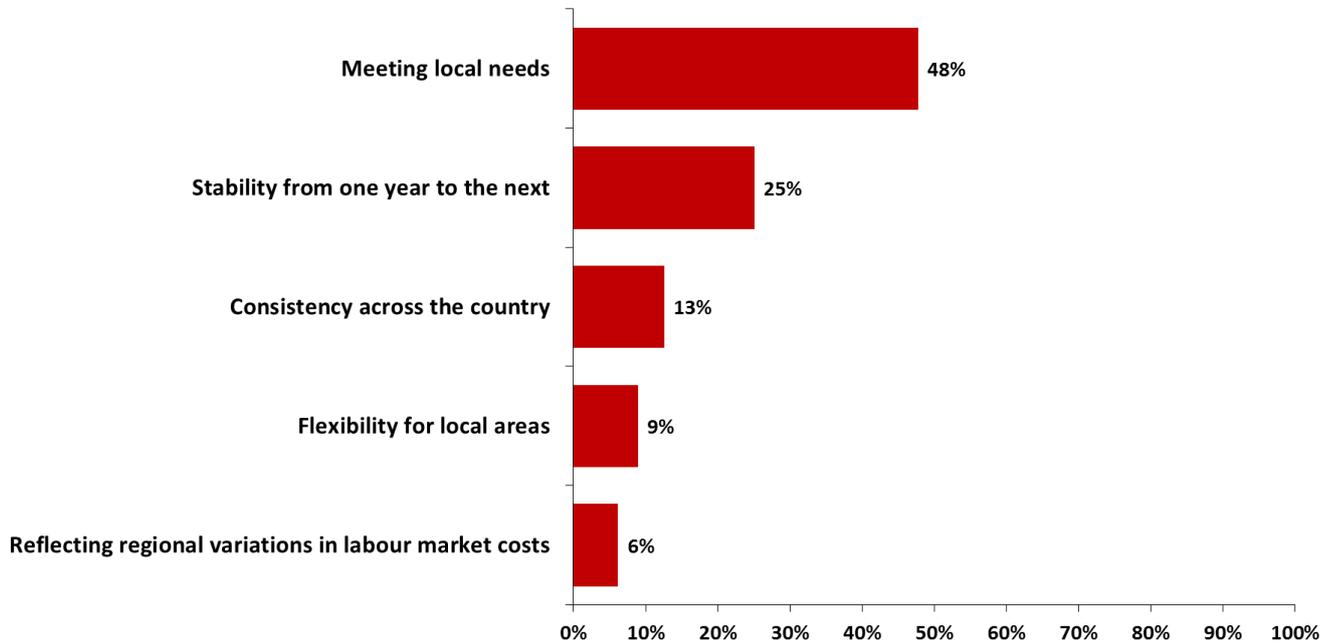
13.1.1 Respondents to the survey were provided with an introduction to school funding and informed that the Department for Education is seeking to reform the school funding system so that it is more transparent and easier to understand¹².

13.1.2 Parents were then asked to rank what they think the most important objectives should be in allocating school funding. As figure 16 shows, meeting local needs is ranked as the most important objective by 48% of parents, consistent with the level of priority it was given in 2015. One-in-two parents (52%) with children in a Maintained school believe meeting local needs is the most important objective in allocating school funding, making them significantly more likely than parents with children in a Free school (39%) and marginally more likely than those with children in an Academy (47%) to select this as the number one priority.

13.1.3 A quarter of parents (25%) rank stability from one year to the next as the most important objective in allocating school funding, on par with 2015. Parents with children in Maintained schools and Academies place equivalent priority on this factor (24% for both), while the figure is marginally higher for parents who have children in a Free school, with one-in-three (32%) reporting that stability from one year to the next should be the biggest priority in allocating school funding.

¹² 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.

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



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=between 1007 and 1009, due to question being optional)

	Ranked first	Ranked second	Ranked third	Ranked fourth	Ranked fifth
Meeting local needs	48%	24%	15%	8%	6%
Stability from one year to the next	25%	28%	21%	19%	8%
Consistency across the country	13%	13%	14%	20%	40%
Flexibility for local areas	9%	21%	34%	25%	11%
Reflecting regional variations in labour market costs	6%	15%	16%	28%	35%

Base: All London Parents (2016 n=between 1007 and 1009, due to question being optional)

13.1.4 Parents with children in an Academy (15%) or Free school (20%) are significantly more likely than those with children in a Maintained school (9%) to rank consistency across the country as what should be the most important objective in allocating school funding.

13.1.5 Relatively, parents place less importance on flexibility for local areas (9%) and reflecting regional variations in labour market costs (6%) as objectives for allocating funding.

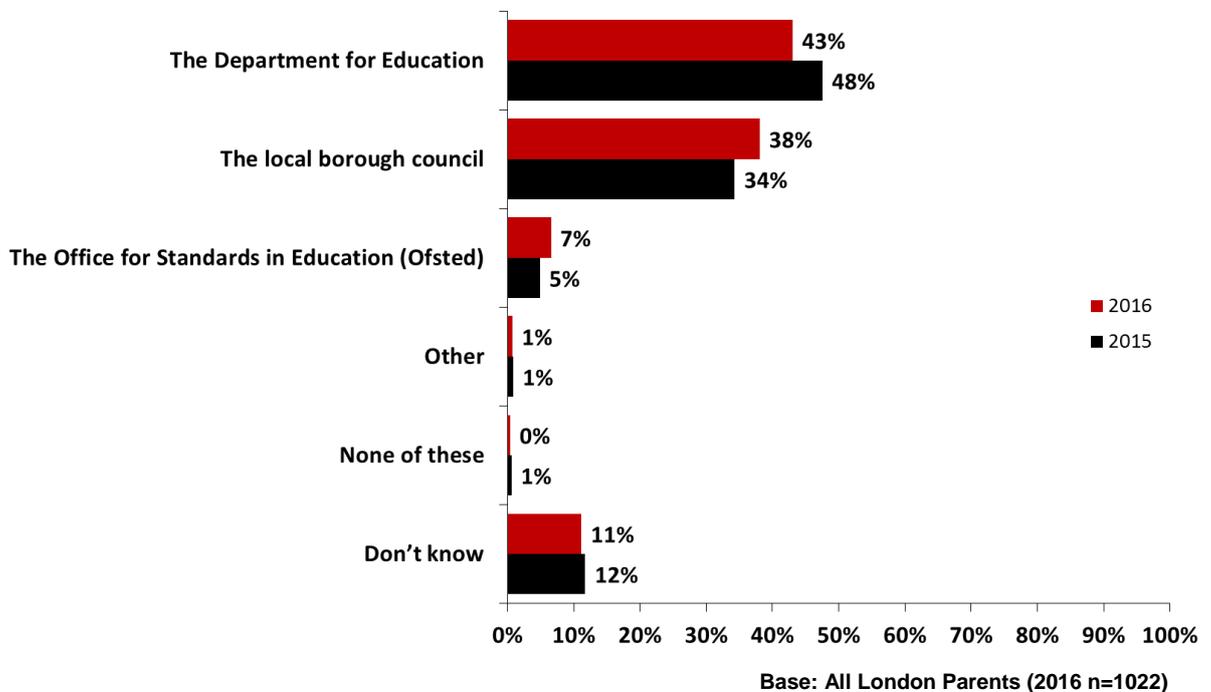
14 Responsibility for school funding

14.1.1 When asked who they think should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools, close to half (43%) of London parents state that the Department for Education should have this role, while 38% feel the local council should.

14.1.2 However, this balance has shifted slightly since 2015 in the direction of the local council. Twelve months ago, 48% of parents believed that the Department for Education should have the primary responsibility for allocating funding to all schools, in contrast with 34% who felt the responsibility should sit with the local council. A difference of 14% in 2015 has shifted to a difference of only 5% in 2016.

14.1.3 Parents from higher social grades (ABC1) are significantly more likely to than those from the lower social grades (C2DE) to believe that the local council should have primary responsibility for allocating funding to all schools (43% compared with 31%).

Figure 18: Views on which party should be primarily responsible for allocating funding to all schools



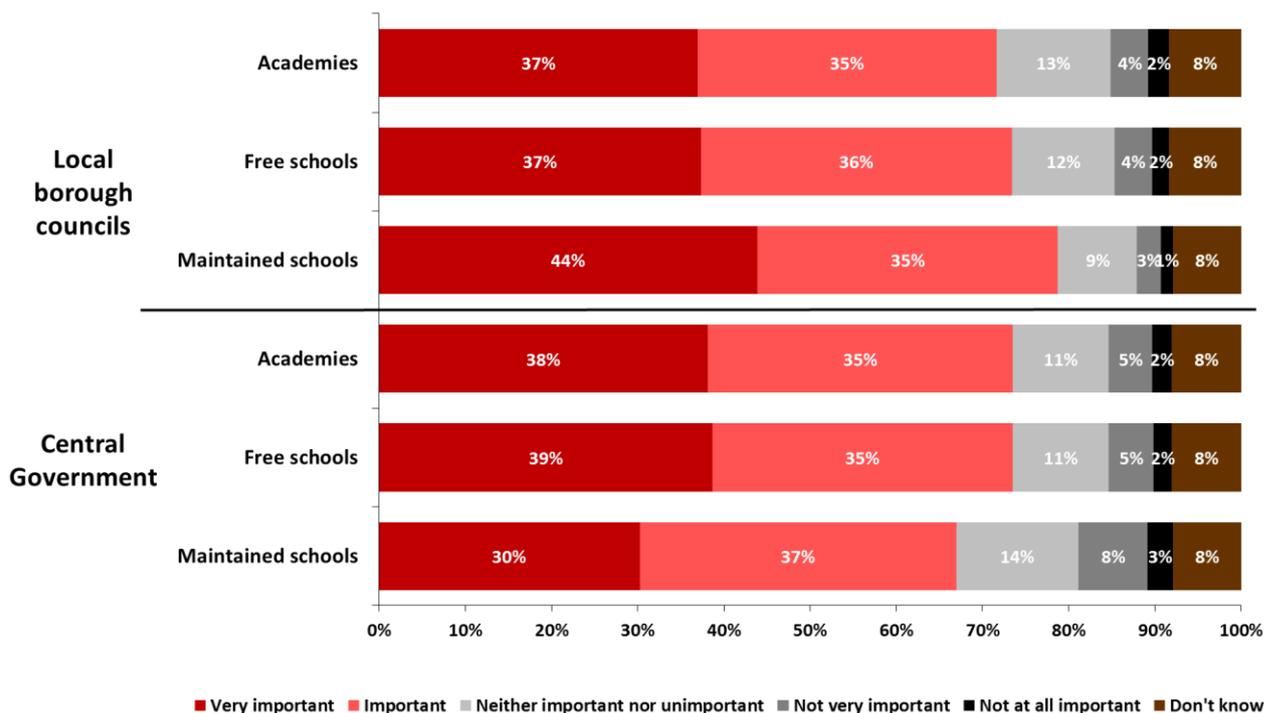
15 Financial auditing of school spending

15.1.1 The vast majority (79%) of London parents feel it is important that Maintained schools have their spending scrutinised by local councils, and among those parents, two-in-five (44%) feel it is very important. These findings are consistent with 2015. Although parents are most likely to state this for Maintained schools, they feel nearly equally strongly about it being important for local councils to be able to scrutinise the spending of Academies (72%) and Free schools (73%).

15.1.2 When considering the importance of Central Government scrutinising the spending of schools, the figures for Free schools and Academies are comparable to those for the proportion who believe it is important for local councils to scrutinise their spending, at 74% for both. However, it is not consistent with the figures for Maintained schools; only 67% of parents believe that it is important for Central Government to scrutinise the spending of Maintained schools, significantly less than the proportion who believe it is important for local councils to be scrutinising their spending.

15.1.3 Since 2015, London parents have become somewhat more likely to believe that Academies and Free schools should have their spending scrutinised by Central Government (69% compared with 74%, and 68% compared with 74%, respectively).

Figure 19: Perceptions of the importance of different school types having their spending scrutinised by local and central government



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

15.1.4 Consistent with 2015, London parents are roughly equally likely to believe that local councils and the Department for Education should be ensuring that Academies (41% and 40% respectively) and Free schools (40% and 41% respectively) are spending their money in a responsible way. However, in contrast with 2015, parents have expressed that they feel Governors should in fact hold this responsibility to a somewhat greater extent, with close to half stating that they should be ensuring that Academies (43%) and Free schools (44%) are spending their money responsibly.

- 15.1.5 When considering Maintained schools, a majority of parents (53%) believe that local councils should be ensuring they spend their money in a responsible way. They are significantly more likely to state this for local councils than for any other authority. Secondly, roughly two-in-five believe this accountability should sit with Governors (42%) the Department for Education (40%). This prioritisation is on par with 2015.
- 15.1.6 Since last year, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of London parents who believe that local councils should be ensuring Academies spend their money responsibly, from 35% in 2015 to 41% in 2016.
- 15.1.7 However, a broader trend can also be observed over this time period, in the form of an increase in the expectation for various authorities to be ensuring each type of school is spending its money in a responsible way. Parents are more likely to believe that multiple stakeholders should hold this responsibility, including Central Government, the Department for Education, local councils, Governors and parents.
- 15.1.8 In particular, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of parents who feel that Governors should be responsible for ensuring that all school types – Maintained schools (33% in 2015 compared with 42% in 2016), Free schools (34% in 2015 compared with 44% in 2016) and Academies (33% in 2015 compared with 43% in 2016) – are spending their money in a responsible way.
- 15.1.9 The Department for Education has also seen an increase in this expectation from parents for all three school types: Maintained schools (33% in 2015 compared with 40% in 2016), Free schools (35% in 2015 compared with 41% in 2016) and Academies (34% in 2015 compared with 40% in 2016).

Figure 20: 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	40%	41%	40%
Local borough councils	41%	40%	53%
Governors	43%	44%	42%
Central government	23%	20%	17%
Parents	18%	23%	18%
Private accountants	14%	15%	11%
Other	2%	2%	1%
No one	1%	0%	0%
Don't know	11%	11%	11%

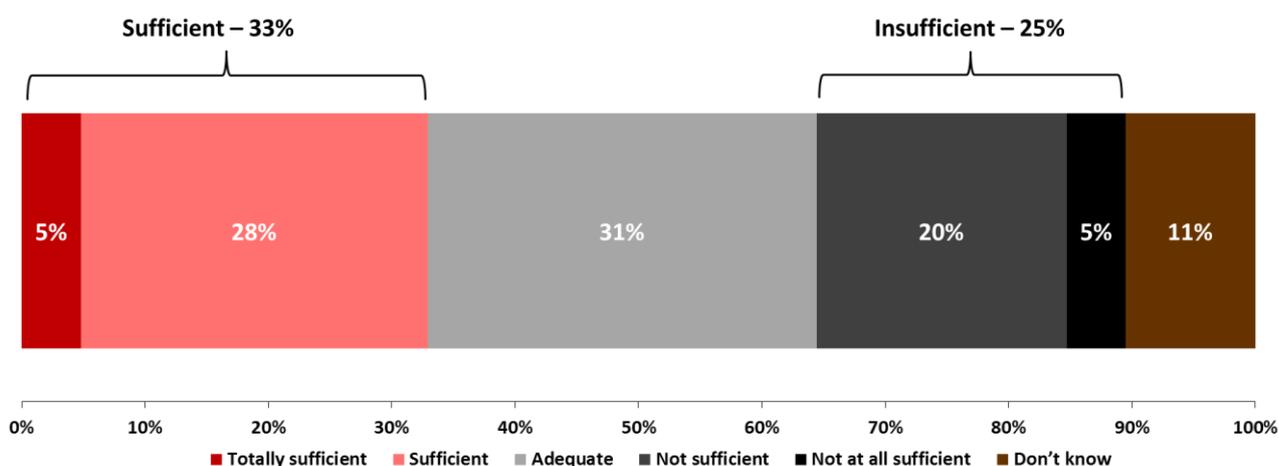
Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

16 Funding pressures

16.1.1 One-in-three London parents (33%) believe that the current level of funding/resources their child's school receives is sufficient for what it needs to operate effectively, and a roughly equal proportion (31%) feel it is adequate.

16.1.2 However, a quarter of parents (25%) feel the current level of funding and/or resources is insufficient, and this is significantly higher among parents with children in a Maintained school (32%) than among those with children in an Academy (20%) or Free school (16%).

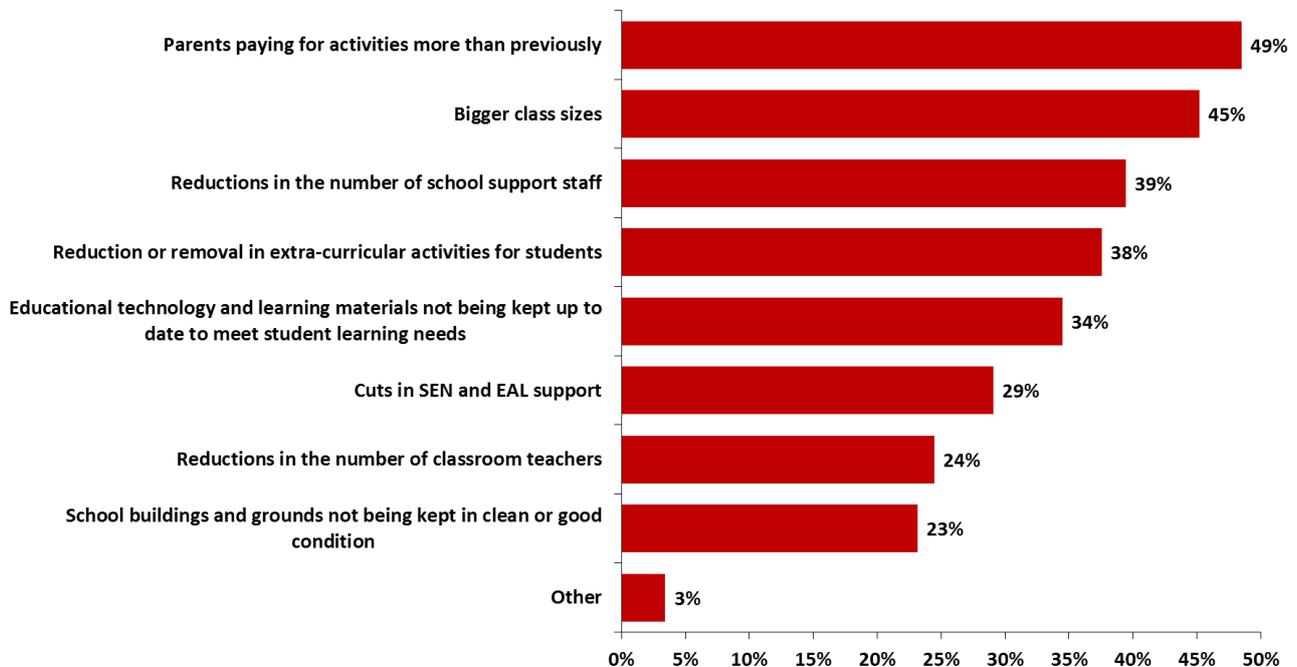
Figure 21: Perception of whether or not the current level of funding/ resources their child's school receives is sufficient for what it needs to operate effectively



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

- 16.1.3 Among parents who indicate they are aware of pressures on funding in their child's school, the most commonly reported impact is parents paying for activities more than previously, with one-in-two (49%) stating this. Parents with children in a Maintained school are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy to report paying for activities more than previously as a consequence of funding pressures.
- 16.1.4 Nearly half of parents (45%) also report that bigger class sizes has been an outcome of funding pressures in their child's school, and this is relatively equal across the school types.
- 16.1.5 Other frequently reported impacts of pressures on funding are reductions in the number of school support staff (39%), reduction or removal in extra-curricular activities for students (38%), and educational technology and learning materials not being kept up to date to meet student learning needs (34%).
- 16.1.6 Relatively, parents are less likely to report reductions in the number of classroom teachers (24%) and school buildings and grounds not being kept in clean/good condition (23%) as impacts of funding pressures in their child's school.

Figure 22: Parents' perceptions of the impacts that pressures on funding are having on their child's school



Base: All London Parents who are aware of pressures on funding in their child's school (2016 n=634)

16.1.7 In addition to paying for activities more than previously, parents with children in a Maintained school (41%) are more likely than those with children in an Academy (27%) to state that a consequence of funding pressures in their child's school has been educational technology and learning materials not being kept up to date to meet student learning needs.

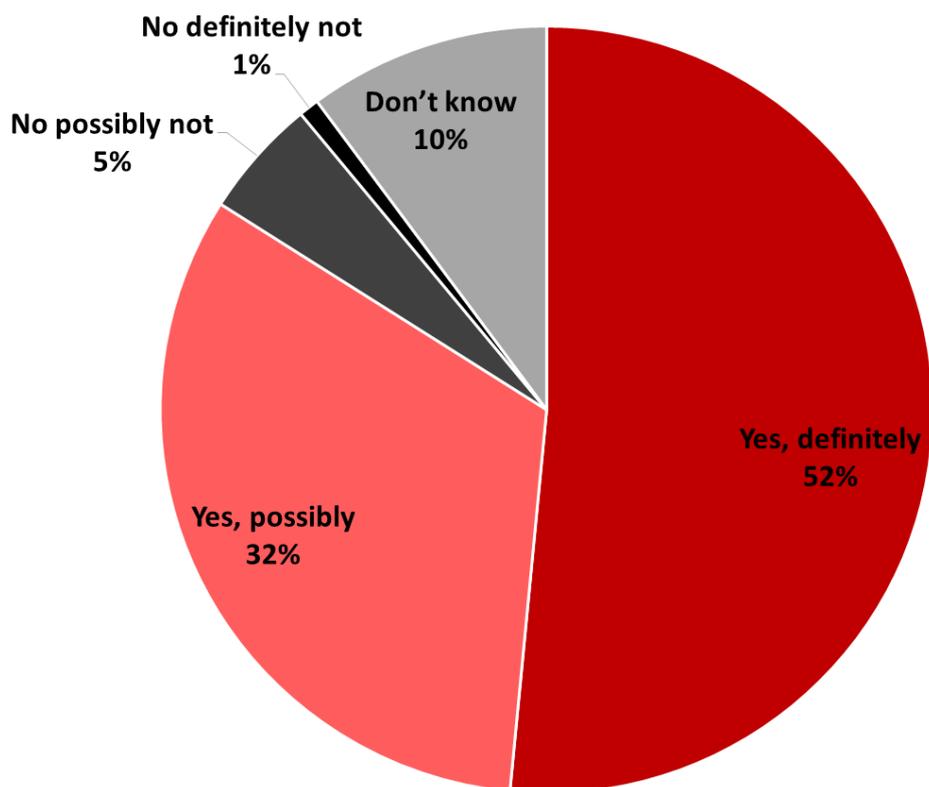
17 School budget reductions

17.1.1 The vast majority of parents (84%) believe that if their child's school budget were to be reduced, it would have a negative impact on the quality of the education the school provides. Only a small proportion (6%) feel it would *not* have a negative impact.

17.1.2 Parents of a higher social grade are significantly more like than those of a lower social grade to believe that it would have a negative impact on the quality of the education (90% among ABC1 compared with 75% among C2DE).

17.1.3 Parents of children in a Maintained school (60%) are significantly more likely than those with children in an Academy (48%) or Free school (37%) to believe that a reduction in budget it would definitely have a negative impact on the quality of the education.

Figure 23: Perception of whether or not a reduction in their child’s school budget would have a negative impact on the quality of the education the school provides



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

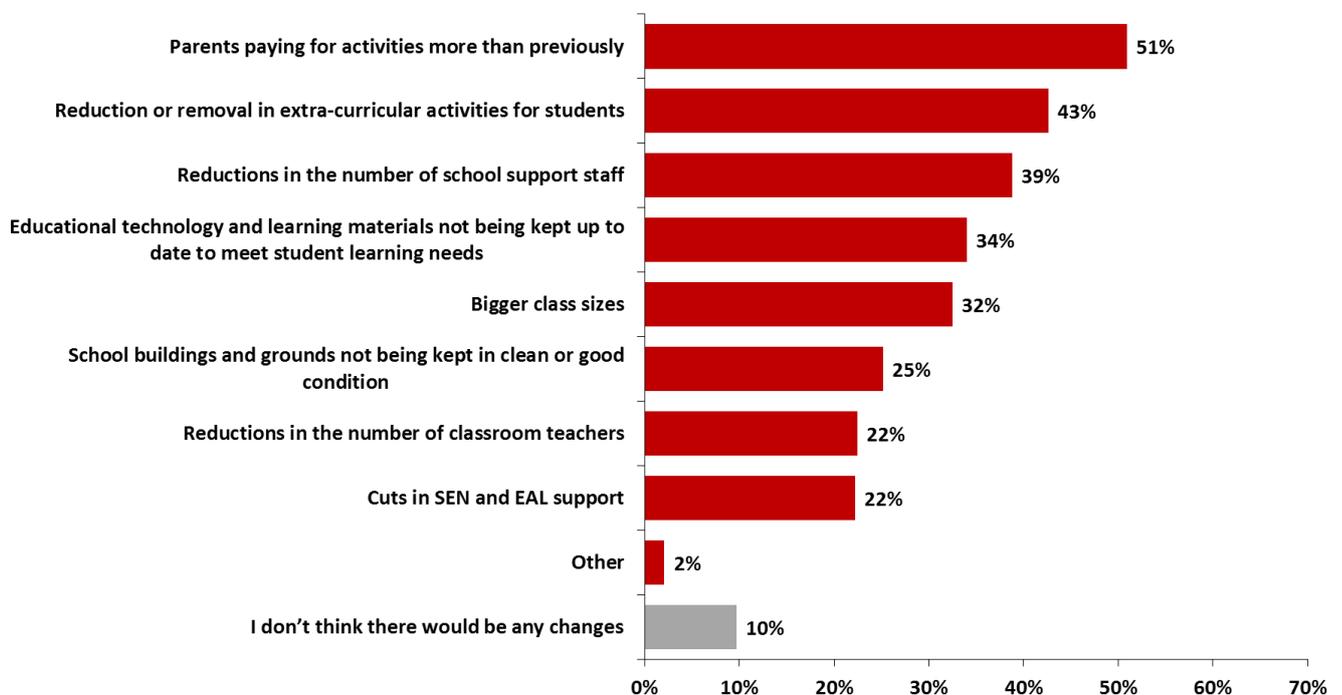
17.1.4 One-in-two parents (51%) believe that if there was to be a reduction in the level of funding their child’s school receives, an outcome would be parents paying for activities more than previously. This is the response stated most often. The second most commonly perceived impact is also activity-related; 43% of parents feel there would be a reduction or removal in extra-curricular activities for students.

17.1.5 Parents of children in Maintained schools (44%) and Academies (46%) are significantly more likely than those with children in Free schools (32%) to believe that the reduction or removal of extra-curricular activities could be an outcome.

17.1.6 Significant proportions of parents also believe that possible consequences could be reductions in the number of school support staff (39%), educational technology and learning materials not being kept up to date to meet student learning needs (34%), and bigger class sizes (32%).

17.1.7 One-in-ten parents (10%) don't think there would be any changes if there was to be a reduction in their child's school funding.

Figure 24: Perceptions of where changes could be made if there was to be a reduction in the level of funding their child's school receives



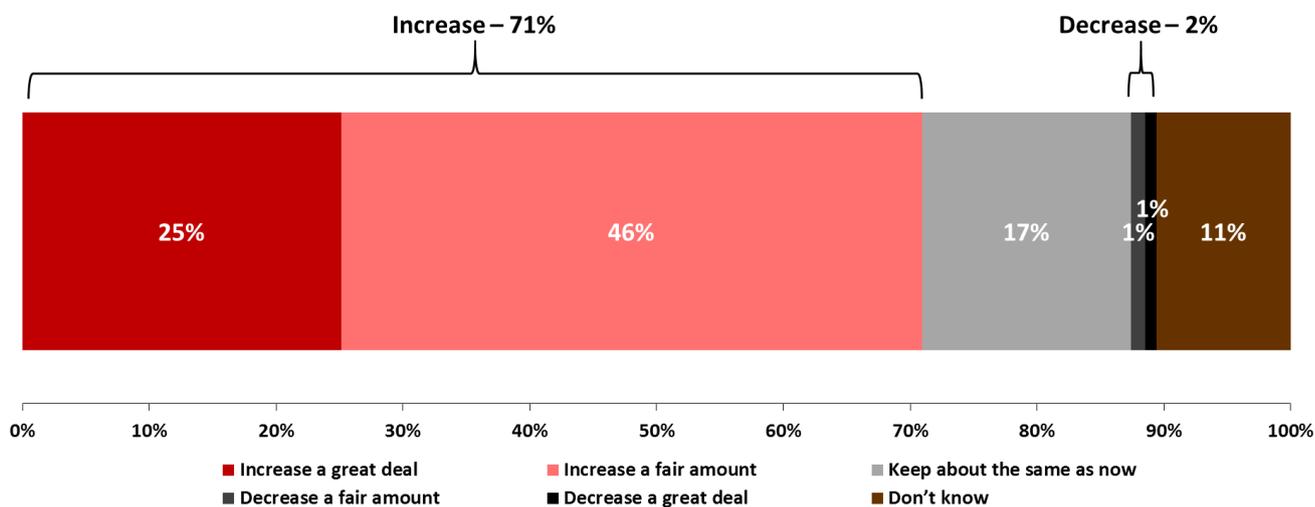
Base: All London Parents, excluding those who said 'Don't know' (2016 n=850)

18 Perceptions of government spending on education

18.1.1 The vast majority of London parents (71%) feel that the UK government should increase the amount of money it spends on education and schools. A quarter (25%) believe the government should increase funding by a great deal and nearly half (46%) by a fair amount.

18.1.2 Only a very small proportion (2%) believe the UK government should decrease the amount of money it spends. The remainder feel it should be kept the same as now (17%) or are unsure (11%).

Figure 25: Opinion on whether the UK government should increase, decrease, or maintain the amount of money it spends on education and schools



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

18.1.3 Parents of a higher social grade are more likely to believe the government should increase the amount of money it spends on education and schools (77% among ABC1 compared with 62% among C2DE), while parents of a lower social grade are more likely to feel unsure (17% among C2DE compared with 6% among ABC1).

18.1.4 Parents with children in a Maintained school (75%) are significantly more likely than those with children in a Free school (62%) to feel that the UK government should increase the amount of money it spends. Parents of children in an Academy (72%) fall in the middle.

Section 4: 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.

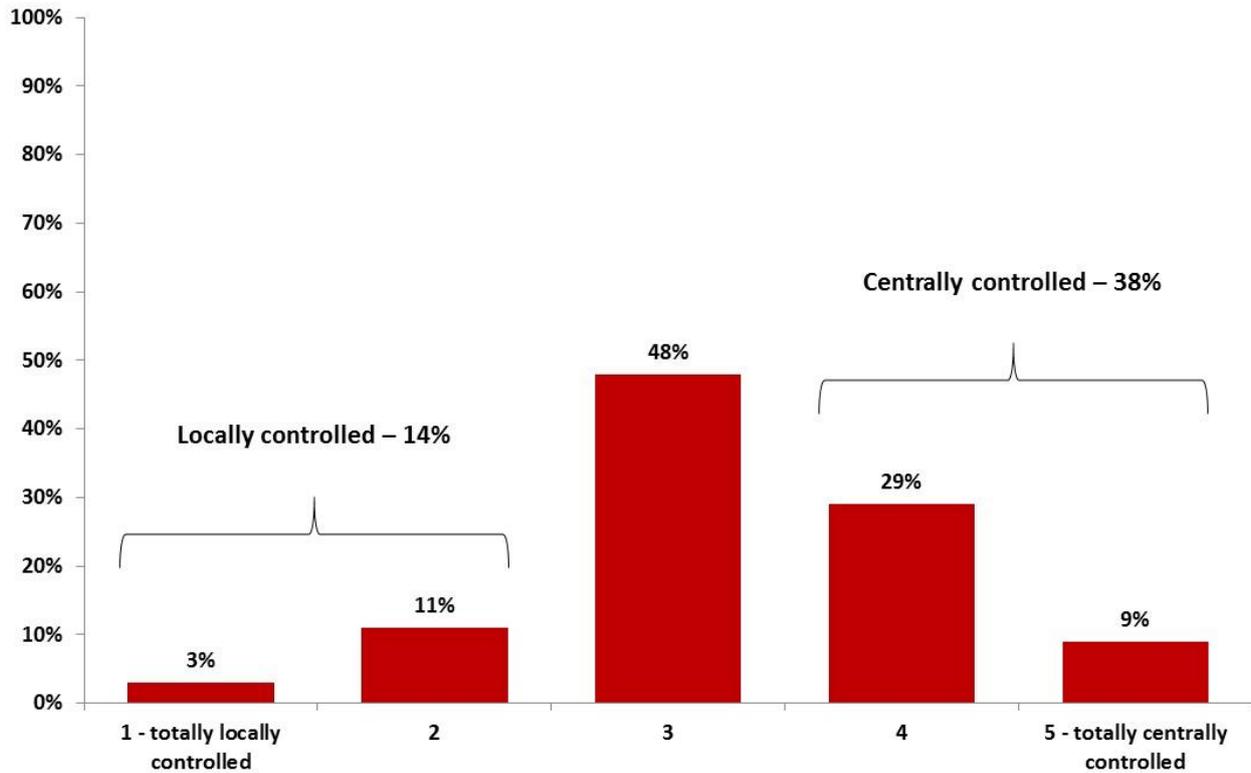
19 How centralised or localised is the education system?

19.1.1 As figure 25 shows, nearly half of parents in London (48%), when asked at the outset of the survey, are in the middle ground on whether the English education system is centrally or locally controlled.

19.1.2 Although, at the outset of the survey, parents were more likely to feel that the education system was more centrally controlled (38%) than locally controlled (14%). This data on initial perceptions of how centralised or localised the education system has remained a consistent view from parents through the 2013, 2014 and 2015 studies.

19.1.3 Interestingly, parents who have a child at a Maintained school were more likely than parents with a child at an Academy school to feel the education system was under more local control – with 19% of parents with a child in a Maintained school feeling the education system is under local control compared with 10% of parents with a child in an Academy.

Figure 26: 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 (2016 n=1022)

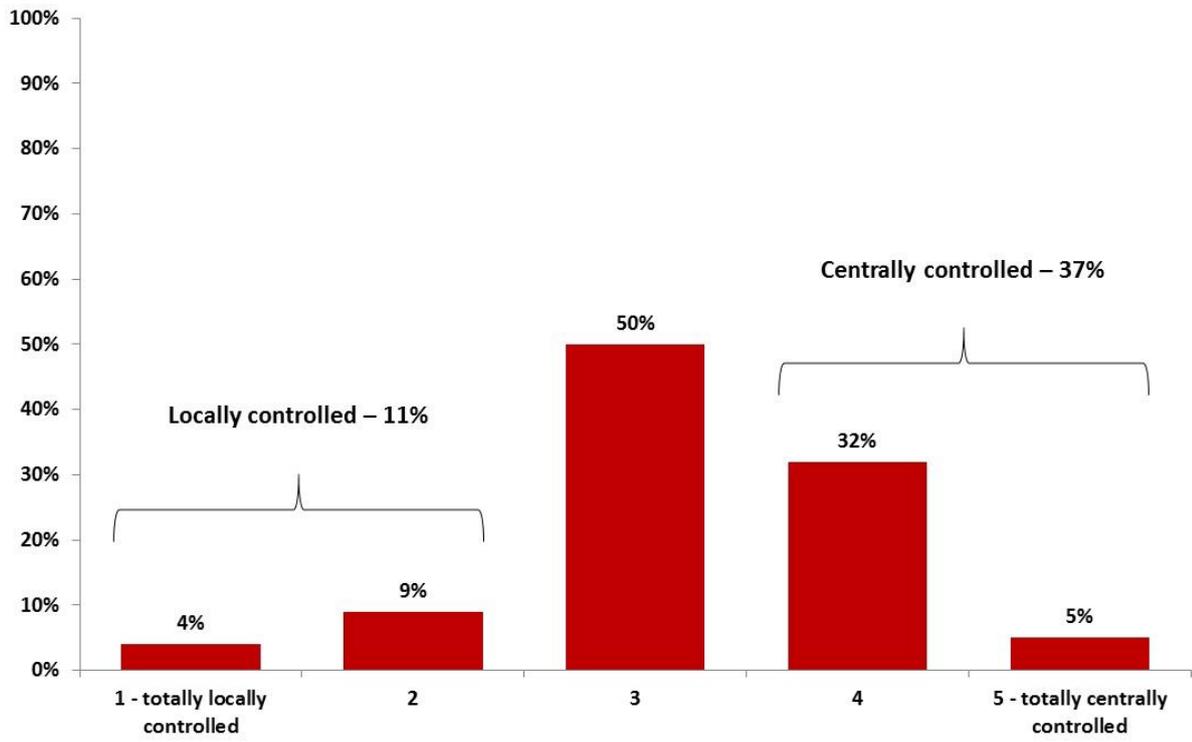
19.1.4 At the end of the survey parents were then shown information which described two positions on how the introduction of Academies and Free schools has made the education system more centralised or has created more local decision making¹³.

¹³ 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.

- 19.1.5 Figures 26 and 27 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.
- 19.1.6 The largest shift in opinion has been around parents in London feeling the education system is totally centrally controlled, with a total reduction of four percentage points overall in this viewpoint. For parents of a child in an Academy school this change in opinion was starker, with a six percentage point fall in the proportion of parents who feel the education system in totally under central control.
- 19.1.7 The data shows that this a softening of opinion rather than a shift to the view that the education system was under greater local control. With increases seen in the proportion of parents who rated the education system four on the scale where five is totally centrally controlled.

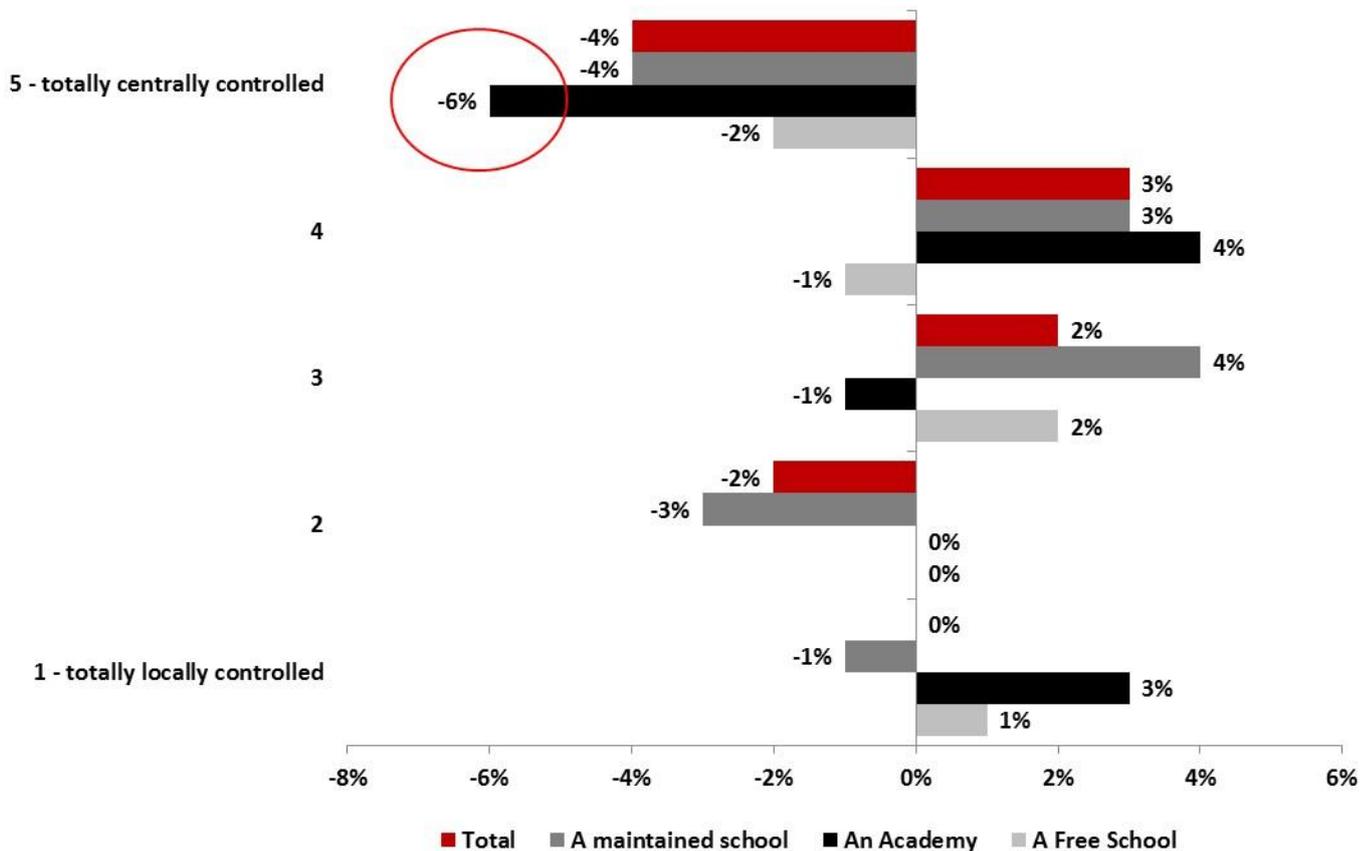
Figure 27: Thinking of the education system in England, how centralised (i.e. under central government control) or localised (i.e. under local control) do you think the system currently is? – asked at the end of the survey



*Difference in net percentage is due to rounding

Base: All London Parents (2015 n=1022)

Figure 28: 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

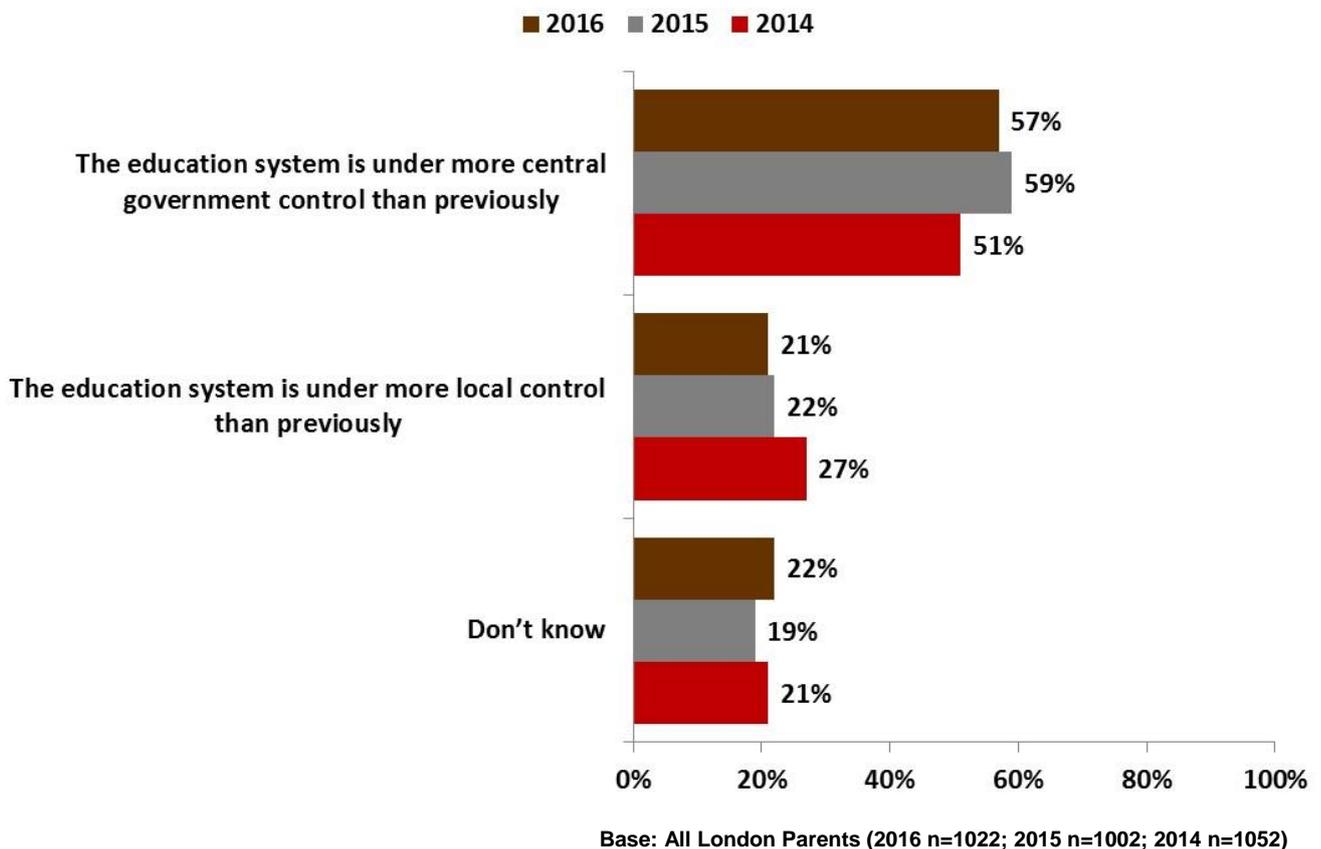


Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022), Maintained school (2016 n=497), Academy school (2016 n=353), Free school (2016 n=176)

19.1.8 Figure 29 below summarises this position with six out of ten parents in London (57%) 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 (21%) thought the system was under more local control and 22% did not know.

19.1.9 This maintains the trend that was seen in 2015 of a shift of parental views towards feeling that the education system is under more central government control. Compared to the 2014 survey this is a six percentage point increase in the proportion of parents who think the education system is under more central government control than previously.

Figure 29: 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?



19.1.10 There is a clear difference in attitudes by social grade, with those parents from higher social grades (ABC1) significantly more likely than those from other social grades (C2DE) 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 ABC1 social grade report this compared with 48% of C2DEs.

19.1.11 By the type of school that children attend there is also a difference in attitudes. Around six out of ten of parents with a child in a Maintained school (62%) or an Academy (63%) think that the education system is under more central control than they did previously, significantly higher than the two fifths (42%) of parents with a child in a Free school who think this.

19.1.12 Although parents with a child in a Free school (27%) are significantly more likely than those with a child in a Maintained school (19%) or Academy (19%) to report that they do not know whether the education system is under more central or local control than they did previously.

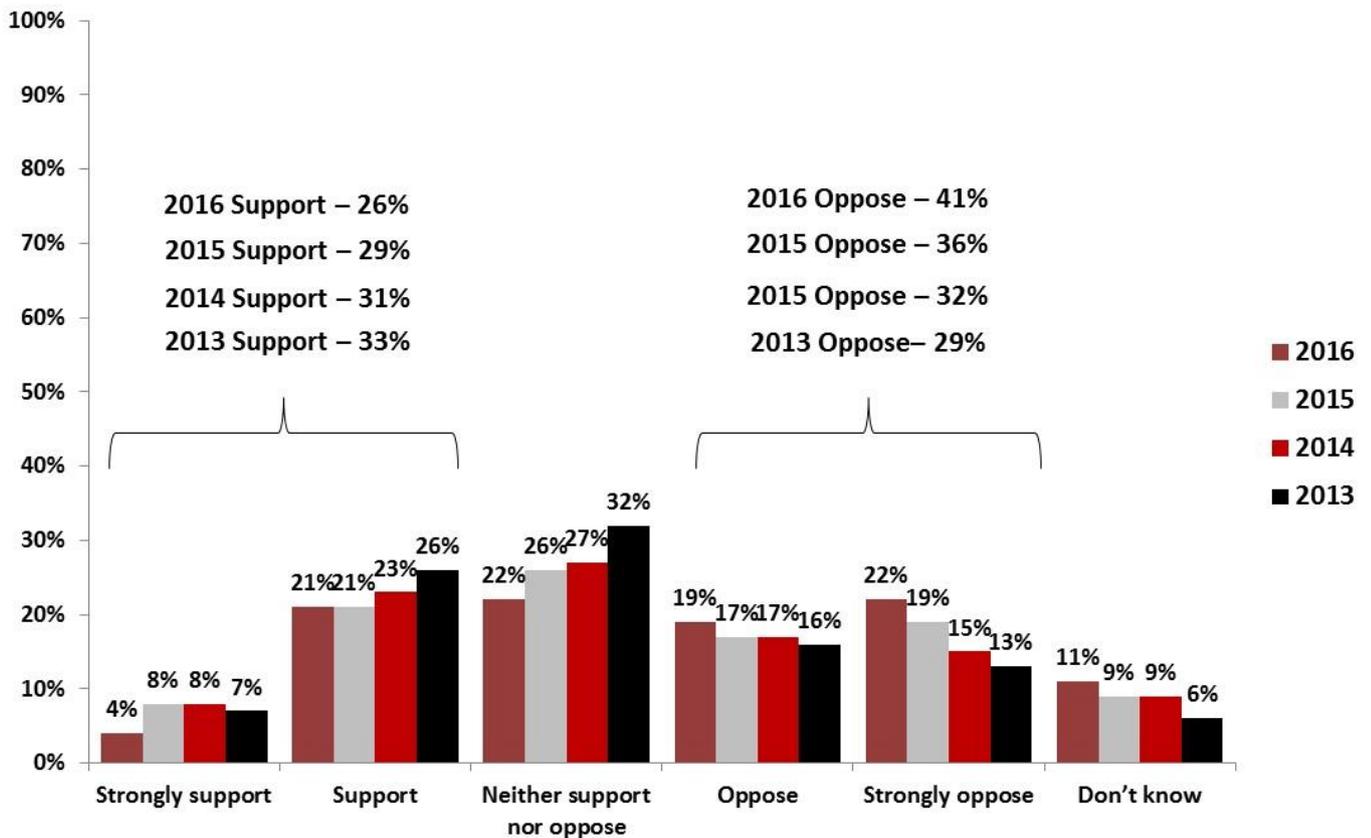
20 London parents' support for Academies and Free schools

20.1.1 Opposition from parents in London to the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools continues to grow. The proportion of parents opposing the growth in Academy and Free schools has increased by five percentage points from the 2015 survey.

20.1.2 Four out of ten parents in London now oppose the idea of moving towards more Academies and Free schools, with 26% in support – although there is not a majority view either way. A fifth (22%) neither support nor oppose, so there is still a large amount of uncertainty on the growth of Academies and Free schools.

20.1.3 This is also a sizeable shift in opinion from the 2013 survey when 33% 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 30: To what extent do you support or oppose the idea of moving toward more Academies and Free schools?



Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022; 2015 n= 1002; 2014 n=1052; 2013 n=1019)

20.1.4 Opposition to the idea of more Academies and Free schools remains higher from those from a higher social grade, with 45% of those from an ABC1 social grade are in opposition to the idea of more Academies and Free schools compared with 34% of those from a C2DE social grade. In a possibly related point, opposition from parents is higher for those living in inner London (45%) than from those who live in outer London (37%).

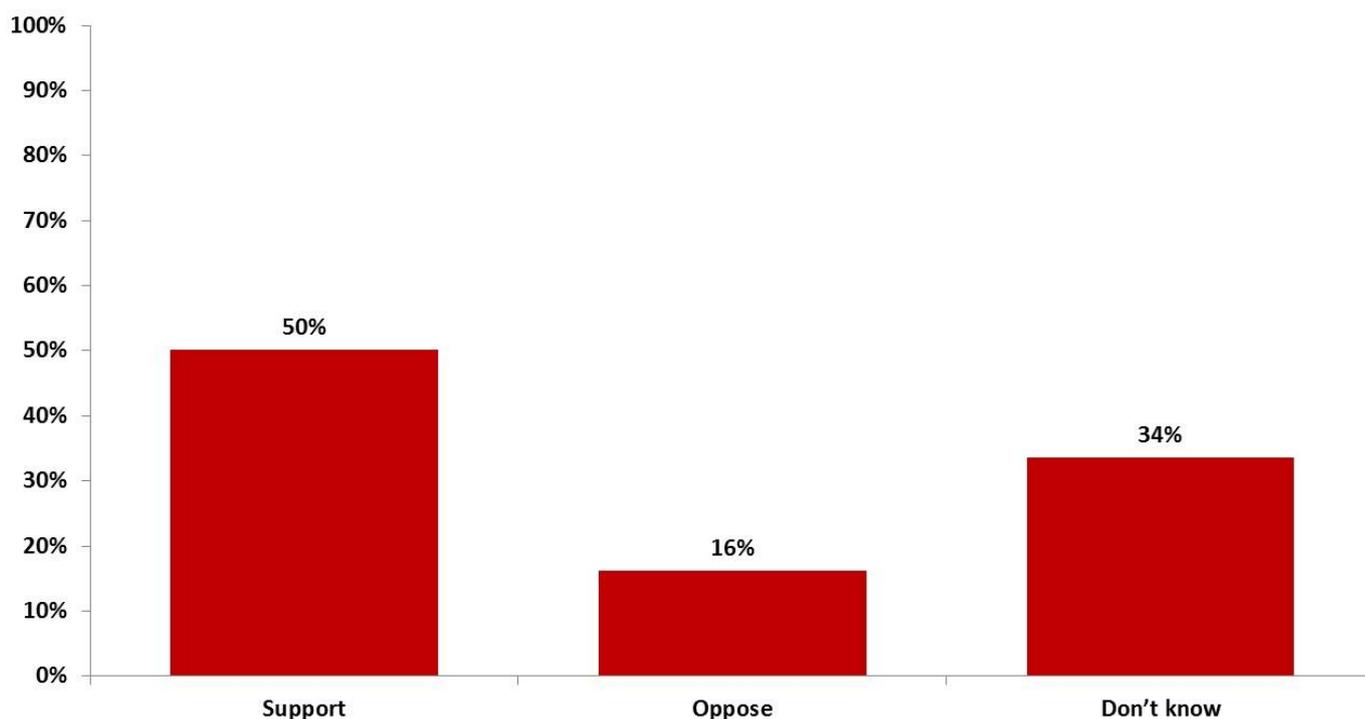
20.1.5 By school type we also find that parents with a child in a Maintained school are significantly more likely to oppose more Academies and Free schools than those parents with a child in an Academy or Free school. As can be seen below:

- Maintained schools – 15% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 57% oppose

- Academy schools – 35% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 29% oppose
- Free schools – 41% of parents support more Academies and Free schools and 18% oppose

20.1.6 For the first time parents in London were asked if they support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor academies and half of parents in London (50%) support the idea. Under a fifth (16%) of parents in London oppose the idea but there is a fair degree of uncertainty with a third of parents (34%) not knowing if they support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor academies.

Figure 31: From what you know do you support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor academies?



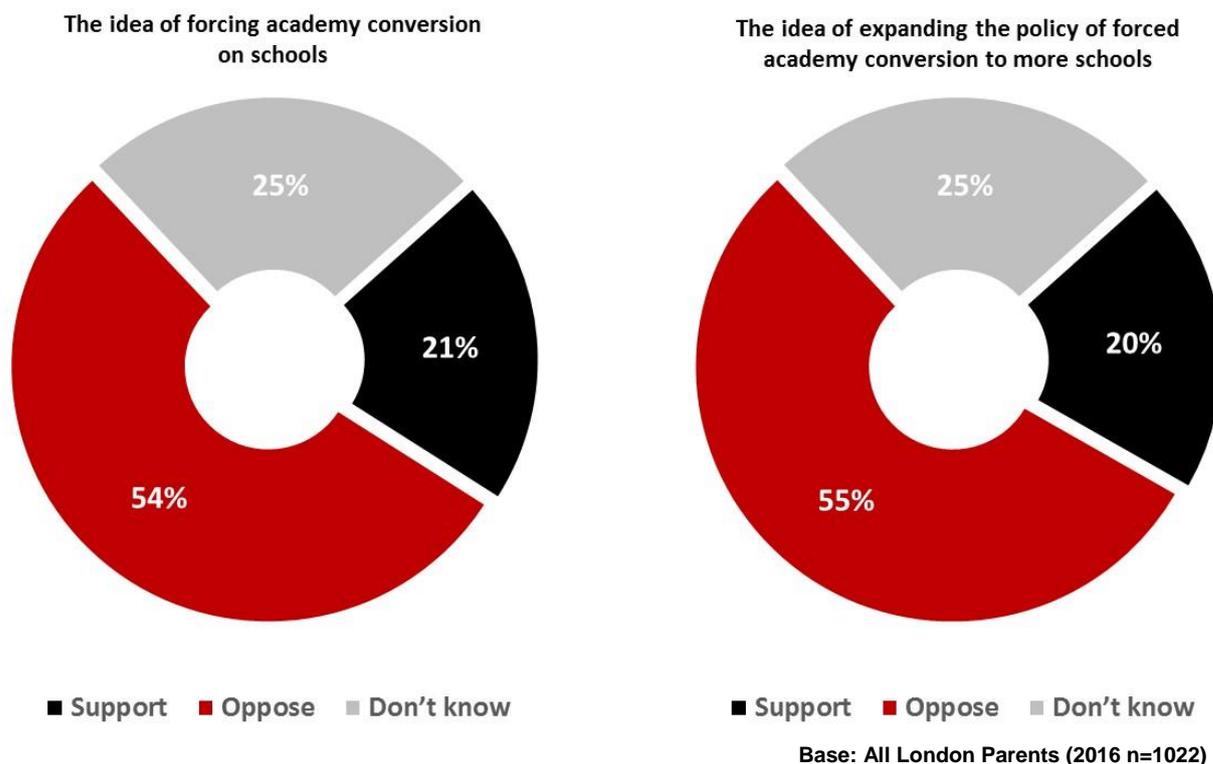
Base: All London Parents (2016 n=1022)

20.1.7 There is a difference in opinion by social grade. With those from a lower social grade (C2DE) being much more likely to report that they don't know whether they support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor academies (43% of C2DEs compared with 27% of ABC1s).

21 Forced Academy conversion

21.1.1 The majority of parents in London are currently opposed to the idea of forcing Academy conversion on schools and the idea of expanding the policy of forced Academy conversion to more schools – with 54% and 55% respectively in opposition to these ideas.

Figure 32: From what you know do you support or oppose the idea of local councils being able to sponsor academies?



21.1.2 Parents with a child in a Maintained school are the most strongly opposed to the idea of forcing Academy conversion on schools, with 65% in opposition. Although half of parents with a child in an Academy school (49%) oppose forced Academy conversion.

21.1.3 The same findings are seen in relation to the idea of expanding the policy of forced Academy conversion to more schools. Seven out of ten (67%) of parents with a child in a Maintained school are opposed to expanding any forced academisation policy compared with 50% of those parents with a child in an Academy school.

- 21.1.4 Younger parents (aged 25-34) are more likely than those parents aged 35-44 and those aged 45-54 to support the idea of forcing Academy conversion on schools – with 31% in support compared with 19% and 19% respectively.
- 21.1.5 The same is true of support for the idea of expanding the policy of forced Academy conversion to more schools – with 32 of parents aged 25-34 % in support compared with 16% of those aged 35-44 and 19% of those aged 45-54.