



Parents of Children Aged 3, 4 and 5-Years-Old.

Introduction

In this chapter we explore the experiences and views of parents of children aged 3 to 5 years old. In our small group chats sessions, we spoke with 68 parents of children of this age. *TheChat* national survey had responses from 560 parents of children of this age. We draw on the findings from both parts of *theChat* and use direct quotes from parents throughout. The chapter reports on:

- **Learning at home**, reflecting how parents approach learning at home on a range of themes and topics that might form part of parenting of children of this age. Parents also discuss what influences what they talk about, and when.
- **Learning at nursery or school**, reflecting on parental views on nursery/school-based learning.

If you are interested in more from parents of children in the early years, please do read the [Spotlight Issues](#) series and the chapter [Supporting Parents](#), in both you will find more from parents of younger children.

Thank you to all the parents who took part in our small group chats and to those who completed our national survey.

Thanks also to colleagues across the NHS, nurseries, schools, local authority services and third sector agencies, that helped us to meet parents and for promoting the national survey.

A note on our reporting:

In our reporting we use the term parent to mean both *parents and carers*; this includes any family member with direct caring responsibility, as well as foster carers and kinship carers.

The following terms are used when reporting on the results of *theChat* national survey:

- **Almost all** means over 90% of parents who responded.
- **Most** means 75% to 90% of parents who responded.
- **A majority** means 50% to 74% of parents who responded.
- **Less than half** means 15% to 49% of parents who responded.
- **Few** means less than 15% of parents who responded.

As part of our analysis of the national survey we have looked at whether having a child with additional support needs, or having an affiliation with a religion, influences a parent's response to a significant degree. Statistical significance is assessed using the Chi-square test for independence which is suitable for examining associations between variables. Where significant differences are found we report them as such throughout the chapter.

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Learning at home

In small group chats, and in the national survey, parents were asked to comment on their views and experiences when it comes to talking and learning about a series of themes, each of which was further described by offering topics that may or may not be part of learning at home.

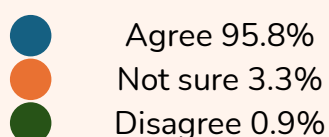
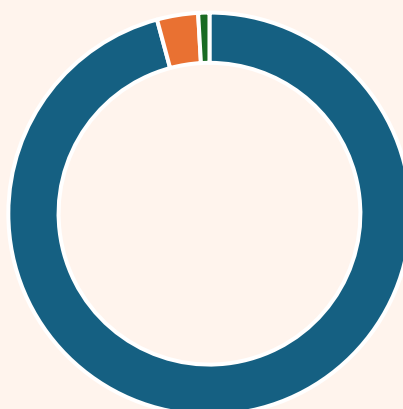
Theme 1: Families and friendships

In group chats and as part of the survey parents spoke about talking and learning about a range of topics that we can think of as being about families and friendships. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

- My family.
- All our families are different, unique, and special.
- Family members provide care and love.
- How to make and keep friendships, play together and share.
- Personal space.
- How to recognise and respect how another person is feeling.

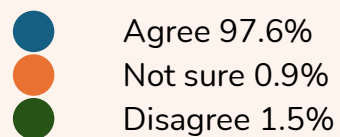
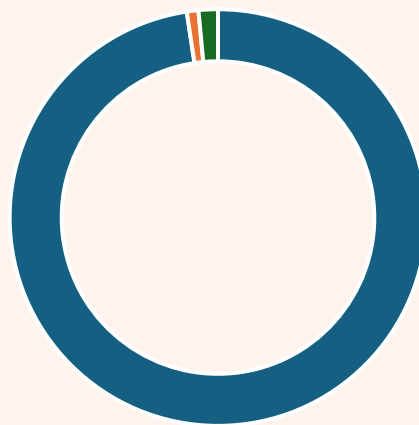
In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *families and friendships* parents were asked to agree/disagree or say they were not sure when it came to the statements that follow – results are given for each.

1. Families and friendships: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(547 responses)



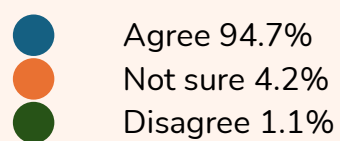
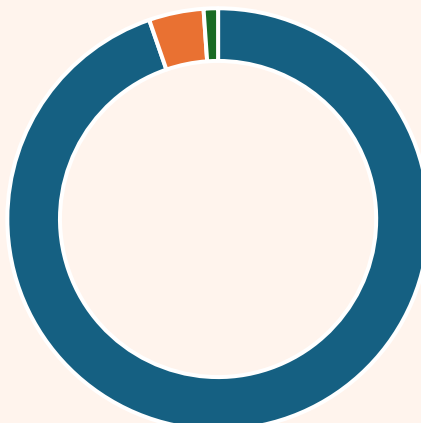
2. Families and friendships: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about.

(547 responses)



3. Families and friendships: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.

(546 responses)



As shown, *almost all* parents responding say they talk and learn about families and friendships at home, they feel this is an important theme, and they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child. While still *almost all* parents, those with a religious affiliation were significantly less likely to agree with statement 2. We can learn more from the contributions of parents in the small group chats as well as from open box responses in the national survey.

Parents have identified that making friends and understanding friendships is complex for children in the early years, and that their role can be to help their child to meet other children and manage emotions. Parents are especially aware of the importance of friendships after the experience of the Covid pandemic.

It must be quite daunting for wee ones trying to figure out relationships and friendships. It's important for me they know other children their age, but if its only one you've got, like my wee boy, then you have to help them to meet other kids.

(Group chat 2)

Especially at a younger age, whoever you are at nursery or school with, they're your friends, and you need to be nice to your friends. It's not like everyone has to be best friends, but everyone has to be nice to each other. So, don't do something to your friend that you wouldn't want them to do to you, kind of thing.

(Group chat 1)

My awareness of this has probably been heightened since Covid.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

When kids fall out, we need to help them deal with that. When I was growing up, we were told 'hit back or it won't stop'. I'm proud of them when they stand up for themselves, but it's a fine line. The wee one I look after, they have been called a bully in the nursery, but you know it all comes from his bag of troubles, he's coming out of it now, but he could very easily continue down this road.

(Group chat 32)

As we report on the findings of *theChat* we will share the experience of parents of children with additional support needs and disabilities. There is also more detail in the chapters focusing on [Spotlight Issues](#) and [Supporting Parents](#). The theme of friendship has been a significant focus for those parenting a child with ASN. Parents

can be concerned about how their child will make and sustain friendships as they grow.

He can't really understand why some children don't like or dislike certain things in the same way he does, so it is something I think about, if this is how he is struggling with friendships how will he be able to cope later when he's older and getting into relationships.

(Group chat 24)

Our children, particularly when they have additional support needs, need access to social experiences that allow them to work out friendships and relationships and have that natural organic feedback from other children. It would be useful to help us parents understand the best ways to help our children navigate relationships, what do they understand? How can we make things explicit and understandable to them? Help us how to be clear about concepts like respect, love. How do I make these concepts clear to them, how do we make them real in practice?

(Group chat 17)

When it comes to families, parents say that from an early age children begin to understand the importance of their family and recognise when other children's family circumstances are like their own or are different in some way. Parents begin to have discussions at this age to affirm the child's own family experience, but also to understand differences.

At age 3 we started talking about animal families, birds in their nest, making the nest, having and looking after the eggs. Very simple, but something he can understand is a family.

(Group chat 39)

My 6-year-old will ask questions like why she doesn't have a daddy? And so, I do need to teach that families are different, some families have dads, some families have two mums or two dads. I want her to understand that every household is different.

(Group chat 2)

We can explain to our children that every family is different. They come from different places, some just have a mum or a dad, some have mums or dads. Some people don't have grandparents, some people do. I think it's making them aware of the simple situation around them. So, if someone with a different family comes into their life, they aren't unkind. But I also believe it needs to be age appropriate. The world is changing so quickly, but as long as the information being given say at school fits with the information at home. So, I'm not sure it's an age thing, it's about what's happening in their circle. For example, we went to a birthday party, and his wee friend has two mums, and my boy asked, 'where's the daddy?' and so I was able to say, 'well there are just two mummies in this family' and he was perfectly happy with that explanation.

(Group chat 1)

I work hard to make sure my child knows their family (two mums) is special - I worry that our family is not always included in the curriculum and that I need to work hard to make up the gap and keep my child from feeling excluded or alienated by not being mentioned at nursery or school.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

This next comment sits in contract to the one above. There is more discussion about parental views towards discussion and learning that some people - including parents - are lesbian, gay or bisexual in [Spotlight Issue: Some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual](#).

By referring to unique and special families refer to same sex, transferred LGBT community? If so, that should be a little clearer, all family set ups are unique whether single parents, same sex, I think for this to be a subject for 3–5-year-old is not relevant nor warranted.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

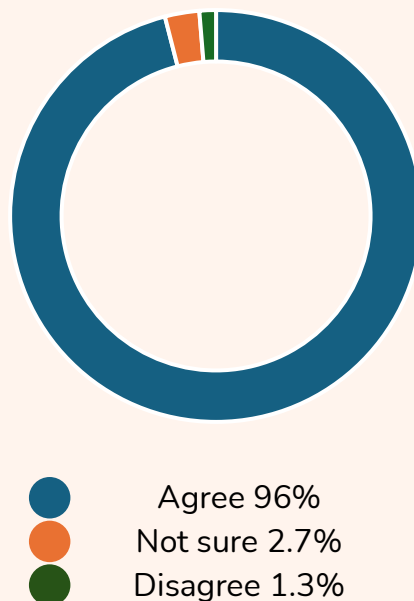
Theme 2: Every child is unique and special

We have already explored how parents speak with their child about different kinds of families. This is extended when it comes to talking and learning about every child being unique and special. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

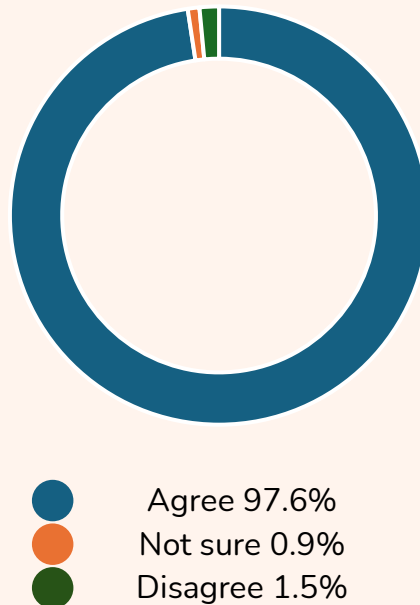
- That people are individual and unique.
- About the similarities and differences among children they meet.
- The importance of kindness and showing kindness to others.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *every child is unique and special* parents were asked to agree/disagree or say they were not sure when it came to the statements that follow – results are given for each.

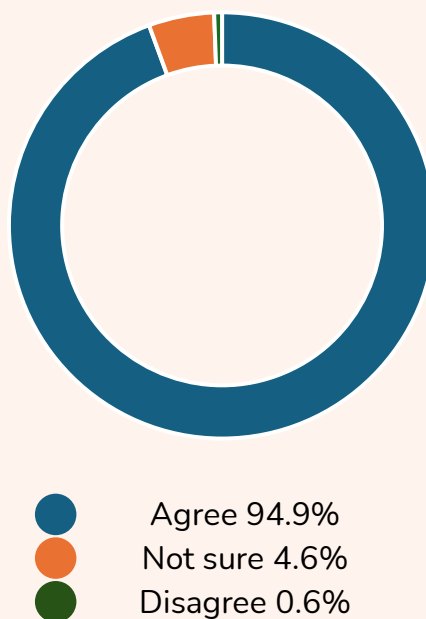
1. Every child is unique and special: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(547 responses)



2. Every child is unique and special: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about. (545 responses)



3. Every child is unique and special: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so. (544 responses)



As shown, *almost all* parents responding say that they talk and learn about the individuality and uniqueness of people, similarities and differences between us and the importance of showing kindness. Parents – again *almost all* - report that they feel this is an important topic, and they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child. While still *almost all* parents, those with a religious affiliation were significantly less likely to agree with statements 1 and 2. We can learn more from the contributions of parents in the small group chats as well as from open box responses in the national survey.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of talking and learning about individuality, uniqueness and kindness, for some parents of children at this age the focus is and should be on acknowledging *similarities* and keeping a positive focus on learning.

My 5-year-old tends to always see the similarities rather than differences which is where I have focused on, the differences can come a little later.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

We focus on what unites us, not what divides us.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

For some parents, diversity within the family is a way to begin to acknowledge and respect individuality.

Well, we've got two gay people in my family so my daughter who is 6 is aware that they like boys, she asks 'why don't they like girls' kind of thing, so we talk. And another family member in a wheelchair, so that's not different as such.

(Group chat 2)

Across group chats parents saw this theme as a way to recognise the sex-based stereotypes which children can have imposed on them. Parents also recognise that when a child strays from stereotypical gender norms of what a boy or girl should look like or like to do, this can be commented on by others including family members; this is particularly so it seems for boys at this age.

I want my child to feel like he can be an individual, I don't see the need for him to conform to what a boy should be like, or look like, but I also want to protect him, you know I don't want him singled out.

(Group chat 25)

People say like my wee boy will be in (name of industry) like his dad. And I'm like, you don't know that he could like something different as he gets older. Because like, he always dances. And people are like 'you can't make him dance cause he's like a boy, he'll be gay'. I just say because he likes to dance doesn't make him gay. But yeah, stuff like that is annoying, because whatever he likes he should be able to do.

(Group chat 3)

My son likes Barbie, like the cartoons, and he gets called a girl. When I was a young girl, I played with action figures and cars so...

(Group chat 3)

With children identifying differences between people, this parent identified that children begin to understand racism, particularly when they are exposed to it.

Our children are starting to notice that they are visibly different due to skin colour, and it does not feel that race/racism/positive difference is being discussed enough at school/nursery because their settings are pretty homogenous.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Parents have also said that they are supporting children to understand the importance of kindness, and how this contrasts with being unkind or hitting. In other chapters we explore how talking and learning about kindness, and its importance in peer relationships, shifts as children get older, but already at this age some parents are keen to ensure that kindness should not be passive or mean that children must acquiesce to something they do not agree with.

Yes, I teach them to be kind to others, and to think about other people's feelings. I say, what would you expect from other people? It's about talking to your children, not every child is going to be nice all the time, so they need to hear if they have upset another child. It's not about shouting at them, that doesn't work, we need to sit down and talk. I know that's not easy all the time, but I do try to explain, things

like hitting isn't nice. But kids being unkind to other kids, or hitting, does happen.
(Group chat 2)

Regarding "being kind" I think this is parroted too much - I think it should be more about "being respectful". For example, being kind, I believe discourages children (and adults) from challenging or questioning things and promotes walking on eggshells to not upset someone. I believe being respectful is about ensuring what you're saying or doing is not intentionally hurtful, but it doesn't discourage a child from asking questions.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

In the context of these considerations parents also identified that when their child is subject to unkindness or disrespect from others this can feel difficult to manage

I am confident and intentional in educating my kids about the importance of respecting diversity among different people, but I am not sure how to support their feelings when they are subjected to others' disrespect.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

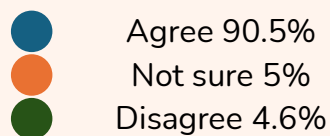
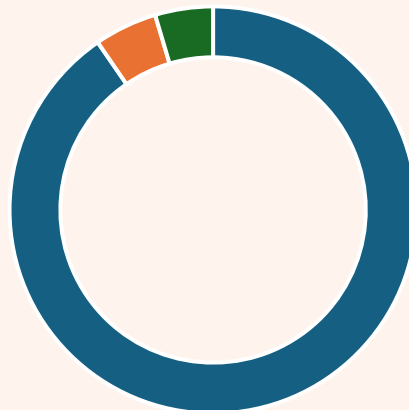
Theme 3: Children learning about their body

Across our group chats and as a part of the national survey, parents were asked to reflect on their approach to talking and learning about a range of topics which can be thought about as early learning for the child about their body, thinking about:

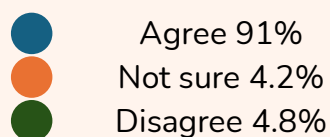
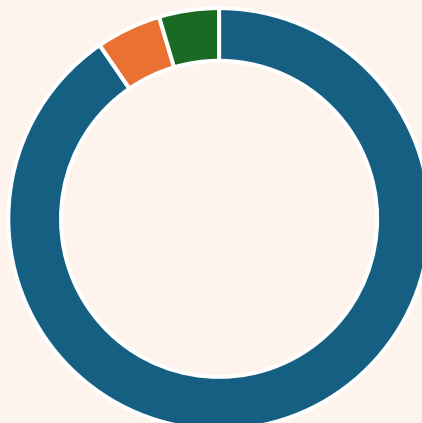
- The names for parts of their body - including the penis, testicles, vulva, bottom, nipples.
- That parts of their body are private.
- That their body belongs to them (the idea of bodily autonomy).
- That keeping clean is important, learning about hand washing and brushing teeth.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *children learning about their body* parents were asked to agree/disagree or say they were not sure when it came to the statements that follow – results are given for each.

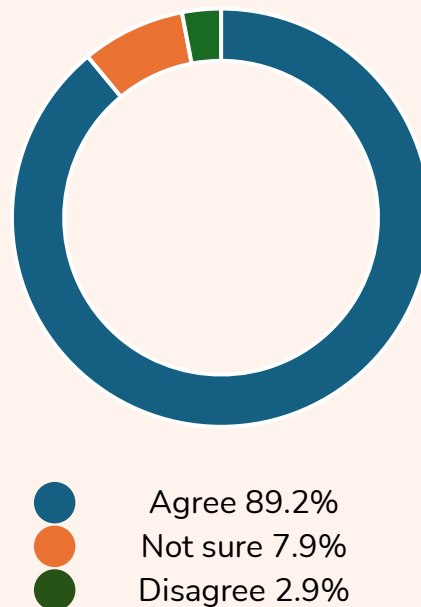
1. About their body: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(545 responses)



2. About their body: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about.
(544 responses)



3. About their body: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.
(545 responses)



As shown, *almost all* parents responding say that they talk and learn with their child about their body, about privacy and private parts and about looking after their body - the words parents use for parts of their body vary and will be discussed shortly. *Almost all* report that they feel this is an important topic, and *most* have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child on these matters. While still *most* parents, those with a religious affiliation were significantly less likely to agree with statements 1 and 2.

Although we see from the survey that *almost all* parents are engaged in learning and talking about their child's body, we have heard from parents who do not want any learning about the child's body to happen in nursery or school, nor do they want anatomically correct language used in any setting. For some parents, genitalia are viewed as 'sex organs' and so inappropriate to name, indeed the use of some terminology is seen as sexualising children. Comments like these capture this view.

This should be taught at home by parents. I do not agree with a 3-year-old learning about the word penis or vulva. Far too young.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

*At this age, I only want my child to recognise body parts and know the private ones.
I don't want my child to know what their sex organs are for yet.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

*Children of this age do not need to know correct terminology for body parts. You
have tried to put subjects to sexualise children in with subjects like brushing teeth
and washing hands to try and normalise it. Disgusting.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

This idea that using certain terminology is sexualising children has been challenged by other parents.

*It's all part of your body. Its only adults that sexualise these things. Kids are
innocent and they need to know what their body parts are.
(Group chat 27)*

*We should use the words; they are not bad words.
(Group chat 4)*

When learning at home some parents have talked about preferring to use colloquial terms. Where there were concerns about language this can be about the child's young age, that some words feel too grown up, or a concern that the child might use the words in inappropriate ways. Some parents will make the change from colloquial terms to correct terminology when the age of their child feels right.

*When they were wee, when we were talking about private parts, we'd say peepee
or flower. The school uses the real words. That kind of freaked me out. My son
talked about is penis, and I was like 'no, it's your wee man'.
(Group chat 31)*

*I would only use certain words like that. I'd say like bottom and nipples. But I'd say
'willy'. And for a girl I'd say flower. She knows what the real words are, so I have
said some people will say a boy's willy is a penis. And a girl has a vagina. But we'll
use our words at home.
(Group chat 2)*

I'd be embarrassed if my 2-year-old used one of these formal words in another situation, I'd be embarrassed, but if he said 'willy' I wouldn't be. Sorry, I don't understand why but I just would.

(Group chat 2)

At this age I don't think I would use 'testicles' but I would with my older boys, but I'm not sure when I would or when I did make that change.

(Group chat 5)

Parents also talked about having more concerns for using words relating to the child's body when the child is a girl. Parents have also commented on whether boys and girls need – at age 3, 4, 5 – to know the names of the private parts of children of the opposite sex.

When my daughter was little, I couldn't use the correct words. I referred to 'down there'. I wonder if we are less likely to say the words for girls.

(Group chat 29)

Maybe this is more important for girls, there's so many names people use. For a boy people just say 'willy' and everyone knows.

(Group chat 2)

My child is male, I speak to him about his body and his rights to his body. I haven't discussed female body parts with his because he's 4 and there is no need for him to know about a vulva at 4 years old. He understands boys are girls are different and have different parts, I feel that's age-appropriate information at this stage.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

For some parents the use of the terms offered can be challenging when they themselves had not grown up using them, nonetheless there is an acknowledgement of the need to change.

We do it differently from the way I grew up. When I grew up, we wouldn't use the correct terminology, never for your private parts. It would be like 'your flower' or 'your boy bits'. Whereas I think it's important to use the correct terminology these days, it's a lot more open, we talk about things a lot more than when I was wee. My mum was always like 'oh, we'll talk about that later, when you're older'. That wasn't helpful.

(Group chat 1)

Parents have talked about two further influences on the use of correct terms, firstly is that they are widely used by a child's nursery or school (for parents there is a sense that to not do so themselves might be confusing for the child) and secondly that their use is seen as protective, so that child has the words to describe a worry or ask a question.

Well, it's the direction we are all going in, they are teaching about body parts and private parts, so we need to use the same words.

(Group chat 21)

Maybe up to 3 years old we used different words, but when she started going to nursery, we needed to teach her the right words. And it was then that we wanted her to understand private parts, and that no one should touch her there, so I think it would be confusing if we didn't use the right words. So, we went with the proper terminology, and she's not embarrassed by that.

(Group chat 21)

I think they need to learn the right words because, well I've heard that if there is ever abuse the child has to be able to say the right words. That's sad, but I get that.

(Group chat 31)

While the quotes above illustrate different experiences and perspectives there was agreement from most, but not all, parents in our chat sessions that the terms – penis, testicles, vulva, bottom, nipples – should be used. Parents have also identified this language as the basis for later confidence and communication.

I don't think that the nursery has said what words they use. But hopefully they use the right words, it would be the best thing if they did.

(Group chat 27)

With my boys, well I just thought 'well, it's your penis' Isn't it? It's just their penis.

(Group chat 29)

My mum isn't totally happy about using the correct words, but I don't care. They're all like 'that's not your vagina, it's your cookie or your flower... don't call it that!' But I just say look it's only a word and we will call it what it is. But you know I did feel the same to start with, but then I thought why not? Its biology, it is what it is.

(Group chat 3)

I teach him about his private parts with the actual names. This is a welcome development for me.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

When they were little, before we came to Scotland, we didn't use the real words for the private parts of their body, but here they were taught words. And I learned that we should teach our children in this way, that we should be direct and explain things. Now they are teenagers, we communicate and use these words to communicate.

(Group chat 34)

The use of language has also been discussed by parents as being key to helping their younger child understand the idea of privacy and private parts.

I started this when he was just 6 months old, talking about his private areas. I know he didn't understand what I was saying then but it was for me, just talking as we did things, reminding myself of what's important as he grew up. I think this is as important for boys as it is for girls, that we help them understand to keep their body safe. Like now, he knows that it is his body, even if he doesn't want to hug someone he can say. And as he has grown, we have spoken about closing the bathroom door – not locking as he is only little - and things like washing himself with my help.

(Group chat 39)

From my experience, I think this is something kids need to learn from an early age. My daughter is 6 years old now, but by the time she was 2 or 3 going to nursery she knew that everything under her clothes was hers, hers only, nobody looks or touches there. Only us her parents can help her there.

I would explain a GP if I had to.

(Group chat 38)

We started that when they started training with the potty, going to the toilet. So, they know the names for parts of their body, they know this is private. They know to be clean, and not to touch the private parts of someone's body.

(Group chat 1)

So, while I think it's important to understand what private parts are, it's vital that children are not made to feel there is anything shameful about their naked bodies, and as a parent I think it's important to family openness that we see each other naked.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Parents have talked about wanting their child to feel comfortable with their body and to ensure a positive tone when it come to talking, playing and learning.

We want them to learn about private parts, but at 3, 4, 5 children like to have their clothes off, maybe my daughter will lift her dress. Or say the village children will play naked in the stream, and we want them to be free and have fun. So over time we need to help them learn private spaces, public spaces, it's not black and white, children this age need to play freely. Like running into the sea in their pants or with them off. So, its age related, and about context, as adults we can manage that without the children feeling they are getting something wrong.

(Group chat 5)

We try to relate the idea of private bits and keeping them private in a public space, but without explaining danger, we don't want them to worry. Like the example would be my wee boy pulling his trousers and pants fully down to pee and asking him not to do that in a public bathroom. He doesn't understand any risk in that, and I wouldn't want him to, so it's explaining private parts in positive ways.

(Group chat 5)

Discussion also saw parents reflect on how they want their child to begin to learn about bodily autonomy – this might be understood to be helping the child to understand that their body is *their* body, and that for example, that because it belongs to them no one should ask to see their body or touch them without permission. Parents have talked about these chats lending themselves to learning about consent.

You have to give them some responsibility, like some empowerment over themselves. You have to give kids choice. Then they feel it's their choice. I mean sometimes she'll chose to put her coat on the wrong way round, then have a tantrum.

(Group chat 26)

I'm starting now to tell my 3-year-old about body parts and how your own body belongs to you and it's private and everyone else has private parts too and we never touch these places. My 5-year-old was told this at around 3 years old also. And there told they can come to me to talk about anything. I would never feel uncomfortable talking to my kids about anything.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

In my household, it would be usually the mother who would teach the daughter everything she needs to know. And the father and mother can teach the boy. The number one rule is to teach the children that they must respect their body. So, when they go to the toilet the children know who can help them, and how to clean themselves.

(Group chat 1)

The conversations you hear yourself having.... But you know it's about teaching them both that their body is private. From the very beginning, at home and at nursery, they need to be treated with respect and dignity when it comes their bodies – that you're a person. My wee ones, they don't have to cuddle a person, like if they don't want to cuddle or kiss their gran then that's okay. I think because of Covid, they also feel different.

(Group chat 32)

Consent is really important to me. Like I'm even trying to teach that to my daughter now. Like being in your personal space and things. Something simple like hugging, or them or me being in their personal space, having consent for that. So already she doesn't like it when we are in her personal space, so I say like: 'Can I come near you? Can I give you a hug?' And she'll be like 'yeah, come here' or she'll say 'no', and I'm okay with that, don't question that. It's the small things they can learn from. And that's connected to being respectful of other people's feelings. So, if someone doesn't want to do something, no pressure.

(Group chat 3)

A part of parental discussion about how children learn about their bodies has been the ways in which parents understand and respond to children touching their private parts. Parents expressed concerns about when a child does this in a place that is public or in front of others but also saw this as a soothing behaviour and wanted to address it without causing the child embarrassment or shame.

Bath time is also when my wee boy does like touch his willy, and I let him do that, I feel that's an okay time.

(Group chat 2)

My wee boy, his hands are always on it. I just say, leave it alone. But my wee girl does it too. And I don't quite know what to say to her. I don't want to say anything like 'that's dirty' or that, I try to ignore it mostly. But I don't know what to say to my girl. You know I don't want to put shame on it or anything like that, so no shame.

(Group chat 3)

Our son is 5 and he does have erections sometimes. He has asked what this is, why his penis is standing up, and so we just explain its what happens sometimes. For a moment I didn't have the words, but the I just spoke straightforwardly and said, you have an erection, and that's the thing a penis can do, and it's alright. And he was immediately okay with that. I didn't want him to have shame about that. I did wonder about the word, but it is what it is, his male body was just doing its thing.

(Group chat 4)

A final aspect of talking and learning in the early years can be about keeping clean, hand washing and brushing teeth. Across small group chats and via the survey parents report this is a part of what they do at home. One aspect of this learning is the impact of habits from the pandemic.

We brush our teeth together. They shower with my help, a bit of guidance. So, they know how to wash themselves. The more kids you have the more you realise you need to teach them a bit of independence, to learn these things.

(Group chat 38)

Whenever he sees hand gel, he'll go straight to it and uses it, maybe something from covid. I think during covid the nursery and school were a bit over the top with it, and it wasn't good for their skin, very harsh on their skin. I worry now that the kids won't just get dirty, I think they worry, so do parents, like it limits outdoor play, all germ led.

(Group chat 38)

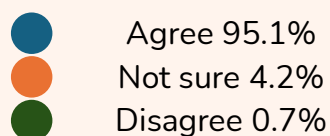
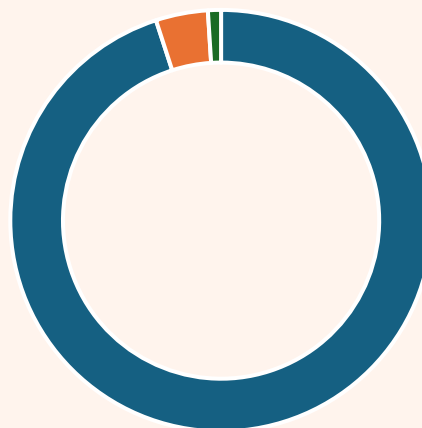
Theme 4: Feelings and asking for help

In the early years, whether at home or in nursery or school, children will begin to express their feelings, they may be overwhelmed at times, and so for parents talking and learning with a child about feelings and asking for help might include supporting them to:

- Understand their feelings, including when they might feel safe or unsafe, happy, or worried.
- Learn which adults that they can go to if they have a question or a worry.
- Introduce the idea of trust.

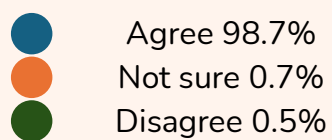
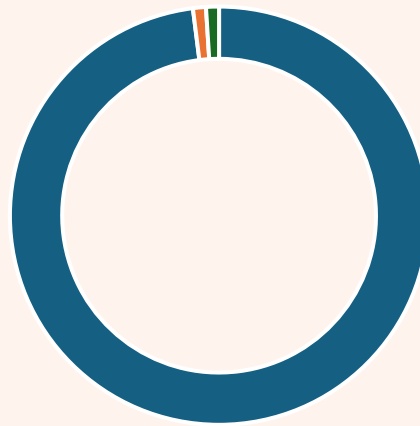
In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *feelings and asking for help* parents were asked to agree/disagree or say they were not sure when it came to the statements that follow – results are given for each.

1. Feelings and asking for help: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(546 responses)



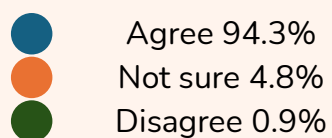
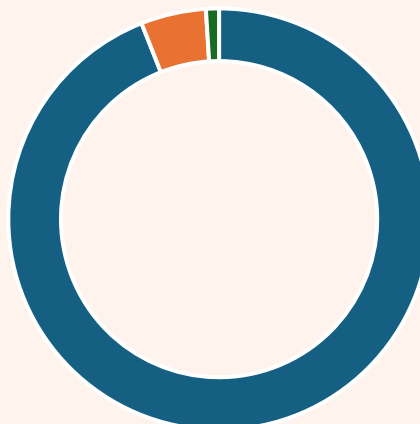
2. Feelings and asking for help: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about.

(547 responses)



3. Feelings and asking for help: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.

(546 responses)



As shown, *almost all* parents responding say they talk and learn with their child about their feelings, who to go to with questions or worries and some early discussion about the concept of *trust* which we will explore further. *Almost all* parents also report that they feel this is an important topic, and that they have confidence in their role. We can learn more from the contributions of parents in the small group chats as well as from open box responses in the national survey.

For parents talking and learning about feelings might not be explicit at this age, but they have talked about doing their best to remain calm and to support early communication. Parents also talk about responding to temper and meltdowns.

I'm not sure we have ever introduced or talked about feeling safe or unsafe, not at this age.

(Group chat 5)

My child has a worry monster (teddy). He uses this to express his feelings.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

My son struggles with safety and feelings.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

We are trying but due to my daughter's temper and issues it doesn't always go down well and can lead to meltdowns.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

It can look like a meltdown or a tantrum, but really, they just can't understand or explain their emotions, so we need to learn how to listen and understand their frustration or them being angry. I can say, it's okay to be angry, just help them express themselves.

(Group chat 2)

There has been a lot of chat with parents about the idea of trust. It is clear from these conversations that in the early years it is a key task of being a parent to establish that your child understands *you* are their main protector, a person to be relied upon, and who will believe them. It seems that the word 'trust' might not be used (one parent said: 'Trust feels like a complicated concept for nursery/P1 age children'.) but all these aspects of being a child's trusted person are part of the

parent/child relationship. For parents, building trust should always be learned from positive talk and experience, and not by worrying a child.

At nursery, children are just so close to home and key people, it doesn't feel that talking about trust is the kind of thing I'd do. Maybe as they get into primary school, you do encourage them to speak to a specific named adult, me, the teacher.

(Group chat 5)

Even from the early years we can teach them to come to us and tell us if there is anything that they see that they are worried about. And older brothers and sisters can help protect the younger ones.

(Group chat 6)

Not sure what is meant here about the idea of trust... we teach our children what is good, and who can help them when something bad happens or when they need help. Trust is not really a part of that.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

I think the child has to choose who they trust, you can't like make someone trust someone. That's even true for little ones. They will choose who they connect to in the nursery. Someone with a vibe they like, someone they sense they want to be with.

(Group chat 2)

You have to introduce the idea of trust carefully, never scaring the children or making them feel adults can be bad. So, it's just identifying positive people.

(Group chat 5)

This parent's insight is interesting in their acknowledgement that as their child grows up, they might not always be the child's 'go-to' trusted person, but that if they have learned how to identify a trusted adult, they will know who to go to.

When they are wee you have to be the most important person they trust, the person they can talk to. But when they get to high school maybe they don't want to talk to you, maybe they'd rather other family members or a professional person. But I can teach them to know who that person is, who they want, so they have someone.

(Group chat 2)

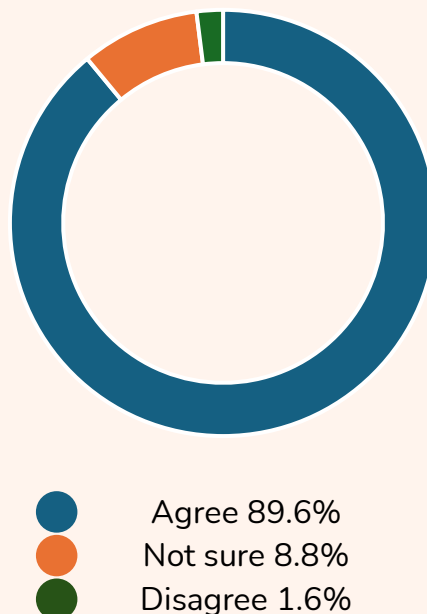
Theme 5: Where living things come from and who looks after them

The final theme offered to parents of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds for discussion in our small group chats and via the national survey was focused on where living things come from and who looks after children. This was described as offering opportunities to talk and learn about these topics:

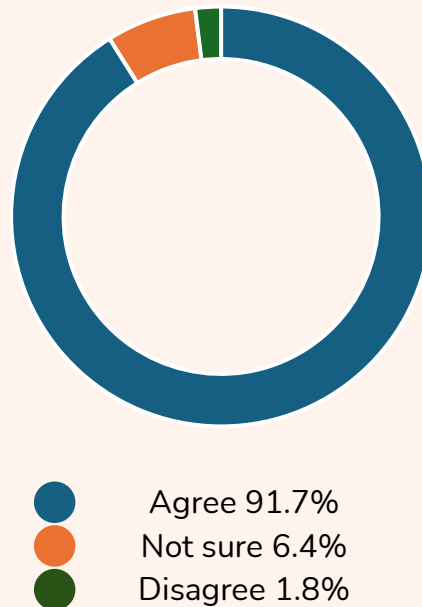
- The needs of plants and animals.
- Pregnancy and looking after a baby.
- The professional people who help and care for children, like nursery staff, teachers, doctors, or nurses.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *where living things come from and who looks after them* parents were asked to agree/disagree or say they were not sure when it came to the statements that follow – results are given for each.

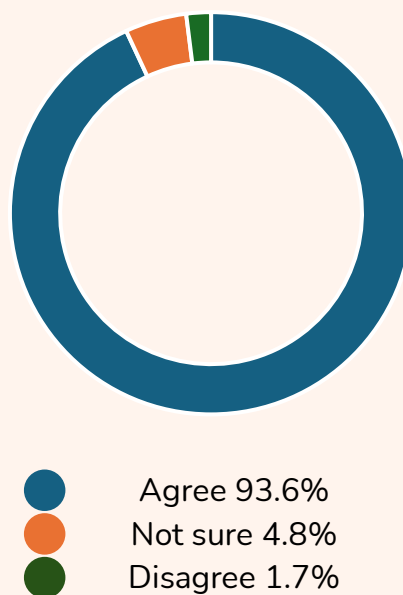
1. Where living things come from and who looks after them: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(546 responses)



2. Where living things come from and who looks after them: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about.
(545 responses)



3. Where living things come from and who looks after them: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.
(545 responses)



As shown, *almost all* parents responding say that they talk and learn with their child about this theme, they think it is important to do so, and have confidence in this role. We can learn more from the contributions of parents in the small group chats as well as from open box responses in the national survey.

The needs of plants and animals, and caring for them, is something that is commonly discussed at home, especially as there is so much on related topics on TV and across media.

I think my younger ones know about animals, but we haven't gone into like how babies are made.

(Group chat 2)

I teach him on how plants need sunlight and water to grow, how he can help care for animals.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

There's lots of things on TV that show things about the life cycle and reproduction of plants and animals, nature programmes that normalise talking about it. Or because we live near farms, they also see very natural things in terms of reproduction, birth...

(Group chat 5)

Across our reporting on *theChat* references will be made to the fact that parents are often led to have conversations with their child because the child asks a question – for many parents this is a good way into discussion, and it shows that a child is ready to have a chat. From early on however, potential questions about how babies are made or how they are born do cause some anxiety.

Because I'm pregnant my son asked how the baby will come out. At 5 I'm not ready to explain too much, but I say I'll go to hospital and the doctor will help me to give birth to the baby. Some tips on this would be good.

(Group chat 39)

I know there is a right answer if children ask questions about how you get pregnant, I just don't know what it is. I think I'd get myself in a pickle.

(Group chat 5)

If I don't know what to say I might just laugh, make light of it. I realise I probably shouldn't.
(Group chat 5)

Some parents have shared how they have talked with their child about pregnancy or having a child. For them, it has been important to respond to questions or describe things in a straightforward way that does not – at this age – need to include a discussion of sexual intercourse. Pregnancy and new babies in the family are often an opportunity to talk and learn.

We have a book, that's very scientific, factual but not detailed about sex itself.
(Group chat 5)

He has a baby sister (born when he turned 5) so has seen me pregnant, breastfeeding etc - but I'm not sure how we might have dealt with those topics if I hadn't had another baby.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

I've got a picture of her, her first scan, and so we can talk about that, and I say you were in mummy's tummy, that's where you came from. And the other day we had a conversation about breast feeding and what that is, because we saw that. My partner said to me 'she's five...' but you know she's asking me. I think if you tell them about things, you're not going to have that fear of them asking something when they see it.
(Group chat 1)

When I was pregnant, I could explain that the baby grows in the belly, and when it is born it comes out of my vagina. But some babies are born with an operation, out their mum's tummy.
(Group chat 2)

When they're wee, I don't think though that they need to know about how babies are made, maybe that's about P5. And I think they start that then at school. That could be the right age, but maybe it's about the individual child, are they ready for it? Some kids have so many questions about everything. If he comes to me with a question, then I'm happy to say that. But I don't really know what age you're supposed to have a conversation like that.
(Group chat 2)

He's 5. He asked how he got out of my tummy and corrected him and said that he came out of my vagina. I am a firm believer in using the right words, and there's nothing wrong with the vagina. I have said that our bodies came together, and we made him. He hasn't asked how all babies were made, but I've left that there. But I'm not sure I understand the language to use. Perhaps more detail as he gets older.

(Group chat 4)

So, when my kids have asked about how the baby is made, I've just said when a lady and a man are adults, and they love each other, that's when they can make a baby. That's been enough.

(Group chat 38)

We live on a farm so plenty opportunity for these discussions.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

A visit to the local farm is handy for this type of chat. We also plant seeds. I want my little one to just know things and not be a big deal, being sat down for the Chat.

Just ongoing learning. Answer things openly.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

For parents who have expressed concerns about this area of learning – at home or at nursery or school – there is the concern that to discuss pregnancy with a child must mean discussing sexual intercourse. Parent comments above have shown this is not the case, but this is clearly an area for further discussion and clarification between parents and nursery/school.

I would not be in agreement with a school talking about pregnancy or sex with my 3/4/5-year-old.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

As long as talking about pregnancy is in a way a 3-year-old can understand I am fine with that, but I am very much against my child learning about sexual intercourse at such a young age.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Some parents have questioned the appropriateness of the suggestion that a child can learn about *looking after a baby*. This comment from a survey respondent is interesting because in expressing a concern the parent gives what could be

considered an appropriate approach to the ways in which a child can indeed understand the topic.

I don't feel my child needs to learn about looking after a baby as that would not be her responsibility at such a young age, not in any in-depth manner anyway, just general change nappy, feed, sleep and nurture through love, connections that she can relate to herself.

(Survey respondent/parent of 3–5-year-old)

For parents of children conceived via IVF or donor there is a need for their child to understand how they were conceived, that this is part of their life and indeed their family story.

We think about this every day. It's not like we always sit down and have a conversation, but we might use books. For our son we have a book, that also helps explain he is a donor conceived child. He always enjoys that. (Group chat 4)

Our child was conceived with a donor, who we don't know, and is an IVF baby. So, I need to be able to explain that we were given sperm and that went inside Mums egg, and then back inside my body. So, we have talked about him being a baby we tried to have for 6 years, it's his story. I explained that the sperm comes from a male body and my egg was fertilised. This felt okay at 4 or 5 years old... We do need to make sure we don't simply conflate sex with how you have a baby. My child's story started with IVF and a donor. If you don't give him his story you erase stuff, build shame or embarrassment around how they started.

(Group chat 4)

In small group chats and via the survey parents have reflected on learning in relation to the topic we called *the professional people who help and care for children, like nursery staff, teachers, doctors, or nurses*. While parents reported that children learn who people are, particularly so as and when they meet adults in professional roles in nursery or school, the discussion also involved parental concern about any idea that children should be told they must trust all professional people routinely.

Yes, they're already at an age where you have to talk about and explain who people are, so like if they need to go to the doctors.

(Group chat 2)

I would have concerns about actively teaching children to trust certain groups of adults- sadly teachers, police or medical staff can all be abusers, and children should always be told to raise concerns about ANY adult, regardless of their status.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

In the context of learning about professional people, and indeed the earlier ideas of trust, parents have also spoken about a feeling that trust between them and some professionals has been broken ([Spotlight Issue: Trust](#) explores this further).

I feel like we are a bit hypocritical; we're putting our children in the hands of people we tell them they can trust, but we don't trust them 100%. We tell our kids they'll be safe. Then they're not when the school does nothing to sort bullying. Should we be telling our children to trust them? It feels like relationships are a bit broken. But well, some of them at school have helped him, teaching assistants and dinner ladies. Professionals just need a bit of compassion and understanding.

(Group chat 38)

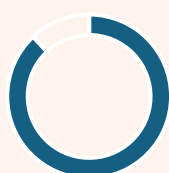
Since I've had my wee one, I've seen 5 different Health Visitors. One phoned the other day to arrange a visit, and I said aye of course, but they don't know him, he doesn't know them. So, when they come your constantly repeating yourself. And then she won't come back.

(Group chat 38)

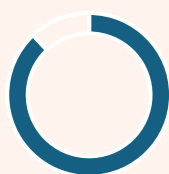
Influences on *what* and *when* parents speak to their child

Parents were asked, in both the small group chats and then in the national survey, to reflect on what influences what and when they speak to their child when it comes to the themes and topics we have been exploring so far in this chapter. The options presented in the national survey were developed from the small group chats we had. As can be seen from the graphic presentation of results from the survey there are many and overlapping influences on parenting and children's learning as we think about children in their early years.

Do any of these things influence what you speak to your child about?



What they hear from
others:
88.2%



Something they do or
say:
88.2%



What they are taught
in nursery or school:
86.9%



A worry they have
talked about:
79.2%



A problem or incident
worrying them:
76.6%



What they see online,
on social media or
TV/film:
74.8%



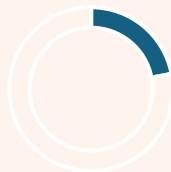
My own experience of
growing up:
64.6%



My experience as an
adult:
53.8%



Our culture:
33%



Our faith:
22.5%

These quotes from parents help illustrate the influences that have been acknowledged.

*Often at bedtime 5-year-old will bring up a worry/something from nursery.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

*We are a very open with our children and would speak about anything that they
want to be worried about or curious about.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

My parents never spoke to me and my siblings about anything to do with our bodies, feelings and worries. I make a point in speaking to my children about these things so they know they can talk to me and ask questions without any embarrassment or judgement.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Our children are cared for therefore believe that truth telling is very important and being open and honest and answer and explain any questions.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

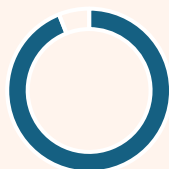
Sometime can be tricky to explain if other children say or feel something that you may not want your child to see/hear.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

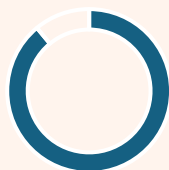
Faith does influence in that we talk about how God made us different from each other.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

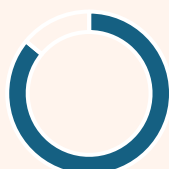
Do any of these things influence when you speak to your child?



A question they ask:
94.6%



When they
misunderstand
something: 88.7%



When they behave in
a way I think is not
acceptable: 86.2%



A worry they have:
84.8%



Because they are
being taught about it
in nursery/school:
77%



A worry I have:
64.5%



When I want them to
know what our family
thinks is okay or
acceptable: 63.5%



When I feel they are
the right age: 60.8%

These quotes from parents help illustrate the influences that have been acknowledged.

We have day to day chats about what we're seeing or doing, what's happened at nursery, what someone else did at nursery etc.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

When situations arise outside the normal that I feel require additional explanation or my child tells me they don't understand, or I can see their wee minds mulling it over.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Stuff that seems innocent in cartoons but isn't. Like Disney and their true loves kisses, it makes kids think it's normal to kiss everyone on the mouth for long periods. I find it hard to tell my child that she shouldn't do this and that a peck on the cheek is enough. It was my mum and grannies that tried to teach her to kiss everyone in the room before bed.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

As same sex parents who are also Catholic and bring up our children in the faith we need to discuss 'gaps' within the school teaching e.g. recently the school assembly spoke about dignity and respect and included lots of people in society but did not mention LGBTQ which I feel is a massive gap in the school teachings being RC school.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

I think what we can already do is to show our children a traditional, healthy family, at first. This is the most important thing.

(Group chat 1)

I feel there is no right or wrong ages for topics. How things are discussed, and the level of detail and explanation is dependent on age and comprehension.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Learning at nursery or school

Parents have been asked to reflect on learning at nursery and school. Before we report on this it may be helpful to describe what guides the learning that can happen in nursery and school when it comes to the themes and topics that have been discussed so far. Curriculum for Excellence is Scotland's curriculum, and it sets out how children gain the knowledge, skills and attributes they need for life. The curriculum is defined as everything that is planned for children – this includes curriculum areas and subjects. There are eight curriculum areas, one of these is Health and Wellbeing [health-and-wellbeing-eo.pdf \(education.gov.scot\)](#) Within the Health and Wellbeing curriculum children learn about Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP).

To support teachers to deliver the best RSHP learning a national teaching and learning resource has been developed. It is hosted here [www.rshp.scot](#) In nursery and in P1 children might be expected to be learning at what is called *Early Level* [Early Level - RSHP](#) Nurseries and schools are not required to deliver the learning approaches and materials that are offered; they may choose to deliver some or all. But the topics can potentially form part of nursery and school-based learning, and so this is how we have developed the list of 15 topics discussed in this section of the report.

Teaching and learning in the denominational sector can draw on the RSHP national resource as well as materials developed and supported by the Scottish Catholic Education Service, more here [Health & Relationships | Scottish Catholic Education Service | SCES](#) and here [Equality & Inclusion Learning and Teaching | Scottish Catholic Education Service | SCES](#)

In this part of the report, we share survey results which asked parents: *How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in nursery or P1?* We can also share quotes from parents taken from small group chats and open text boxes in the national survey.

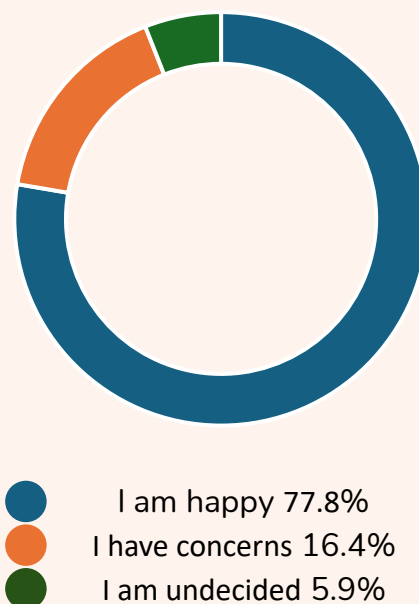
As stated earlier, the following terms are used when reporting on the results of theChat national survey:

- **Almost all** means over 90% of parents who responded.
- **Most** means 75% to 90% of parents who responded.
- **A majority** means 50% to 74% of parents who responded.
- **Less than half** means 15% to 49% of parents who responded.
- **Few** means less than 15% of parents who responded.

Topic 1: Names for parts of the body

Looking at all responses, *most* parents are happy with their children learning about names for parts of the body at nursery or school. While a *majority* of parents with a religious affiliation are happy for learning on this topic, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. Earlier in the chapter we explored different views about language, and it is important to understand why some parents may have concerns or be undecided. As the quotes from parents identify, one issue is communication between nursery/school and home on approaches to this learning.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(544 responses)



They must teach this at nursery though because my wee boy talks about his penis.
(Group chat 2)

School has also helped massively with reinforcing this topic.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

All of these topics are fine - the names of body parts is just different to how I was taught so more information on exactly what they are told would be good.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

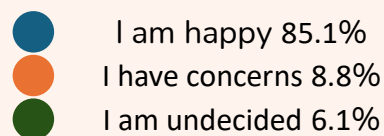
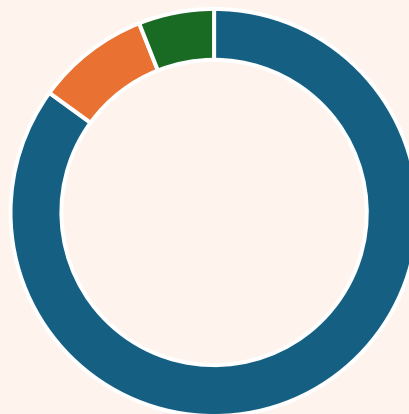
I don't think it is always appropriate for 5-year-olds and younger to be learning specific names for private body parts. This is certainly not appropriate at nursery age (especially learning about the parts of the other sex). As a parent I would also

*like to be informed by the school before this information is shared with my child.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

Topic 2: That parts of the body are private

Most parents are happy with nursery/school-based learning for their children that parts of their body are private. Few parents expressed concern. While most parents with a religious affiliation are also happy for learning on this topic, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. Again, where there are concerns these might be mitigated by improved communication between nursery/school and home.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(543 responses)

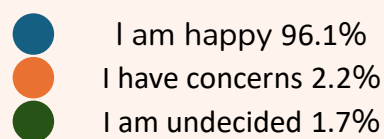
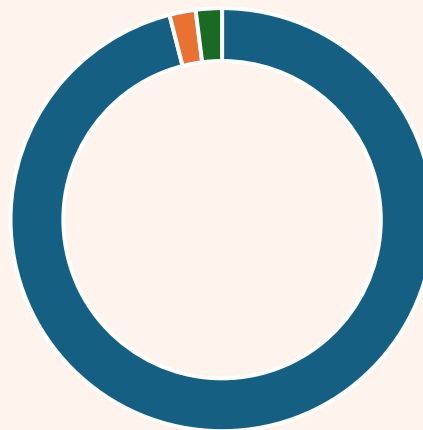


*Think it would be good if school could pre warn parents as my child's class were confused about chat about body parts and privacy causing some children to be worried about going swimming. It would allow parents to support the conversation more.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

Topic 3: Keeping clean

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about keeping clean, toothbrushing and handwashing when they are at nursery/school. Few parents expressed concern.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(543 responses)



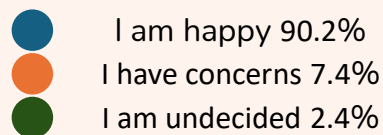
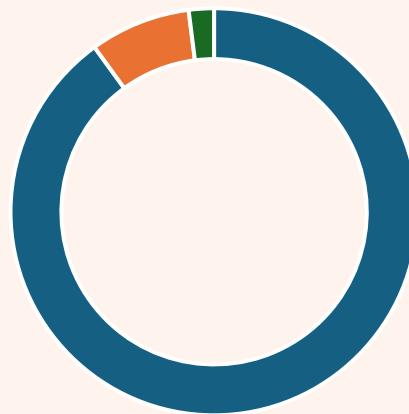
This is something at home and I know it's taught in nursery too.
(Group chat 2)

We used to do a toothbrushing song, on YouTube. We still use it because my two boys are in the process of getting diagnosed, autism, so things like that can be a fight sometimes. We've got toothpaste with no taste and no foam. Its good they do toothbrushing and hand washing at nursery, maybe they get it better than me. And I know if they refuse to brush in the morning with me, I know they'll brush at nursery.
(Group chat 38)

Topic 4: My body belongs to me (bodily autonomy)

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about bodily autonomy as part of nursery/school learning. *Few* parents expressed concern. While *most* parents with a religious affiliation are happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns.

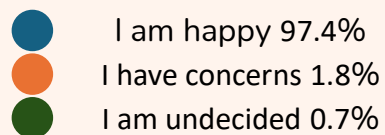
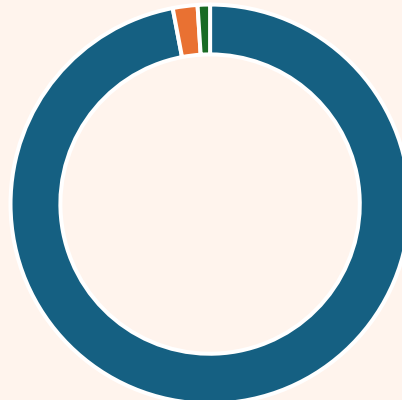
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(542 responses)



Topic 5: Being a friend

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about friendship and being a friend as part of nursery/school learning. *Few* parents expressed concern.

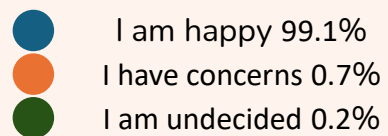
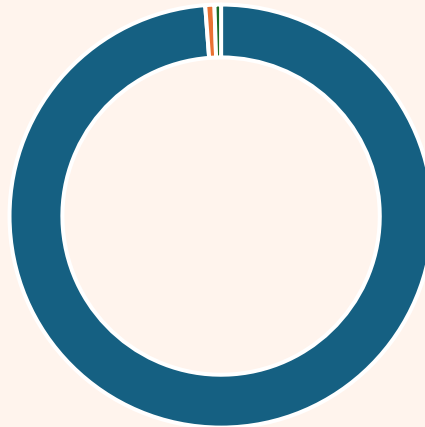
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(543 responses)



Topic 6: Helping others

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about helping others as part of nursery/school learning. *Few* parents expressed concern.

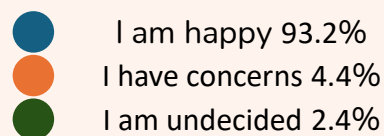
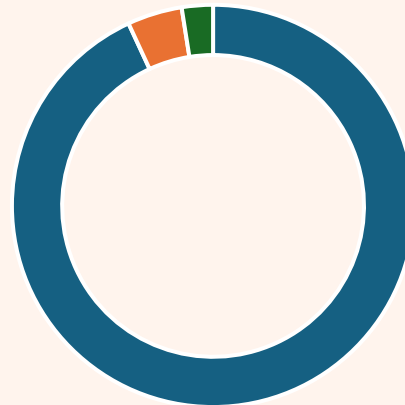
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(543 responses)



Topic 7: Personal space and privacy

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about personal space and privacy as part of nursery/school learning. *Few* parents expressed concern. While *almost all* parents with a religious affiliation are also happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns.

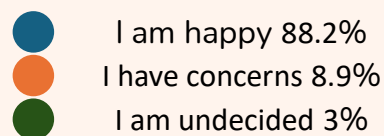
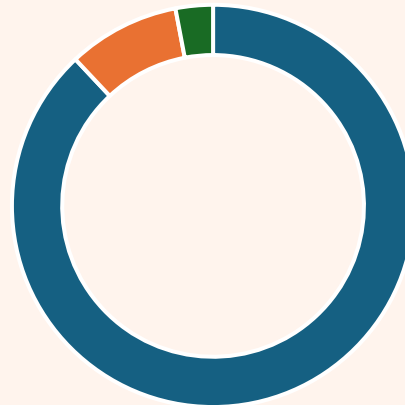
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(541 responses)



Topic 8: My family/all our families are different

Most parents are happy for their child to be learning about their family and diversity in families as part of nursery/school learning. Few parents expressed concern. While *most* parents with a religious affiliation are also happy for learning on this topic, they are significantly more likely to have concerns.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(541 responses)

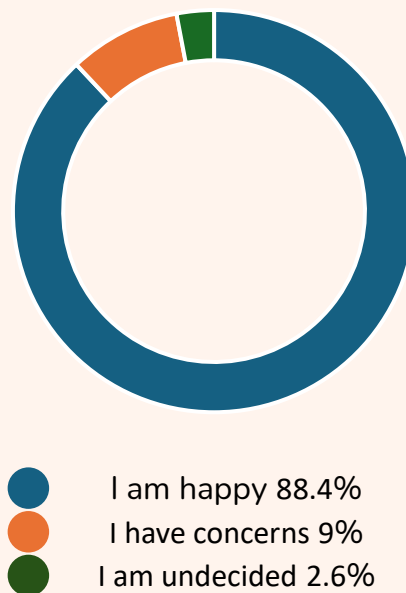


I want my child to see that his two-mum family is just as normal as anyone else's and is just as represented in the classroom (books, discussions, holiday celebrations). His friend in P1 has two dads so it isn't exactly uncommon anymore, and people act like it's inappropriate to mention families like ours but surely my child deserves to know it's ok to exist.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Topic 9: Learning about similarities and differences between people

Most parents are happy for their child to be learning about similarities and differences between people as part of nursery/school learning. Few parents expressed concern. While *most* parents with a religious affiliation are also happy for learning on this topic, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. Quotes from parents below highlight that as well as learning for children, the day-to-day practices of the nursery or school should also be considered.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(542 responses)



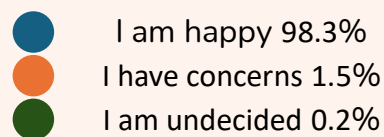
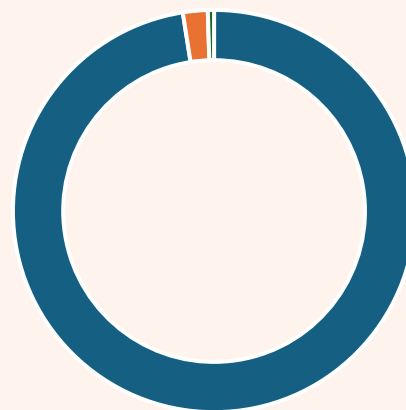
*Important to start to introduce discussions around racism at this age.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)*

*There was some stereotypical stuff at nursery, organising boys and girls separately,
I just wonder if the staff had had enough opportunity to learn, to reflect on their
own upbringing, so that they could work in ways that were better.
(Group chat 25)*

Topic 10: Kindness

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about kindness as part of nursery/school learning. Few parents expressed concern. Across reporting on *theChat* we will hear from parents that this learning, and the expectations we have for children about being kind, should not view the act of kindness as a passive behaviour.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(542 responses)



They use kindness in nursery, like having kind hands, indoor voices, being gentle. My wee boy is quite shy, he'll take a step back, so it's important all the children are learning about kindness.

(Group chat 2)

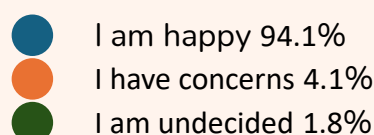
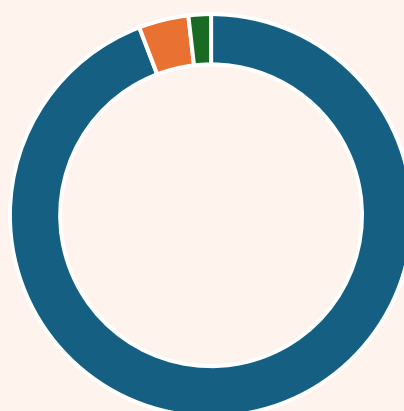
I feel that in teaching about friendliness and being kind children are sometimes taught to put others' feelings above their own. My older child finds it hard to set boundaries or stick up for himself when others are unkind because he is so worried about getting in trouble for not being nice.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Topic 11: The professional people who help me

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about the professional people who help them as part of nursery/school learning. Few parents expressed concern. While *almost all* parents with a religious affiliation are also happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. The quotes from parents below echo earlier discussion about learning at home where parents do not want children to learn that all adults should be trusted, simply by virtue of being an adult or in a position of trust.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(541 responses)



Concerns about police being talked about as trustworthy and even invited into schools when we know this is not the case, especially for marginalised people.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

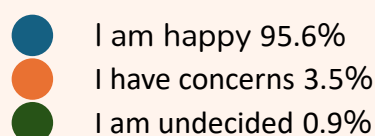
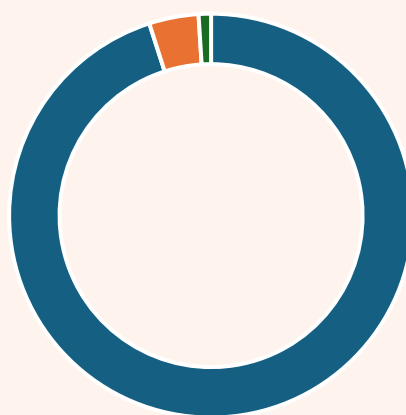
I would like to teach my child about professional people that help us; however, I also have concerns about teaching children to trust professional adults. In our home we teach children to look out for strange behaviours, even in professional adults.

(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Topic 12: Learning about feelings

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about feelings as part of nursery/school learning. Few parents expressed concern. While almost all parents with a religious affiliation are also happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. In the quotes from parents below we hear about connections between home and nursery/school and how similar approaches can be adopted to support a child to understand feelings.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(542 responses)



At my daughter's nursery they are really helping the wee ones to understand their body. To like to understand when she's feeling angry, so start to breath, and so we're doing that at home, and it really does help bring her down before she gets to that point where she's upset. And they do yoga positions and she'll do that at home.
(Group chat 3)

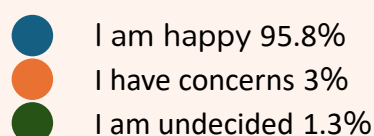
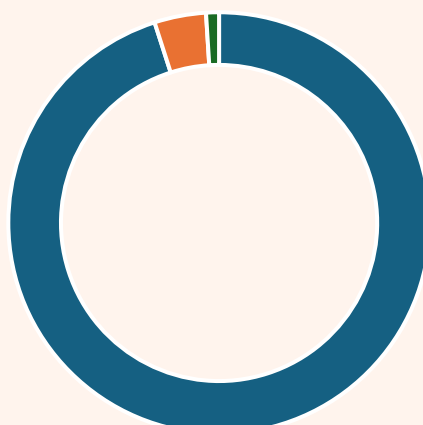
In school they've got like a chart with colours so they can express their feelings, different emotions can be expressed using visuals, so we have one at home too because my daughter is really emotional, it was suggested this might help her. And it does, like if she can't express how she's feeling she can say using the visuals, it really helps. If they feel overwhelmed children can't always get their feelings out.
(Group chat 2)

In nursery they have those cartoon characters that are emotions. And now in primary school the children can select a feeling in the morning, put it in a box, and the teacher can check in with them at some point. I think that's a really good thing.
(Group chat 27)

Topic 13: Making choices, saying 'yes', saying 'no'

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about making choices and saying yes and saying no, as part of nursery/school learning. Few parents expressed concern. While almost all parents with a religious affiliation are also happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. The quotes from parents below highlight that parents see this as early foundational learning to support ongoing learning about bodily autonomy and consent.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(542 responses)



I would be very concerned if children were not being taught about topics such as bodily autonomy from a young age.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

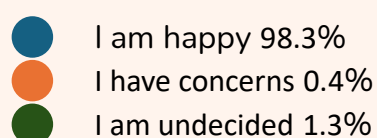
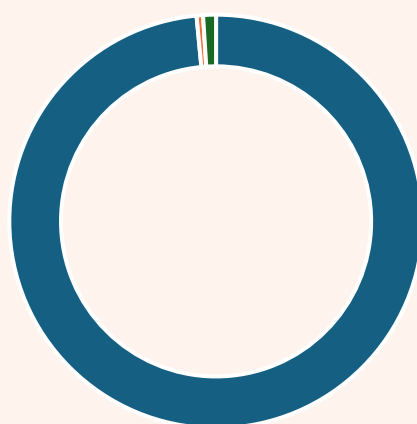
Absolutely essential topics from early age. Learning what my body is and how to say no. Being able to identify what you are not comfortable with and knowing to say no.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

It's never too early to learn about our body, boundaries, consent, etc. always is a way to explain those things in an age-appropriate manner.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Topic 14: Looking after plants and animals

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about how to look after and care for plants and animals. Few parents expressed concern.

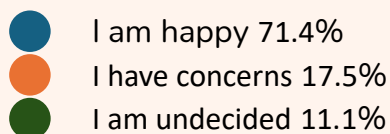
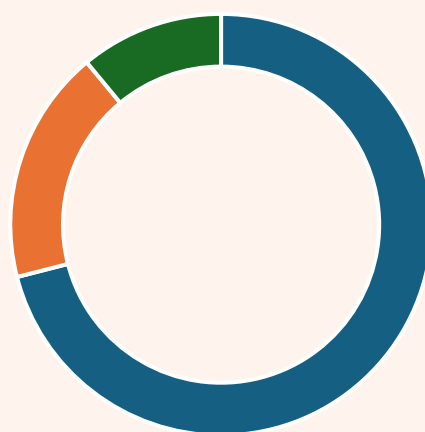
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(538 responses)



Topic 15: Pregnancy and looking after a baby

A majority of parents are happy for their child to talk and learn about pregnancy and looking after a baby as part of their nursery/school-based learning. While a majority of parents with a religious affiliation are also happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. As discussed earlier there is a need for improved communication and clarity about the purpose and delivery of this learning.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic at nursery or in P1?
(542 responses)



I am not sure why children need to learn about pregnancy and looking after a baby.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

All ok if done in an age-appropriate way. Pregnancy might be an interesting one at that age though, I'm interested to know how the mechanics of initiating a pregnancy would be explained.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)

Not all children will experience parents who are pregnant or the need to look after a baby. I think that a general awareness but not an in-depth discussion is required.
(Survey response/parent of 3–5-year-old)