



Parents of children aged 6, 7 and 8-years-old.

Introduction

In this chapter we explore the experiences and views of parents of children aged 6 to 8 years old. In our small group chat sessions, we spoke with 64 parents with children of this age. *TheChat* national survey had responses from 978 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 school**, reflecting on parental views on school-based learning.

If you are interested in more from parents of children aged 6 to 8 years old, please do read the [Spotlight Issues](#) series and the chapter [Supporting Parents](#), in both you will find more from parents of children of this age.

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 or 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.

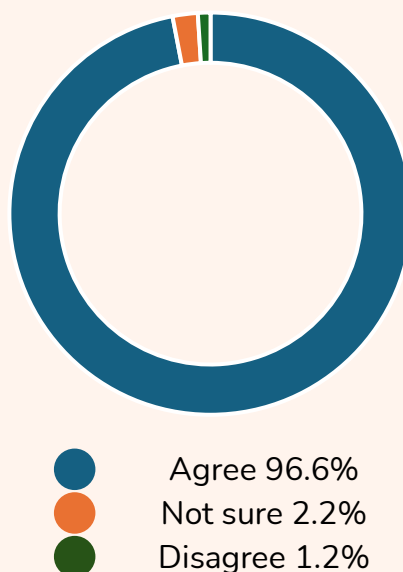
Theme 1: Families and relationships

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 relationships. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

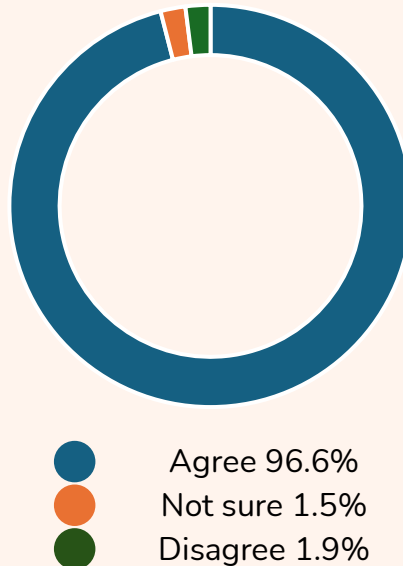
- My family.
- All our families are different, unique and special.
- That there are adults who love and care for them.
- About the adults that children can trust and go to with questions or worries.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *families and relationships* 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.

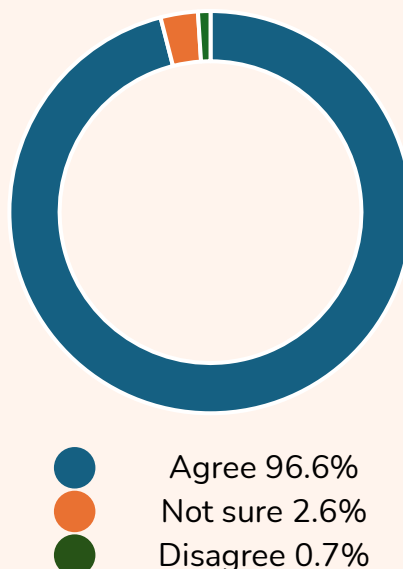
1. Families and relationships: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(947 responses)



2. Families and relationships: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about.
(948 responses)



3. Families and relationships: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.
(946 responses)



As shown, almost all parents responding say they talk and learn about families and relationships at home, they feel this is an important topic, and they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child. Parents of children with an

additional support need were significantly more 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 children talk about their family, and learn that their families love them, in the day-to-day experience of family life.

*My child knows they are loved without the need for a discussion.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*

*I perhaps take it for granted that the children learn this through
experience rather than discussion.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*

In our chats and in responses to the survey parents recognised the importance of modelling loving and caring relationships.

*I want them to know what loving, respectful, caring relationships are like. At home we can model this in our behaviour as mum and dad, we always talk about feelings.
(Group chat 28)*

*I believe understanding the value of family as the primary social unit to be
extremely important in child development.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*

*This is key to parental responsibility.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*

At this age parents also said that their children notice family structures that are different to their own, they might ask questions about this.

*They do ask questions about what they will see as a different kind of family, not asking if that's okay, but just curious as to why is that? So, we can explain that not all families are like ours with a mum and dad and two kids. Stepparents is an interesting question; they'll ask about that if that's a friend's situation. So, you follow the lead, the questions.
(Group chat 25)*

As a single parent household, I understand the importance of introducing the concept of different family types and at this age group it is more about normalising difference and not holding one family type as “perfect” or “best” and therefore inferring others are lesser. There is a child at my child’s school who has lesbian parents for instance, and I have 2 gay male friends who have adopted children, and I would be confident/comfortable to give examples of different family types but stress all families love their children and trusted people may look different from their own experience.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I am a lone mother, and he is being raised in a mixed-race family, so we’ve had conversations since he was very young about visible differences in families, what makes us unique etc.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Important topic to us as my child’s dad died when my child was 1 year old.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Parents have spoken about supporting their child to understand that there are adults they can go to with questions or worries. Of course, parents want to be that person. Parents want their child to understand that adults should not be trusted *just* because they are adults, something that may have changed since the message parents received when they were growing up. Parents acknowledge that children themselves begin to make choices about adults they feel they can go to, and those that they would not go to.

I think it’s very important for the child to have confidence and trust in talking to their parents/carers.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I think when we were young, you would kind of always trust adults. No matter who they were. But nowadays, I think we’re all aware that’s not the case, the way I would say it to my boy would be like, just because someone is a mum it doesn’t mean they act the same way as your mum. It feels sad to have to bring the reality in, but that’s the way it is. You’ve got to keep them safe.

(Group chat 26)

My son just came to me and said 'I don't trust my teachers'. And I said well, who do you trust? And he said me, his mum, and little brother and family. So obviously he will come to me if he's worried about something. I said but you need to respect your teacher. And he said, yes, I respect my teachers, but I don't trust them. Maybe he heard something at school, I don't know why this is.

(Group chat 6)

We definitely have conversations about who safe people are, we use the example of like if someone said to them 'hey do you want to come to my house?' then that would only be okay with a friend they know. We don't have family here, so the kids know there are a small number of friend's mums who are also our friends, that they could trust or go with.

(Group chat 25)

We discuss safe people who we can trust and that we do not need to do whatever an adult tells us as some could be asking us to do something that is wrong and could hurt us.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

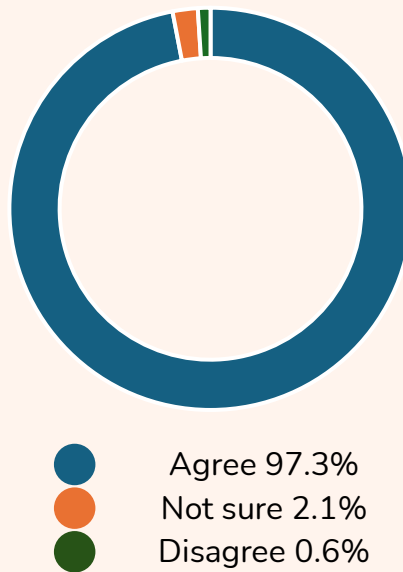
Theme 2: Friendships and relationships.

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 friendships and relationships. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

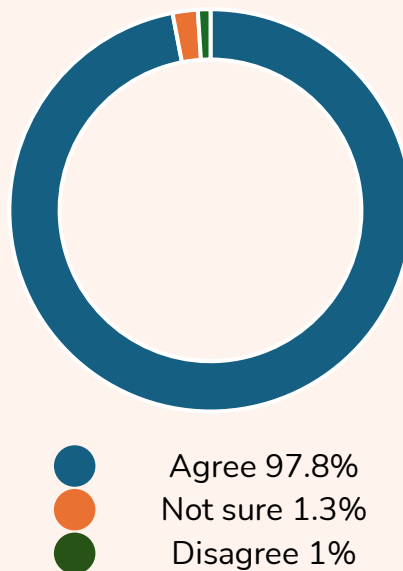
- Making and having friends.
- That they can have friendships with boys and girls.
- About being kind.
- Consent (both asking for and giving consent).

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *friendships and relationships* 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.

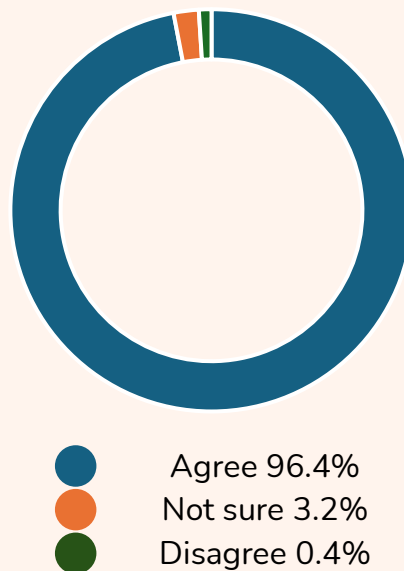
1. Friendships and relationships: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(950 responses)



2. Friendships and relationships: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about. (942 responses)



3. Friendships and relationships: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.
(942 responses)



As shown, *almost all* parents responding say they talk and learn about friendships and relationships at home, they feel this is an important topic, and they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child. 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.

Continuing the earlier perspective that children learn from day-to-day experience rather than being taught as such, some parents find the idea of learning about friendships in any formal way, as odd.

I think it's bizarre that you would teach friendship in a curriculum way, they go to nursery, and they learn about friendships and relationships by doing friendships and relationships. Reading the school curriculum seems preposterous. You model these things for them, in life. It's not taught in an explicit manner.

(Group chat 17)

Across group chats parents have agreed that it is day-to-day experience that forms the basis of conversation about friendships and interpersonal relationships – and the learning of skills or values that underpin friendship.

You have lots of real-life things to talk about at this age, intense friendships, lots of drama. Lots of conversation at home.

(Group chat 7)

It's constantly talked about in my house, at 7 this is so important for them. But it starts before that, helping them learn to share, things like that. But children are different, even thinking about my two. And it's about learning that friendships are about being kind, about learning to see how another person is feeling. Helping them judge this kind of thing.

(Group chat 31)

Parents have talked about the impact of the pandemic on children's friendships.

I think that's been quite challenging because of Covid. There was a quite a time when our children couldn't have those playdates and friends coming over, so I mean like those that were nursery school age, now say P2/P3, that's a different experience from their older siblings who had that. I feel like the way they manage friendships now is more difficult for them. I need to explain they don't need to be best mates, just be nice, kind, respectful.

(Group chat 12)

I definitely noticed the challenges for my wee one who at the start of Covid was in P1, then very disrupted relationships until P3.

(Group chat 12)

Parents have expressed concerns about any pressure on children to be friends, regardless of the behaviour of other children.

My daughter was given into trouble for telling her bully she didn't want to play with her. We need to allow children the autonomy to walk away from situations and people that their instincts tell them to avoid.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Unfortunately, I have also had to have extensive conversations about the impact of unkindness, disruption and physical aggression from children in class with dysregulated behaviours. The impact of this was severely underestimated by the school. The approach to tell kids to be inclusive and insist on friendship groups was

harmful. Children need to be taught about the right to actively choose not to be friends with someone causing them harm. This aspect appears somewhat to be missed. Adults would not be expected to be part of a close group with someone who made them feel this way. We need to be careful to ensure we are not expecting this of our children. Teaching of tolerance and acceptance is important. But not at the expense of teaching consent, boundaries and choice. My child has been somewhat gas lit by the approach taken this year.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

As children experience friendships there can be complexity and worries – parents have talked about the need to manage how they support and intervene, and that they want children to grow in terms of their resilience.

You want to support your child when they are quite shy. To help them think about friendships. But you can't change who they are. Sometimes they just like to sit back and work things out.
(Group chat 31)

I worry about the fact that one of my boys has no resilience in these friendship situations, he'll just crumble when there is conflict. I want him to stand up for himself, or when things aren't right, but how do I do that?
(Group chat 32)

I'm quite worried about peer pressure. I've definitely already spotted it in early years of primary school. That fear of missing out, that if she doesn't do something her friends are doing, she won't be seen positively by them. I'm concerned about how we help them manage this kind of thing.
(Group chat 28)

I think from an early age we can help our children to understand what a healthy relationship is, you know how to trust their instinct and recognise when someone is being unkind or manipulative.
(Group chat 12)

It's a challenge to explain to your kid when they are so open, and maybe others are taking advantage of them. This is particularly when they are neurodiverse.
(Group chat 31)

Something had happened recently, and I had said to my daughter you need to tell the teacher, and she said I thought you told me I had to sort things out myself, and I thought 'ah, yeah I do'. But where is the line for her, how long will she try to sort a problem and not be successful, when do you step in? I want her to know when to ask for help.

(Group chat 32)

By age 6, 7 or 8 parents also notice that there can be pressure on boys and girls who have friendships with each other. While some parents quoted below believe that children will not notice the sex of their friend unless we adults make a point of it (by being explicit in conversation that they can have friendships with boys and girls) others have different experiences.

Children naturally have friendships with boys and girls. They are kids. Why do they have to learn something that occurs naturally when left to play.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I don't feel it's necessary to be explicit that my son can be friends with boys and girls this happens naturally and organically.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

This started at 8 for my boy, what other kids would say. He has a best pal who's a girl and if they want to see each other outside school we can't do sleep overs anymore, they need to meet in a like soft play or something.

(Group chat 39)

I find the girl/boyfriend thing I'm constantly pushing back against what she's picking up from other people (i.e. I have to reassure her that its normal to be friends with boys)

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I think this should be a key focus, as soon as they start school the boy girl divide becomes very apparent.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Finally, in terms of friendships and relationships, parents have talked about how they talk and support learning about consent. Some parents have asked for clarity

about what is meant, a concern has been this means teaching 6-, 7- or 8-year-olds about sexual consent.

Define what u mean by consent for a 7-year-old.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

No need to talk about sexual consent at this age

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Others have understood talking and learning about consent in age-appropriate ways. Some may use the word consent, others may not but explore consent in action.

I'd not necessarily use the word 'consent', but yes, the concept of her agreeing or not or, saying "no" or "yes".

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I have conversations about being kind, friendships and consent but I'm not sure it's understood or goes in. I'm hoping it will build over time.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I like they are sassy. I don't want them to be overbearing, but if something happens to her, I want her to be able to say 'eh, no!'.

(Group chat 32)

I feel confident about this more or less but would appreciate extra help with discussing consent.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

For parents of boys the topic of consent was seen as very important – a theme we will address further in other chapters, and in [Spotlight Issue: Consent](#).

I'm very conscious with having boys of the consent thing. Teaching them that if a girl says no, you respect that immediately, it's a no. Its mirky now, scary for boys.

You can teach them this subtly, even when they are play-fighting amongst themselves, or tickling, teaching that when one of them says 'stop' that's what happens. Even if to that point it's been a fun game. That's teaching about consent.

(Group chat 7)

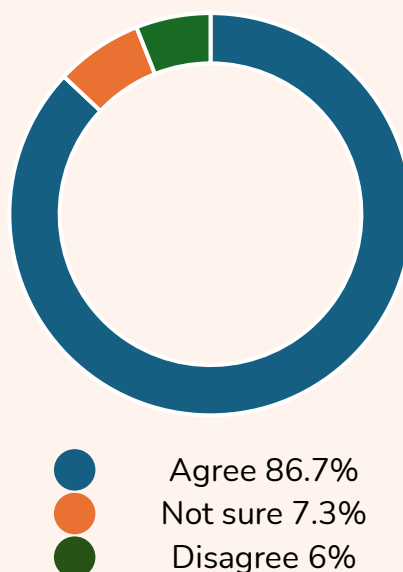
Theme 3: Growing up and learning about their body

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 the child growing up and aspects of learning about their body. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

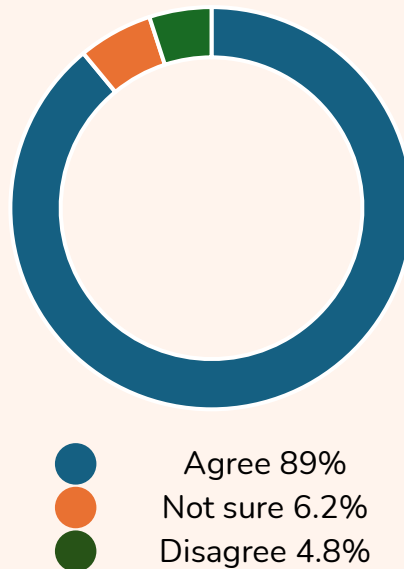
- The names for parts of their body (including penis, testicles, vulva, bottom, nipples).
- Parts of their body are private.
- That their body belongs to them (the idea of bodily autonomy).
- Looking after their body and keeping clean.
- How their body changes as they grow, preparing children for the early changes that will come with puberty.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *growing up and 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.

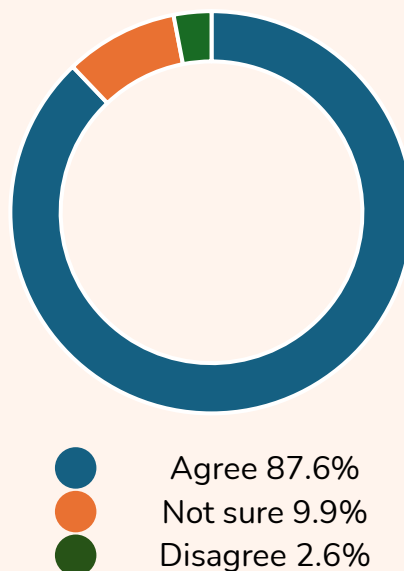
1. Growing up and their body: We do talk and learn about this at home. (941 responses)



2. Growing up and their body: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about. (940 responses)



3. Growing up and their body: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so. (941 responses)



As shown, most parents responding say that they talk and learn about these topics at home, they feel this is an important theme, and they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child. Although still most parents, parents 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.

The responses from the national survey, and from our experience of facilitating small group chats, confirm that parents talk and learn with children when it comes to growing up and their body. However, we can acknowledge that not all parents do so or see this as necessary – parents might also choose some topics for chats rather than others.

My child is 6 and nowhere near puberty so no need for this discussion. Knows private parts are private.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I do not cover all of this area. We do not use those names for body parts (I am also a Catholic primary school teacher and we do not introduce those terms so young). However, he knows that girls' and boys' bodies are different, will discuss that with his family as well as the importance of keeping his body clean. I have not discussed puberty; this will be discussed when changes begin to happen.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

As discussed in the chapter reporting on the views of parents of 3- to 5-year-olds, the language used for private parts of the body is a matter of concern for some parents. Words for private parts of the body can be viewed as 'sexual'.

I think at this age learning about vulva and testicles is a bit too much.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

It makes me really uncomfortable actually, because these words that are here are sexual words. I think it's enough to say that there are parts of your body that are private, that's all children need to understand at 6, 7 years old. I understand the argument about children that are being abused, that this can help children to reach out for support, but that doesn't justify teaching really small children these words.

We say penis and vagina, no more detail than that. Bottom is fine. Nipples is like how I would describe my own nipples, not hers.

(Group chat 8)

There has been some chat with parents about the word vulva. For some parents the word vagina is more commonly used.

We say 'vagina' and now seeing these words I'm panicking a little bit thinking we are getting it wrong. Now do I have to explain the difference? But if we are going 'vulva' I'll go vulva, just need to get their dad to use it...

(Group chat 7)

For some parents there is a sense of caution and a focus on what feels age-appropriate across the age range of 6, 7 and 8 years old in terms of what is being discussed. Parents can be led by their child's questions.

We talk about this in an age-appropriate manner. Puberty is a long time away still.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I think I approach this quite scientifically, factually at home but we don't use these words for parts of the body. I know I'm supposed to.

(Group chat 7)

We face the topic with absolute normality. The kids' questions establish the amount of information that we explain but so far, they are not very concerned. We are focused on hygiene and respect.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

It's easier if you are asked a question, I'm not comfortable bringing this up.

(Group chat 36)

I got a question recently from my daughter about what a period is, she's only 6, but she must have heard something. It's hard to know how much detail to go in to. I think I've done alright; we'll see what questions she comes back with next, when she figures out what she might still want to ask.

(Group chat 25)

As shown in the survey results most parents do talk and learn with their child. From chats we have learned that they also use the terms for parts of the body which will generally be used in school. For some parents, language is necessary for early

learning about the changes that will come with puberty. Parents described conversations in these ways:

As puberty is happening earlier and earlier it's important to start these chats from P2 onwards. We have used the correct words for the body parts from birth. We have been open to any questions asked and feel it's important to talk about these things for many reasons.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I think it's important that they have an awareness of the changes that are going to happen just before they do.

(Group chat 7)

It was my son that introduced us to this, we were always saying things like 'winky' or 'flower' and he just said one day 'Daddy, it's a penis, not a winky' and I just thought well, okay, fair enough.

(Group chat 33)

We need to remember that those early changes that come with puberty can start at 8 or 9, I took my wee girl to hospital because she had some pain in her chest, and it was the early start of breast development.

(Group chat 33)

Me and my two girls had a period chat on our way down the road the other day. The youngest came up with a question and we just decided to walk and talk and answer it as the day went by. We just tried not to have an uncomfortable atmosphere; we didn't need to do a big sit down. She asked while we were walking and just kept walking.

(Group chat 38)

For me, learning the correct names for parts of their body is really important for lots of reasons. I think using different names, that's not helpful. In a biological sense they need to know the proper names for these body parts. So, I've always used the correct names, from when they were born, it's just something I felt was right to do.

It means they understand their body. It will help them get ready for puberty.

(Group chat 30)

For some parents, discussion and language is given importance when considering the child's safety and wellbeing or is thought of as a building block for later teenage conversations.

When we foster a new child, we need to ask them what they call parts of their body, so that we understand what they say and what they need to talk about, it's important to understand them and not impose words.

(Group chat 33)

I'm a biology teacher so feel comfortable discussing things like this with my own children as I do it every day at work - I honestly can't stress how much easier it makes it for teenagers if the correct biological terminology has been used at home and at primary school from an early age.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Parents have also reflected on the benefits of using the same language about the body when discussing learning at school – although as will be reflected elsewhere there is a need to improve on how schools communicate about learning.

We use the official names, so that when they came home from school and talked about what they were learning it just made the conversation feel more natural.

That's helped me as a parent. So, things getting talked about at school and at home. It's not just a hidden thing that say mums and daughters talk about. And the kids will remember having these chats in different places. So, more natural, nothing is top secret.

(Group chat 30)

I remember it felt like this learning was starting early, but you know he loved it, talking about body parts, I think they had fun with it. It was only me that was like 'oh'. I did feel a bit unprepared. It would be better to know more, not every kid chooses to share, at least I got the funniest bits.

(Group chat 21)

Parents have shared how talking and learning around the issues of growing up and their child's body is influenced by faith or culture. (These issues are explored across various parts of our reporting including in [Spotlight Issue: Learning through the prism of faith and culture.](#))

I have had the conversation with my boys, so just early primary, about what is private and good touch and bad touch, but I haven't got to the details, the words. We have had this discussion with school because they are using words. But I come from a different religious background, and we need to find a way on this. So, they are doing stuff at school, but we're not taking it that fast in the house.

(Group chat 22)

Parents have talked about the importance of children learning about private parts and privacy, but also want to be able to do this without making a child worry or feel anxious.

Sometimes navigating the topic of consent and private body parts is challenging. I want to be able to talk to my child about how sometimes other children and adults may behave in ways that aren't appropriate, without scaring my child.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

We had to have a conversation because we found that the children were showing each other their private parts, so that needed a conversation and some clear ideas about what private parts are.

(Group chat 21)

The topic of being confident in their body and bodily autonomy has also been discussed by parents - 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. Again, parents want this learning to be positive, rather than based on worrying a child.

I'd say we are body positive, it's just me and my daughter, so we do see each other naked. I want her to be positive, to understand that people have wobbly bits, big bums or whatever. But she knows if we have a visitor then clothes are worn. And that even if a pal is staying over, they might have different ways of doing things, like they like to be private and say change in the bathroom. She knows that that no one should ask or see her private parts, we established that early on. And at her dads

she's always clothed, and her step mum will help her in the bath.

(Group chat 21)

So, my son is 7, and usually I would give him a kiss when he's leaving for school. But this morning he said, 'no daddy' and wanted to shake my hand. So, I'm like, okay, if he wants that, if he would feel embarrassed by that hug or kiss, then no problem. Tomorrow might be different. But I respect what he says.

(Group chat 6)

Body autonomy, that's something we work on at home, respecting other people's spaces but also knowing you have control over your body, your personal space.

(Group chat 7)

I also want my child to learn positively, so I do want them to learn about bodily autonomy, but also to learn that isn't just saying no or restricting people in your space. It can also be liking being tickled, feeling nice things. This all needs to be enhancing the positive. We need to make sure that we let children lead us on some of this, what's relaxed and acceptable for them – so like 'this is okay for me, this isn't okay for me'. Is it a good feeling I want more of? Or something I want to stop? We need to help them learn how to trust themselves, listen to themselves.

(Group chat 7)

We try to be as open and honest as possible about what we speak to our kids about. We say if we don't know something and create opportunities to learn together. We try to do this so there is limited worries or shame attached to things like relationships and understanding bodies. We do emphasis consent and body boundaries as a particularly important rule for interacting with others.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

When it comes to keeping clean and establishing routines for toothbrushing and washing, parents see this as something done day to day, often with the help of some tools and rewards to make the routine fun.

For hygiene we have an app, it reminds them to wash their face, brush their teeth, do their hair. They love the coin rewards, basically it's about good routines that they will continue into being young adults.

(Group chat 39)

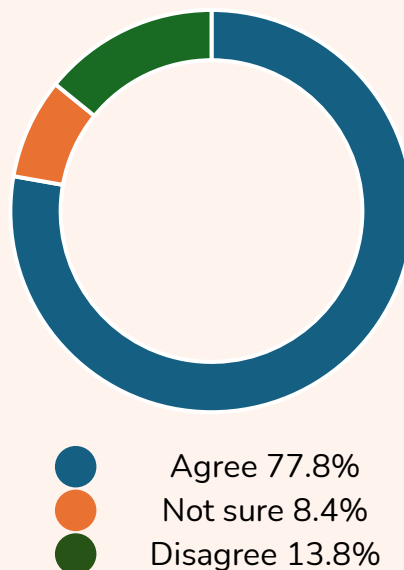
Theme 4: Respect and equality

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 respect and equality. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

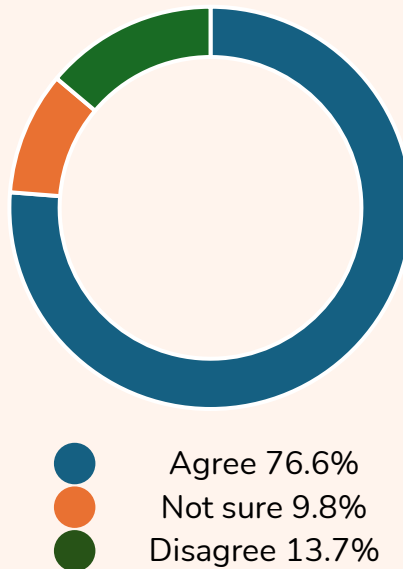
- How we are all unique and special.
- That they are not limited by gender (sex-based) stereotypes, that they can be any kind of girl or boy they want to be.
- Some people have a disability.
- Some people are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *respect and equality* 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.

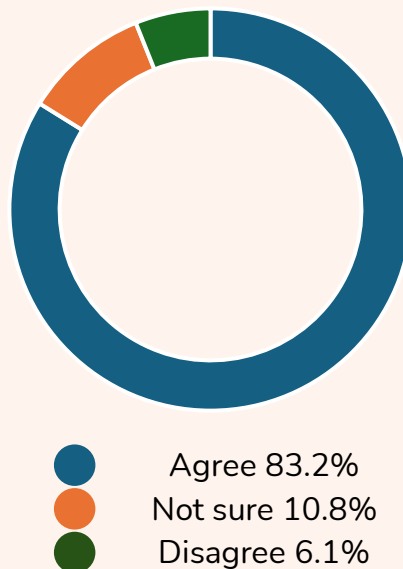
1. Respect and equality: We do talk and learn about this at home.
(941 responses)



2. Respect and equality: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about.
(943 responses)



3. Respect and equality: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so.
(939 responses)



As shown, most parents responding say they talk and learn about respect and equality at home, they feel these are important topics, and they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child. Parents of children with an additional support need were significantly more likely to agree with statement 2, that this theme is an important topic for their child. Parents with a religious affiliation (although still a majority) were significantly less likely to agree with all 3 statements. 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 talked about gender (sex-based) stereotypes and how they impact on childhood. They acknowledge that other adults or family members can have views on what is appropriate or right for a boy or a girl, but that they want their child to be free of limitations or stereotypes based on sex. They have also acknowledged the importance of respecting a child's choices when it comes to toys or play and have talked about building their child's self-worth as a boy or as a girl.

Thinking about my 8-year-old boy, he's always been into what might be categorised as 'girl's toys. But it's never really come up as an issue in terms of 'no you can't have those toys'. We are open in that way. And he hasn't ever questioned, it feels open that way. His dad has sometimes said 'oh isn't that for girls' but my child's response is 'it's just a toy, dad'. So, he's comfortable, happy with his choices. (Group chat 30)

*I have boys, one who fits the stereotypes of football, the other that dances. This is all normalised, we have boys that like different things, so we accept all, it's not framed as right or wrong.
(Group chat 8)*

*But there's definitely still things these days that are marketed towards a female audience, whether it's said or not. But maybe what ends up being a stereotype is built on what a lot of girls or boys typically want. But what's important is not to hold your child to that. And we have to be tuned into what they want and when, they change what they like.
(Group chat 30)*

*What's interesting is that with sons and a daughter I have done nothing different, I always said it's how we socialise them that matters, boys and girls are the same, but as soon as she could express preferences, she wanted very stereotypical girl things as well as still play football with her brothers. So as parents we can only do our best, model how things should be, but let them be, not pigeon-hole them.
(Group chat 8)*

I am keen for my daughters to not have gender stereotypes and actively encourage them to do activities and play with "non-gender typical" things.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

We explain to our children they that have value and worth, and that certain gender stereotypes aren't always true. We teach that there are people who do life in different ways to us, but we don't shy away from encouraging the girls to be girls or the boys to be boys. We don't shy away from explaining that other people live differently but hold out our values to them and encourage them to pursue them.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

When they talk or learn about respect and equality with children, parents have spoken about not making assumptions about their child's future relationships, being open in their language in consideration that their child might have an opposite sex or same sex partner as an adult.

You know I've never said to my boys that they need to like girls. I've always said you can like whoever you like. We actually had a discussion about it last night, we were talking about somebody being racist, and so we were saying to them, you know every person is exactly the same, there's no real differences, we're all the same people – and you can like whoever you want.

You can be what you want to be. Like when I'm talking about future relationships I'll say, 'like when you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend...'

(Group chat 32)

I'm very conscious of the language I use, that I let them know that their future could be literally anything, so talk about lots of different people and relationships and families.

(Group chat 7)

Parents have acknowledged that their children are aware of same sex relationships, either in their family or via media.

I think TV is pretty good now, so like Strictly having two male dancers, anything goes, they are just seeing and absorbing things.

(Group chat 7)

Talking about lesbian gay and bisexual relationships is ok in our family because we have close friends in gay relationships, but I found it hard as a kid because I was from a very conservative Christian home/church.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Parents have also acknowledged that children at age 6, 7 or 8 can hear and repeat homophobic language, without understanding the meaning or the hurt that can be caused.

My son has used the word gay in a negative way, that something bad is gay. I wonder where that comes from. Certainly not us. Older young people in the playground? I don't think he understands what he's saying.
(Group chat 7)

Having reported on how parents talk and learn, especially about same sex relationships, *theChat* has also heard from parents who do not want to have these conversations, at home or at school. Typically, such a view sees talking about same sex relationships as meaning that children are also being spoken to about sexual activity, rather than understanding same sex relationships as being about who a person loves (as the final contributor below offers).

I don't think an 8-year-old needs to have discussions about sex and sexuality. This is very different than learning about body parts and is completely uncalled for at this age. Let kids be kids. I strongly disagree with this agenda that is being pushed on our children. This takes no consideration of parental belief or religion.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Children at this age group do not need to know gay, lesbian, heterosexual etc as this is a term for who someone chooses to have sex with. Over-sexualisation of children is rampant in schools. My children have two aunties that are married and love each other, no more than that is required for this age group.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I would support to make them understand and be sensitive towards disabilities but not lbgtq.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

At a parent's night someone asked if they get to hear about LGBT people, and the teacher was like, that will not be spoken about here. So, then what? The school thinks it's okay to shun kids? They need to learn it's just about who they love, her auntie's gay.

(Group chat 26)

There has been an interesting response across *theChat* to the topic of gender (sex-based) stereotypes being introduced with the expression *children can be any kind of girl or boy they want to be*. This language was intended to help us explore stereotypes, how parents possibly accept or challenge ideas or boundaries about how a girl or a boy should behave, or like, or what they should play with. In small group chat sessions this could be explained as such, but in the national survey the language has been interpreted by some parents – not all – as being a message about children somehow being told that they can change sex, for some parents this is part of an agenda that schools have to promote children as being transgender. This theme is discussed in more detail in the [Spotlight Issue: Sex/Gender](#), but in the meantime, these are comments from parents responding to the national survey that adopted this interpretation of language. Discussion and clarification of language around this theme is clearly required.

I am not okay with schools promoting genders other than male and female.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Keep gender discussions out of schools.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I feel that this age group is fine for people with a disability and gay lesbian but far too young to be talking about they can be any gender I feel there is a lot of pressure in this area at the moment but not for young children.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

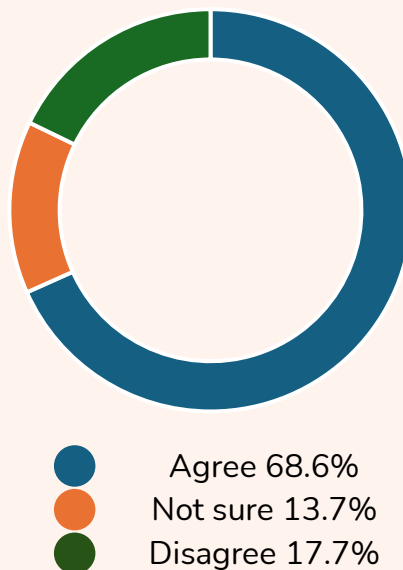
Theme 5: How life (including human life) begins, pregnancy and birth

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 how life (including human life) begins, pregnancy and birth. This can include talking and learning about these topics:

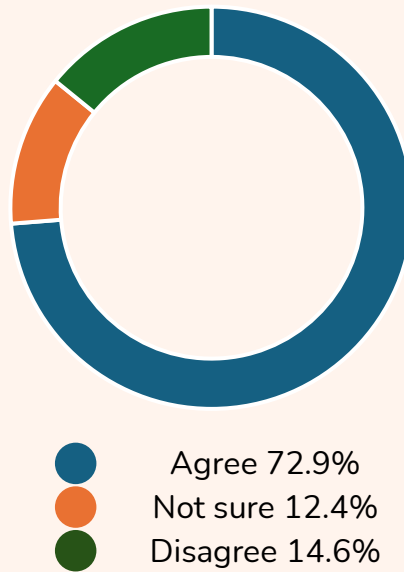
- The life cycles of plants and animals.
- How a baby is made (conception), pregnancy and how a baby is born.
- What a baby needs and how to care for a baby.

In the national survey, and in relation to the theme *how life begins, pregnancy and birth* 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.

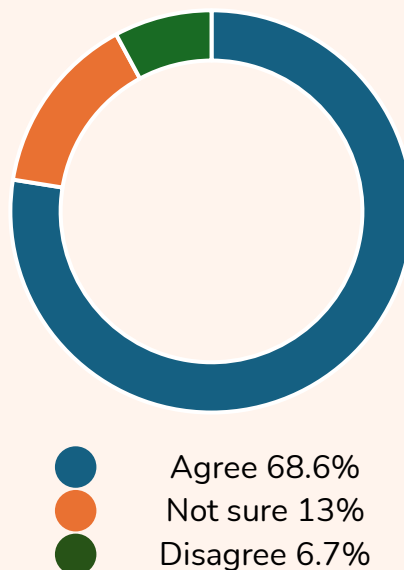
1. How life begins, pregnancy and birth: We do talk and learn about this at home. (942 responses)



2. How life begins, pregnancy and birth: I feel this is an important topic for my child to understand and learn about. (942 responses)



3. How life begins, pregnancy and birth: If I wanted to support my child to understand or learn about this, I would feel confident to do so. (939 responses)



As shown, a *majority* of parents responding say they talk and learn about this theme at home and that they feel this is important. Most parents say they have confidence in their role when it comes to supporting their child to learn about this theme. While a *majority* of parents with a religious affiliation also agree that they

talk at home, and feel this is an important topic, they were statistically 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.

Across small group chats and survey, parents have reported being content with talking and learning about the life cycle of plants and animals; for some parents this is enough at this age.

Plants and animals is fine...everything else is not necessary at this age.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Parents have also highlighted the interest their child can have in pregnancy and conception – the *how did the baby get in your tummy* type question. Parents have talked about children having questions about how they were born. When there is a pregnancy at home, or children see a pregnant woman, this can lead to questions and conversation. Parents have said that knowing how to respond can feel challenging, others feel confident in their response.

Some areas more confident than others. I found it difficult to answer some questions that my 8-year-old had recently about conception and sex and found it difficult to access any resources or advice on how to approach this or what angle to take in terms of language and detail used.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Well, my son asks questions and I try to answer them. Like 'daddy, how did I come?' and I explain to him clearly. I say that me and your mum, we are husband and wife, and we love each other, and that's how you are made. It's not like you just come from nowhere. He says: 'One day will I have a family like you?' and I say, of course. 'Will I have a girl?' Yes, of course, you will meet your sweetheart and make a couple. But I wouldn't discuss with him what they need to do to make babies, to make love, no I don't want him to know at 7 those things. At the moment it's about meeting someone and loving them. He is happy with that kind of explanation; he doesn't ask for more.
(Group chat 6)

My daughter knows it's a man and a woman, and they'll have a relationship, and then the baby is in mummy's tummy. But then she'll see someone who's pregnant and she knows they don't have a boyfriend, so she'll ask how did that happen, she doesn't have a boyfriend? So, I'll say no, you need a boyfriend, then change the subject, I just feel awkward.

(Group chat 39)

When you are having your second or later child then the older ones will ask questions as you go, very naturally and you can be quite straightforward. It's not something I feel we have needed to raise as such.

(Group chat 7)

A common theme for parents was the need to have conversations and respond to questions with what feels like responses that are factual, not overly detailed and age appropriate (For more read [Spotlight Issue: What is age appropriate?](#)). Responding to questions about conception is the most difficult topic.

It is important children are given age appropriate, factual answers to questions where babies come from etc.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Plants - fine. Linking natural reproduction of plants, animals, humans - fine. Sexual reproduction - discussed in context of "seed in mummy's tummy that grows".

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I'm a bit worried about giving him too much detail, and then he goes telling everybody what I've told him. It's hard explaining stuff without going into too much detail.

(Group chat 3)

They don't ask about conception, or how the baby got there at this age, that comes later. Then you can give the biology of it, very factual, seed, egg, but not at this age.

(Group chat 8)

So, she asked me: Where do babies come from? Is it in your tummy? How does it get out? So, I was like, it comes out your vagina, and she was a bit confused. She asked: Out your tummy? So, I said yes it does come out your tummy and she seemed happy with that.

(Group chat 3)

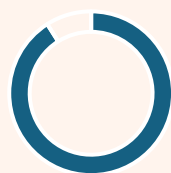
I had home births and so the older ones can explain to the younger ones. They're not interested in conception, but in pregnancy and how the baby comes out.
(Group chat 8)

When it comes to children talking and learning about babies and what they need again this is something parents do day-to-day in family life.

We want to raise our children to love children and have families, so have encouraged all nurturing instincts and engaged with any interesting question they have about how things live and grow.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

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

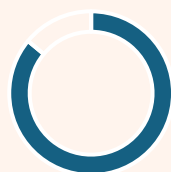
Parents were asked, in both the small group chats, and then in the national survey, to reflect on what might influence what and when they speak to their child about the themes and topics we have been exploring so far in this chapter. The options presented in the national survey were developed from the 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 who are 6, 7 and 8 years old.



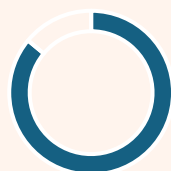
What they hear from others: 90.8%



What they are taught in school: 86.4%



A worry they have talked about: 83.4%



Something they do or say: 82.9%



What they see online, on social media or TV/film: 80.1%



A problem or incident worrying them: 77.9%



My own experience of
growing up:
66.4%



My experience as an
adult:
56.7%



Our culture:
34.3%



Our faith:
24.3%

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

I talk to my children about anything that is worrying them or any concerns they have. It's called parenting.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Try to be child led and talk about things that are relevant to him.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

My daughter constantly asks questions and I try to answer them honestly but without overwhelming her. She has asked questions about periods, menopause, miscarriage as well as the usual questions about how babies are made. We also talk about other issues which arise from things she has seen or heard i.e. homosexuality and a little about transgender (as there is an individual in our town who she sometimes sees)

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

A lot of the conversations have come up as something externally has sparked them rather than being a planned conversation.

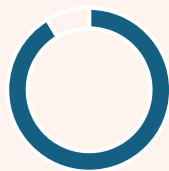
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Playground influence is huge, perceptions on gender norms and peer pressure already evident.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Although we no longer strictly follow Christian faith this strongly influences my values and those I want to pass on to the kids.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)



A question they ask:
95.4%



When they
misunderstand
something: 88.8%



A worry they have:
85.5%



When they behave in
a way I think is not
acceptable: 78.8%



Because they are
being taught about it
in school: 74.9%



When I feel they are
the right age: 72.6%



When I want them to
know what our family
thinks is okay or
acceptable: 62.3%



A worry I have:
61.2%

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

Any of these could influence but the 'when' varies depending on what it is but I would always try and speak to them when there are limited distractions, and they can focus on having a conversation with me.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Have regular conversation and routinely try to build in these topics frequently.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

My son is adopted so we have regular conversations about family. Often these conversations are prompted by questions from him that have arisen from something that has happened at school.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I have always been responsive to my child's needs. I have found that children have an ability to give indicators to us about when they are ready for things. I have found this with our child from weening from breast milk, to walking, to being able to play independently, to being able to walk to school their self. I enjoy and relish the open relationship we have as a family and our ability to talk things over and to questions things. (I may answer differently when they reach teenage!)

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Some things come up as hoc. Such as having gay friends' round and clarifying they are married and not just friends.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

When it's very prevalent in the media and may be leaking into their life e.g toxic gender debate especially as my child identifies as non-binary.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

When they are influenced by friends saying words or terms they do not know the meaning of or understand.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I want to make sure I teach them early so that it's an embedded part of their understanding of the world.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Learning at school

Parents have been asked to reflect on learning at school. Before we report on this it may be helpful to describe what guides the learning that can happen in 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 and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes they need for life. The curriculum is defined as everything that is planned for children and young people – 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 and young people 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 P2, P3 and P4 children might be expected to be learning at what is called *First Level* [First Level - RSHP](#) Schools are not required to deliver these lessons; they may choose to deliver some or all. But the topics can potentially form part of school-based learning, and so this is how we have developed our list of 20 topics discussed in this section of our 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 P2, P3 or P4?* 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:

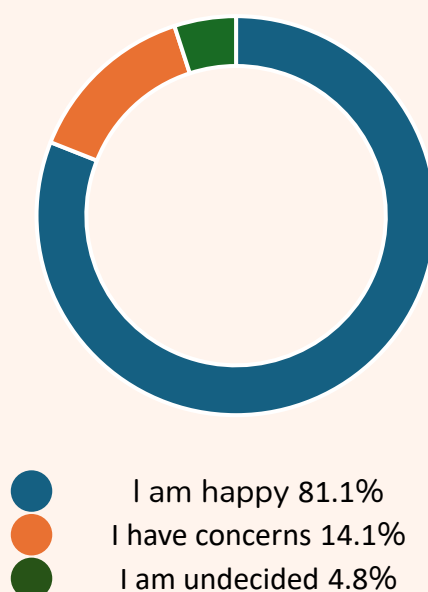
- **Almost all** means over 90% of parents who responded.
- **Most** means 75% to 90% of parents who responded.
- **A majority** means 50% to 74% of parents who responded.
- **Less than half** means 15% to 49% of parents who responded.
- **Few** means less than 15% of parents who responded.

Topic 1: Names for parts of the body

Most parents are happy with their children learning about this topic at school. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while a *majority* remain happy, 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 school and home on approaches to this learning.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?

(941 responses)



I heard a lot about the nicknames that other children have for body parts because the teacher had asked about that, I think in the context of teaching the proper names.

(Group chat 5)

I think it was last year the teacher said, 'you are allowed to laugh, this can be quite funny' and I think that was really good. (Group chat 5)

I don't know what the school does in this regard, that is in terms of the names for parts of the body.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

We've had no communication from the school at all, well I certainly haven't about how they refer to parts of the body. I pick things up from TV about what you should do, but I don't feel confidently instructed by the school as to what we should be doing.

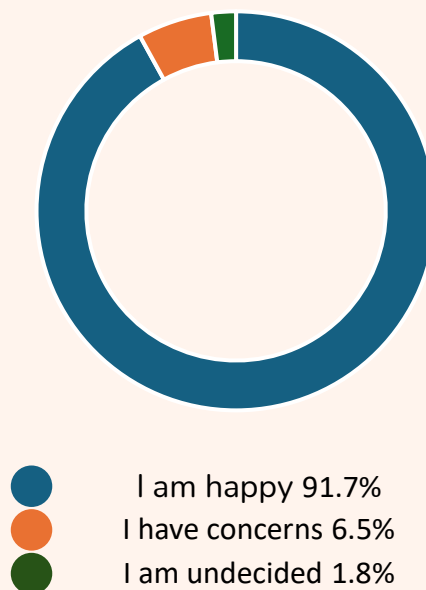
Consistency would be good. (Group chat 7)

Topic 2: That parts of the body are private

Almost all parents are happy with their child learning that parts of their body are private. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while *most* remain happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns (although still *few* at <15%). In group chats parents talked positively about the use of the NSPCC 'PANTS' learning resources.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?

(939 responses)



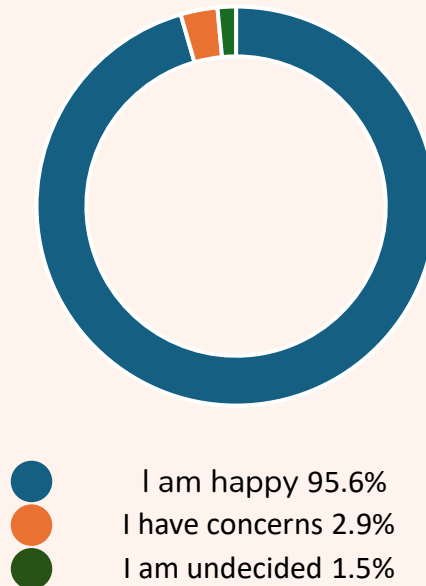
The only thing I know is the dinosaur pants thing, hilarious, they loved that. That's the extent of anything I am aware of. That was in P2.

(Group chat 7)

Topic 3: Keeping clean

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about keeping clean/personal hygiene at school. Few parents expressed concern.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(942 responses)

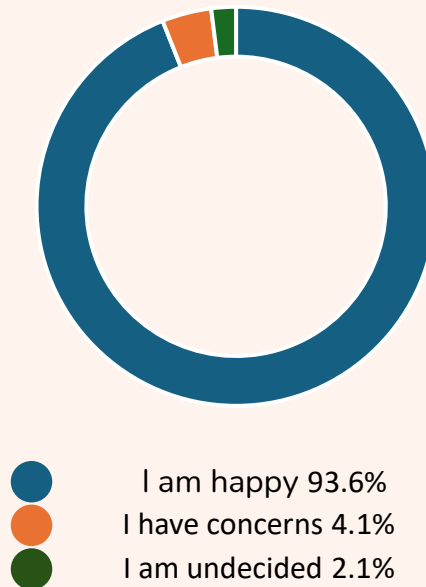


*I find backing up the learning we provide at home very useful especially when it comes to personal hygiene e.g. toilet hygiene and tooth brushing.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*

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 school learning. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while most remain happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns (although still few at <15%).

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4? (942 responses)



I think it is important for parents to know how in depth these discussions go at school and specific language used. I think it is important that when learning about consent and autonomy and "boss of me", that children are reminded they still have to respect authority figures and parents and follow instructions.

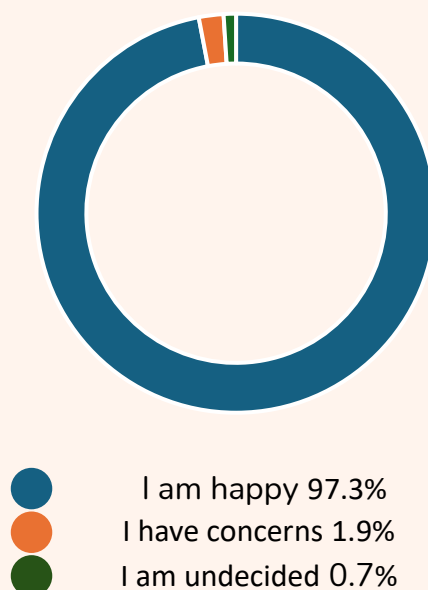
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 5: Being a friend

As reported earlier the topic of friendships is important to children at this age. Almost all parents are happy with learning on this topic to happen in school. Few parents expressed concern.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?

(940 responses)



This is so important for school learning. When they are little, as parents, we are or in control of this, who they play with. But at this age, at school they are having to navigate sometime intense relationships. We get their view at the end of the day, but we can't work out what really happens, so teachers have a lot of responsibility over this, to make building friendships a big part of their job.

(Group chat 7)

It's really important to establish talking about friendships, what's kind, that bullying is not okay, how to be a good friend. I think a lot of the RSHP education is good on things like that, it's encouraging anti-bullying and kindness and looking out for someone that's maybe upset – that for me is a priority, fostering an environment that looks out for each other. Because that can be missed in school, the culture accepting everyone is a priority when they are younger.

(Group chat 8)

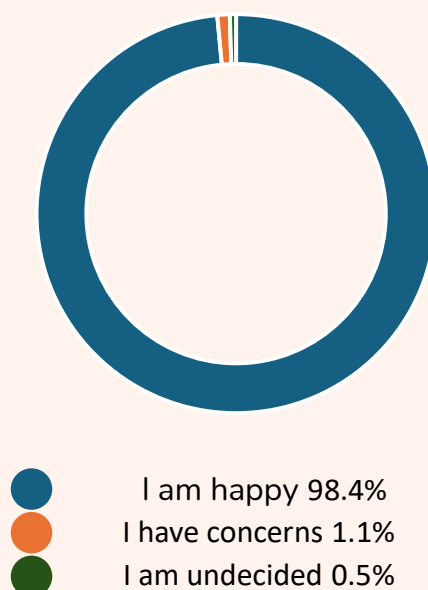
At our sons last school, he just didn't have friends. We would watch from outside the playground and see him on his own. The school said they were trying to help him socialise but all they were doing was forcing other kids to play with him. They

had a 'friendship bench' I'd rather call it the 'stigma bench'. You know you were supposed to sit there if you wanted another child to come talk or play with you. He wouldn't have used that. But at this school they have supported him to make friends, properly.
(Group chat 31)

Topic 6: Kindness

Almost all parents are happy for their child to experience teaching and learning about kindness at school. Few parents expressed concern. As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, 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 in P2, P3 or P4?
(942 responses)



Yes, absolutely, something for home and school.
(Group chat 7)

I know they do things on friendship and being kind. We get told things from school. You can be a kindness champion, gems for kind things. And they get rights of the child.
(Group chat 7)

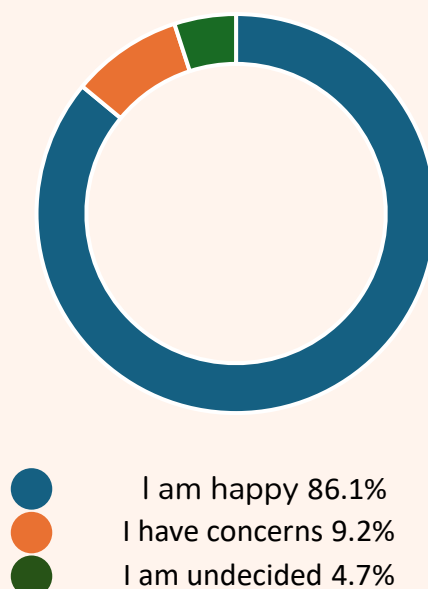
One thing on this focus on kindness, I can have a problem with that. An overemphasis erodes boundaries, so they swallow conflict or intrusion

because they are taught kindness is overriding. But no, not all the time. You need to learn how to say no. Respect, yes, not for free. But especially for my girl she worries about upsetting others if she is not kind, it becomes something that is passive.
(Group chat 8)

Topic 7: Consent

Most parents are happy for their child to learn about consent in school. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while most also remain happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(943 responses)

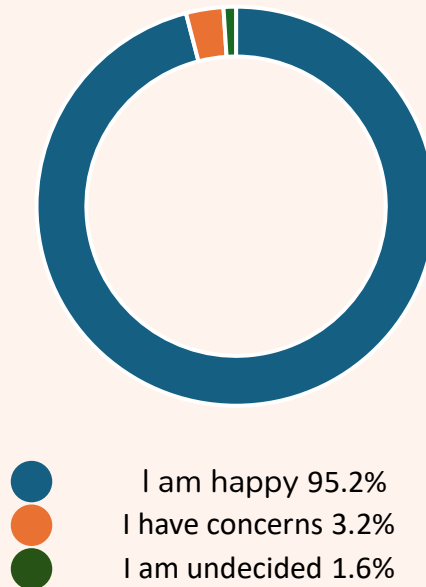


I think teaching children about consent is really important but it's important to make sure that they also understand the responsibilities others have towards them, so that should their consent be violated by someone, they understand that this is not their fault and do not blame themselves.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 8: Managing fall outs with friends

Almost all parents are happy for their child to experience teaching and learning about managing more complex aspects of friendships at school. Few parents expressed concern.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(943 responses)



It would be good if the school curriculum was focused on helping children to manage conflict, human dynamics, and relationships, they need to learn to manage things themselves. School can help children to learn resolution skills.
(Group chat 8)

Topic 9: Identifying adults to trust/who to go to with a question or worry

Almost all parents are happy for their child to learn about identifying adults who they can trust or go to with a worry as part of learning in school. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while most remain happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns (although still few at <15%).

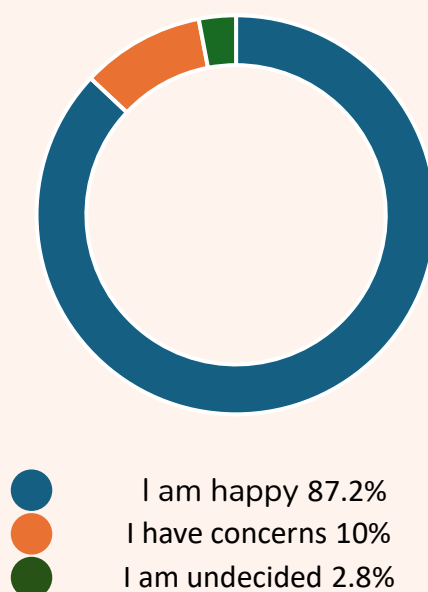
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(939 responses)



Topic 10: My family/all our families are different

Most parents are happy for their child to experience teaching and learning about their family and the diversity of families. *Few* parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while *most* remain happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(937 responses)

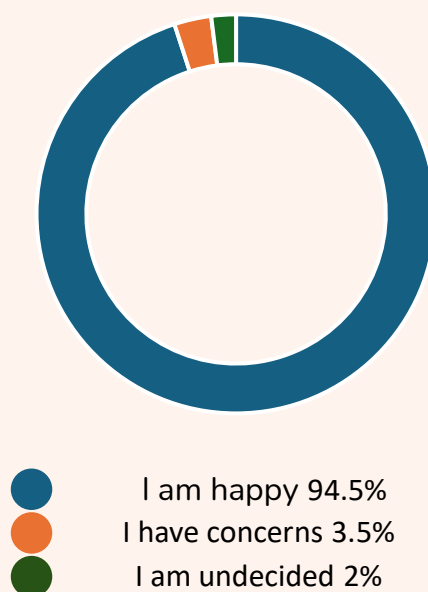


I like that they teach about different relationships and families in P1. They have a poster that says family is love. And has like mum and dad equals love, or mum and mum equals love, and talks about grandparents or foster mums and dads. So, like different families. My wee one will ask about couples she sees, like 'are they dad and dad?' Sometimes I just laugh and say, well they might just be pals I don't know them personally!
(Group chat 39)

Topic 11: My feelings – feeling safe

Almost all parents are happy for their child to learn about their feelings, including feeling safe, at school. Few parents expressed concern. As the quote from the parent below highlights a concern can be about how this is taught to meet the needs of all children.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(938 responses)



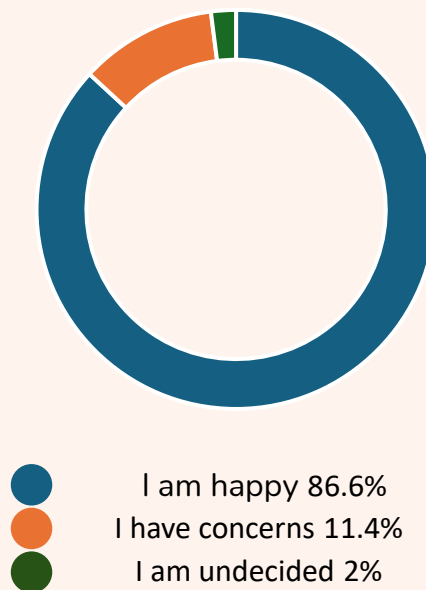
Feeling safe is a topic that was covered by my 8-year old's teacher recently and he came home more confused than informed. It is a very broad concept and difficult for those who are from safe supportive backgrounds to really comprehend what it means to feel unsafe. I'm not sure this topic was approached in the right way in these circumstances, not sure if that is down to content or delivery but it didn't seem to work very well for my child.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 12: We are all unique and different

Most parents are happy for their child to be learning about individual differences and what makes us unique. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while most are happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns. Parents have highlighted the need for more work in the realm of gender (sex-based) stereotypes in the school day/playground.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?

(940 responses)



Schools aren't addressing the way things like play are gendered – boys playing football, girls standing in the corner. It's like the start of a gendered world.
(Group chat 4)

At this age/stage I think RSHP does a very good job at challenging gender stereotypes while maintaining the sex specific language.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Really positive to include this education. There is still a long way schools could go to support this teaching around gender stereotypes in all aspects of school life.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 13: Some people have a disability

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about disability. Few parents expressed concern. Parents whose child is disabled, or who themselves are disabled, see scope for improvement and clarity about approaches.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?

(938 responses)



I am disabled and hence my nondisabled child already has some lived experience of disability. I would like more details about how this subject would be taught as it is complex.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I think this school is quite good at helping children to understand that others might have special educational needs, that probably started in the school nursery. My kids will explain things to me about other children, that for example they are autistic.

(Group chat 12)

We need more on learning about and understanding disability, much more, when there are kids with disabilities in the classroom this is useful for this learning, acceptance. We need to know more about how school does this, it would really help.

(Group chat 7)

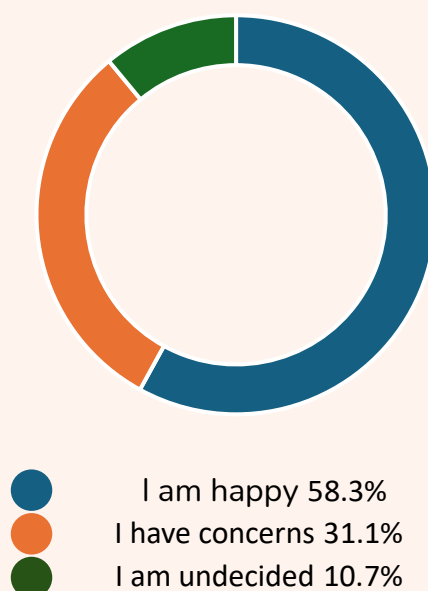
I'm a bit concerned about the language used "having a disability" is deficit language rather than "being disabled". It's important to avoid a conception of disabled people having something wrong with them. I'm not sure teachers are equipped for that.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 14: Some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual

A majority of parents are happy for their child to be learning that some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual – the response provided below is from the full sample of respondents. There is a statistically significant difference in how parents with no religious affiliation (70.3% happy), and those with a religious affiliation (38.5% happy) have responded. There has been earlier discussion in this chapter about learning at home, and in [Spotlight Issue: Some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual](#) this is discussed in more detail. Quotes from parents below highlight a range of views.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(937 responses)



Basic respect for LGBTQ people, yes, okay.
(Group chat 9)

My kid has two mums, and it's 2024, so kids will already know about this, and it should really be embedded in the curriculum not just mentioned to tick a box.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

It's too young to introduce things like bisexuality when they don't understand what sex is. It introduces too many questions. I don't hear it being talked about anywhere else, parents would be telling children this. That all families are different, they see that, its normal, but introducing sexualised things, no.
(Group chat 8)

I am fully supportive of the curriculum as it currently stands and think it is vital that these concepts are introduced in this gradual and age-appropriate way.

Additionally, as someone who grew up under section 28, I feel it is so important that our young people are given LGBTQ inclusive RHSE and am grateful to those who have designed a curriculum that addresses this.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

It's not so much the topic (i.e. gay/lesbian/bisexual) being taught, it's how it may be taught/portrayed that I could have concerns with. I would need more detail on how it's explained to that age group. It feels out of my control when taught at school.

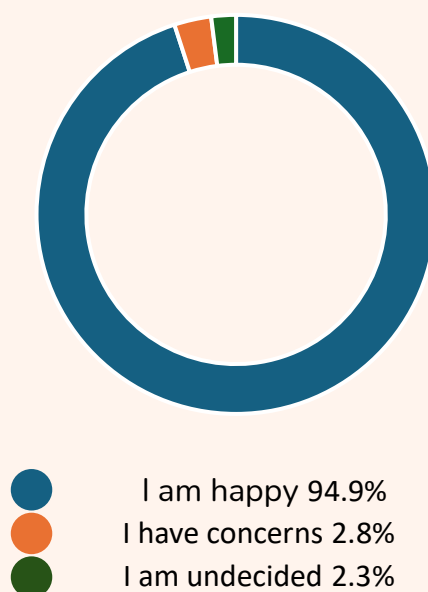
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 15: Learning about the life cycle of plants and animals

Almost all parents are happy for their child to be learning about the life cycle of plants and animals. Few parents expressed concern.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?

(941 responses)



I would like death (and grief) to be included as part of teaching lifecycles.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

I would be concerned if my child asked me about how you get pregnant at this age.

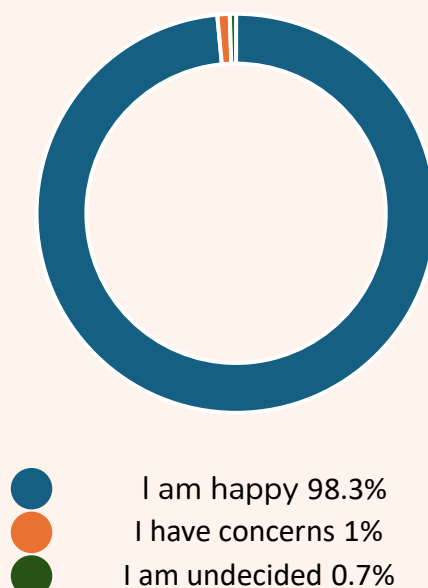
They don't think about it unless it's put into their head, by peers, or something inappropriate on TV. I think it is important for children to learn about reproduction

before they learn about sexuality. And doing it through the life cycle of plants and animals, like understanding how other mammals reproduce, that's a good way to teach, then you can assume they will deduce how human babies are made.
(Group chat 8)

Topic 16: 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.

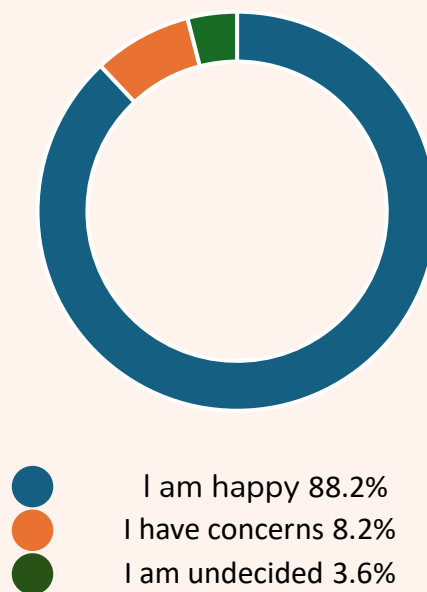
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(941 responses)



Topic 17: Being safe and happy online

Most parents are happy for their child to be learning about being safe and happy online as part of their school-based learning. Few parents expressed concern. Looking to responses from parents with a religious affiliation, while *most* are happy, they are significantly more likely to have concerns (although still *few* at <15%).

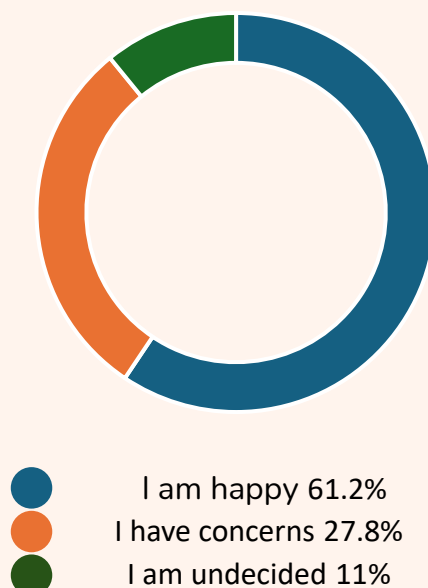
How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(938 responses)



Topic 18: How human life begins

A *majority* of parents – looking to our full set of responses - are happy for their child to be learning about how human life begins. There is a statistically significant difference in how parents with no religious affiliation (69.2% happy), and those with a religious affiliation (48.7% happy) have responded. As discussed earlier in this chapter when talking about learning at home, there are concerns and questions about how to talk with a child of 6, 7 or 8 years old about conception. The quotes from parents capture these concerns and make suggestions as to appropriate approaches.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(938 responses)



I think my only concern at this age would be the topic of conception and how this is taught, it's an area I know will be covered at more depth in later stages and I understand the importance of introducing concepts early and building on these, but I think as long as conception is really surface level, the egg is fertilized by sperm without getting into any further detail of sexual intercourse, I would be happy with my child being taught this.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Happy for them to learn about conception in P4 but P2 appears early.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Would need more detail on "conception" what do you go into. Again, potentially too young for this.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

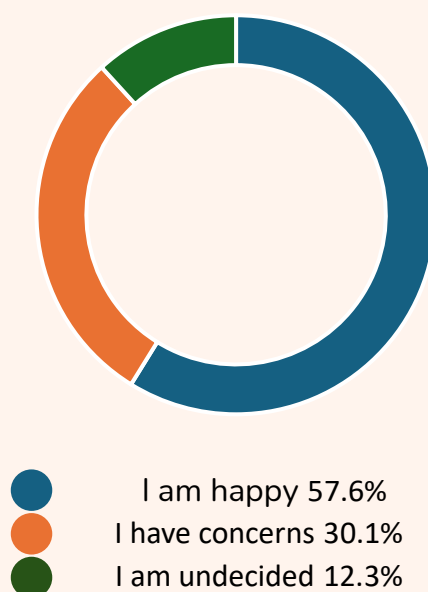
I believe that in regard of basic life science that the build-up is useful. However, I do feel the concept of human conception and sex is not necessary at this age range. That said I feel that pregnancy and birth is very acceptable. Children don't need to rush through these things so sex ed seems more appropriate later. We should however be open to questions and them being inquisitive and not avoid such discussions if the child wishes this help.

(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)

Topic 19: Pregnancy and birth

A majority of parents – looking to our full set of responses - are happy for their child to be learning about pregnancy and birth. There is a statistically significant difference in how parents with no religious affiliation (66.2% happy), and those with a religious affiliation (43.4% happy) have responded.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(936 responses)

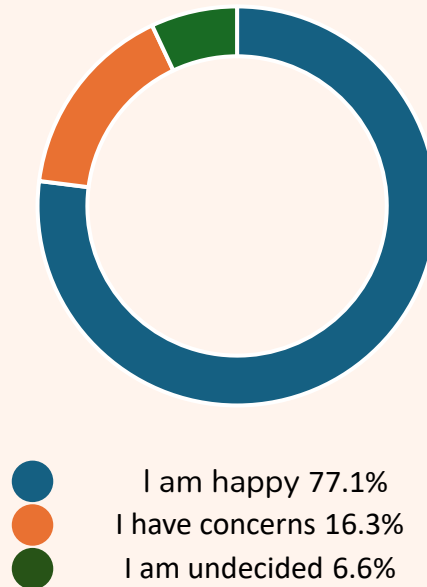


*It would depend how detailed the content is as to whether I feel it's appropriate for a 6-year-old.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*

Topic 20: Looking after a baby

Most parents – looking to our full set of responses - are happy for their child to be learning about looking after a baby. There is a statistically significant difference in how parents with no religious affiliation (81.3% happy), and those with a religious affiliation (70.2% happy) have responded. There is, as discussed earlier when thinking about learning at home, a need to explain and communicate about why this is part of the curriculum and the focus it has.

How do you feel about your child learning about this topic in P2, P3 or P4?
(938 responses)



*I don't understand why a p2-4 child would need to know how to look after a baby.
(Survey response/parent of 6-8-year-old)*