Return to school Survey
March 2021

Introduction

When students returned to school after the first lockdown, no thoughts of parents or students were collected. It was felt that prior to the return to school on 8th March 2021, we wanted students and parents to be able to put forward their views, whether it be positive or concerns or worries. The questions gave everyone the opportunity to answer about the practical side of the return to school, but also the concerns around mental health and wellbeing. The most common responses have been used to formulate results.

Demographics

Primary Students

109 responses were received from students representing 54 schools. The breakdown by year group was as follows:

Reception	9 Responses		Year 4	22 Responses
Year1	15 Responses		Year 5	20 Responses
Year 2	13 Responses		Year 6	21 Responses
Year4	9 Responses			

Secondary Students

441 responses were received from students representing 20 schools. The breakdown by year group was as follows:

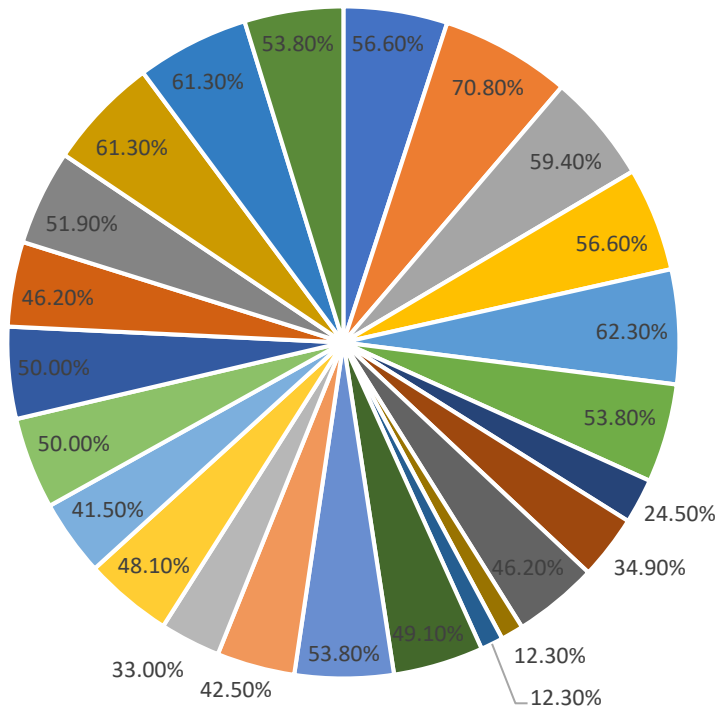| Year 7	52 Responses		Year 11	80 Responses
Year 8	106 Responses		Year 12	5 Responses
Year 9	92 Responses		Year 13	6 Responses
Year 10	100 Responses			

Parent Survey

1012 Parents responded

Number with children in Primary	Number with children in Secondary	Number with children at Specialist / Alternative Provision
727	427	22

Parents with 1 child in Primary	452
Parents with 2 children in Primary	232
Parents with 3 children in Primary	39
Parents with 4 children in Primary	2
Parents with 5 children in Primary	2
Parents with 1 child in Secondary	356
Parents with 2 children in Secondary	105
Parents with 3 children in Secondary	10
Parents with 4 children in Secondary	1

What type of safety measures are in place at your school?

Pie chart data labels:
- 53.80%
- 56.60%
- 70.80%
- 59.40%
- 56.60%
- 62.30%
- 53.80%
- 24.50%
- 34.90%
- 46.20%
- 12.30%
- 12.30%
- 49.10%
- 53.80%
- 42.50%
- 33.00%
- 48.10%
- 41.50%
- 50.00%
- 50.00%
- 46.20%
- 51.90%
- 61.30%
- 61.30%

Legend:
- ■ One-way systems in place
- ■ Staggered start/finish times
- ■ Staggered lunch times
- ■ Staggered break times
- ■ Sanitising stations
- ■ Teachers remaining in one bubble
- ■ Teachers moving around rather than children/young people
- ■ Cleaning kits for workstation/resources
- ■ Regular cleaning throughout the day
- ■ Temperature checks for staff
- ■ Covid 19 testing
- ■ Allocated areas for school dinners
- ■ Allocated entrances/exits
- ■ Allocated toilets
- ■ Allocated resources
- ■ Seating plans/changed classroom layout
- ■ Floor and/or wall markings for social distancing
- ■ Ventilated rooms (open windows and/or doors)
- ■ Regular times for handwashing
- ■ Limits to the number of parents/carers allowed on school site
- ■ Limits to the number of visitors in school
- ■ Adults wearing face coverings
- ■ Smaller/no assemblies
- ■ No changing for PE

What type of safety measures are in place at your school?		
One-way systems in place	60	56.60%
Staggered start/finish times	75	70.80%
Staggered lunch times	63	59.40%
Staggered break times	60	56.60%
Sanitising stations	66	62.30%
Teachers remaining in one bubble	57	53.80%
Teachers moving around rather than children/young people	26	24.50%
Cleaning kits for workstation/resources	37	34.90%
Regular cleaning throughout the day	49	46.20%
Temperature checks for staff	13	12.30%
Covid 19 testing	13	12.30%
Allocated areas for school dinners	52	49.10%
Allocated entrances/exits	57	53.80%
Allocated toilets	45	42.50%
Allocated resources	35	33.00%
Seating plans/changed classroom layout	51	48.10%
Floor and/or wall markings for social distancing	44	41.50%
Ventilated rooms (open windows and/or doors)	53	50.00%
Regular times for handwashing	53	50.00%
Limits to the number of parents/carers allowed on school site	49	46.20%
Limits to the number of visitors in school	55	51.90%
Adults wearing face coverings	65	61.30%
Smaller/no assemblies	65	61.30%
No changing for PE	57	53.80%

How do you feel about going back to school on March 8th?
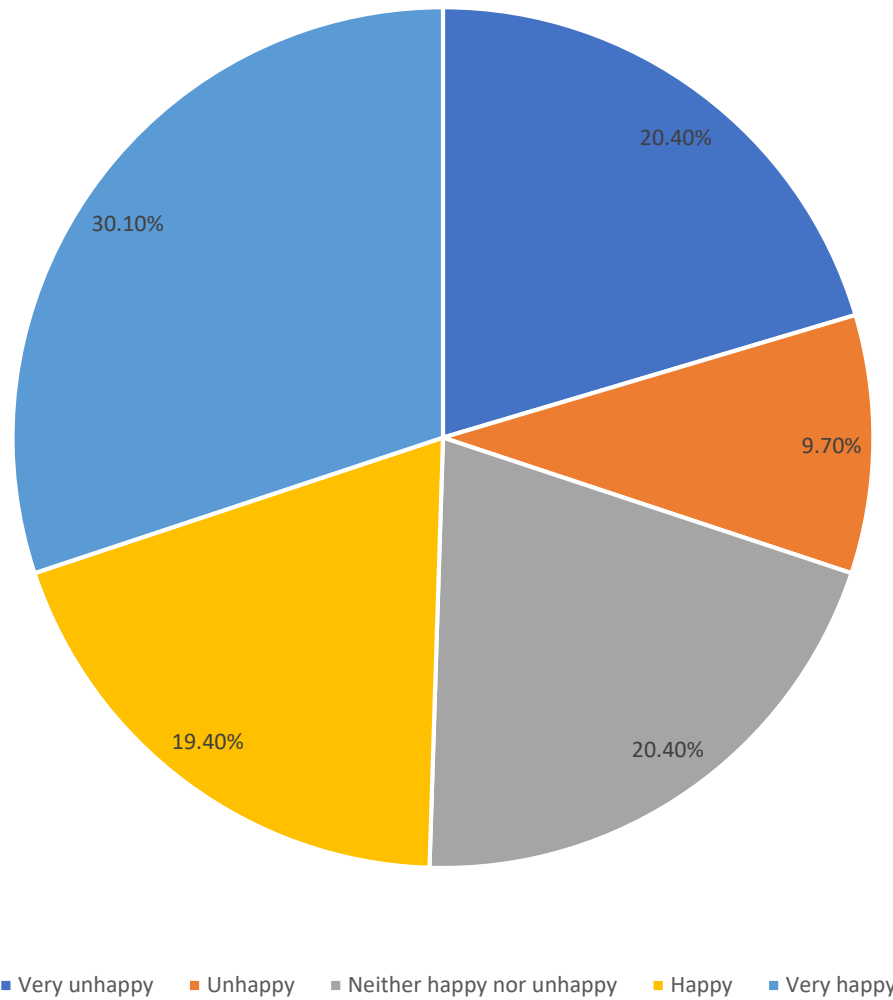
| How do you feel about going back to school on March 8th?		
Very unhappy	21	20.40%
Unhappy	10	9.70%
Neither happy nor unhappy	21	20.40%
Happy	20	19.40%
Very happy	31	30.10%

What would support you with school work?
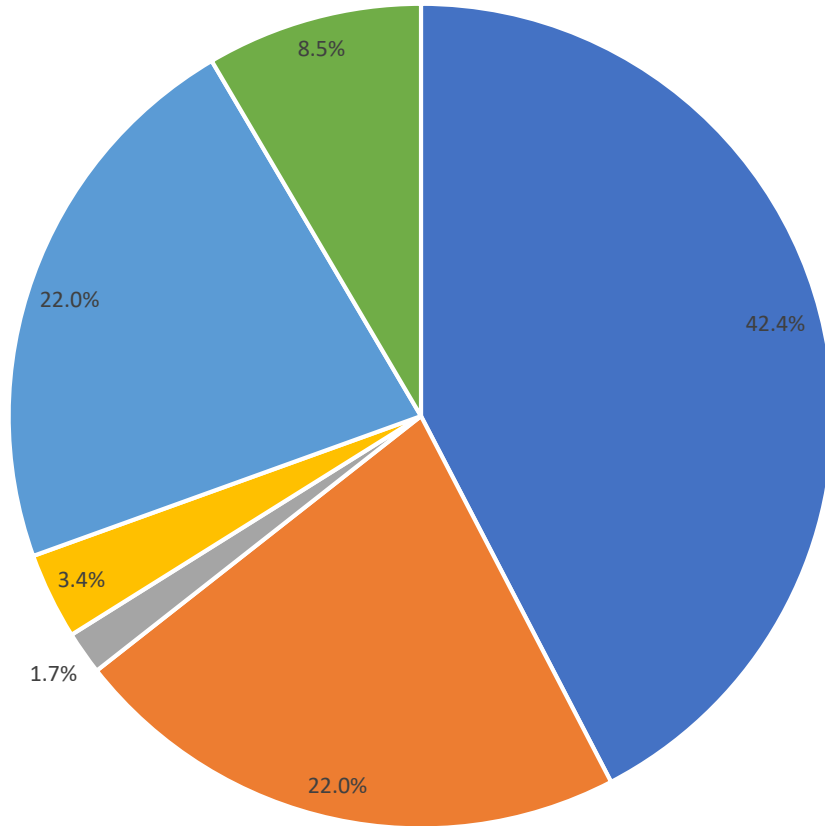
	Additional Help / Revision of what was done	Sticking to COVID Rules
Being with friends	More time outside / Additional activities
Nothing / No comment	Other

Additional Help / Revision of what was done	25	42.4%
Sticking to COVID Rules	13	22.0%
Being with friends	1	1.7%
More time outside / Additional activities	2	3.4%
Nothing / No comment	13	22.0%
Other	5	8.5%

What kind of support would help with your wellbeing?
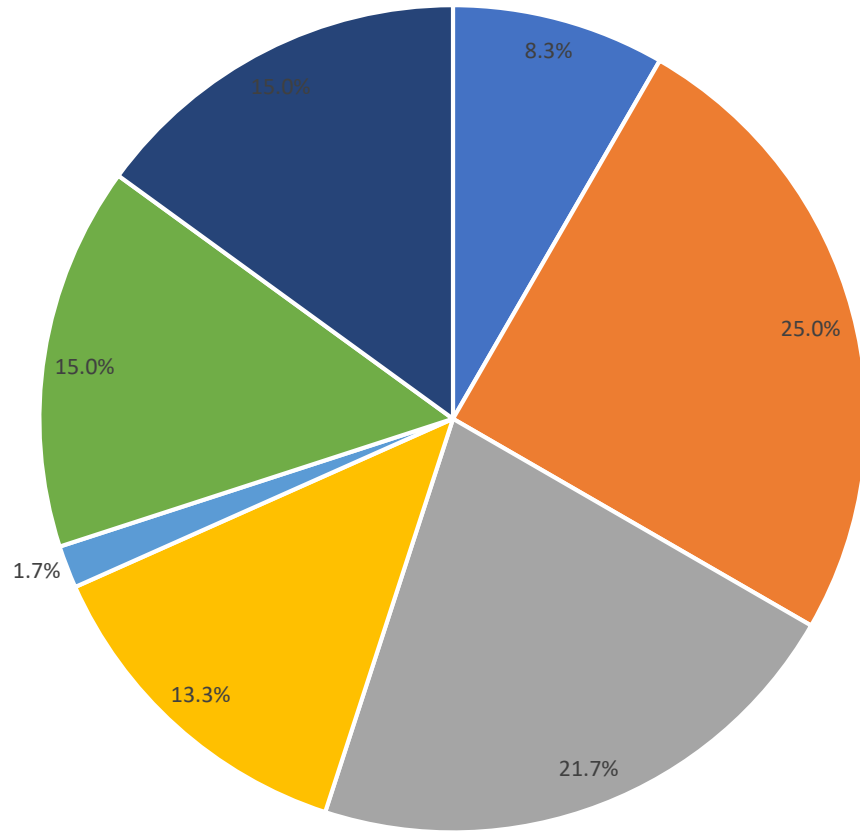
Additional Support in class	5	8.3%
Opportunity to talk / Specific time to talk about anxieties	15	25.0%
Additional activities / More time outside	13	21.7%
Other	8	13.3%
Patience	1	1.7%
General COVID concerns	9	15.0%
No comments / None	9	15.0%

Is there anything more you would like to tell us about going back to school on March 8th?
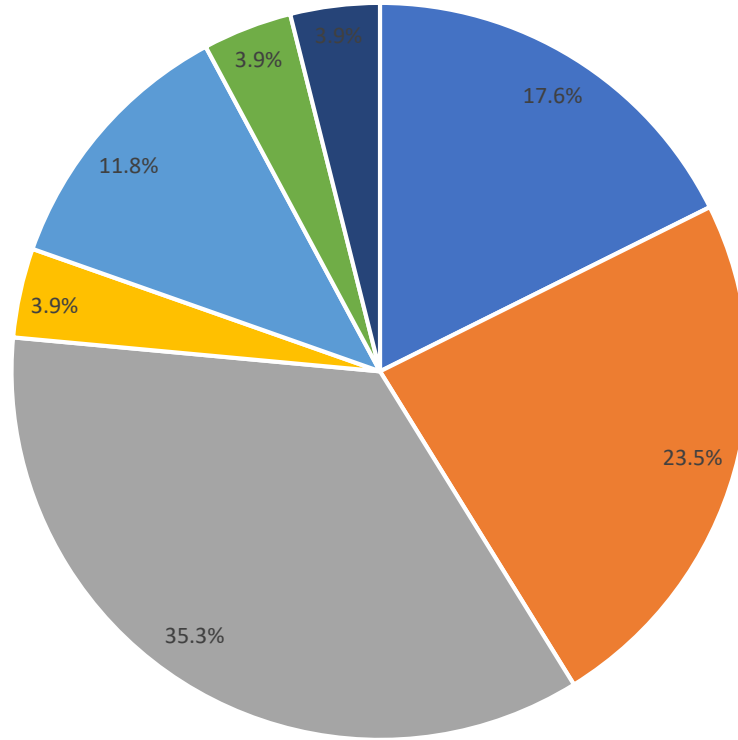
Nothing / No comment	9	17.6%
Looking forward to going back	12	23.5%
Too soon to return / General concerns around COVID	18	35.3%
More support in school	2	3.9%
General anxiety / catching up	6	11.8%
Missing people at home	2	3.9%
Other	2	3.9%

Quotes from Primary Students

'To be able to be happy and safe and not feel like I'm upset I will also really love to sit next to friends and I would social distance I also want like to be able to do drawing and painting if we feel sad.'

'Not having to do the same work because some kids didn't bother with the tasks set'

'an allocated lesson to them so they can express themselves about anything and each be given the opportunity to talk.'

'Making work more fun and just doing fun activities'

'happy for the children to socialise back with their friends'

'I want things to go back to normal. Have trips and sit by my friends and to eat my lunch in the hall.'

'School is as safe as can be & children need to mix with each other for their mental health well-being regardless of the threat of covid'

'I am so excited especially that it is my last year in primary school and I want to make more happy memories.'

'I'll miss being with my family'

'After school catch up lessons, more active clubs before and after school. Reintroduced daily mile, or something similar'

'I don't want to go back to school as I will miss my mom and I am worried about the school work being too hard'

'Clubs to spend time with my friends. Extra time with friends.'

'Feel good Friday'

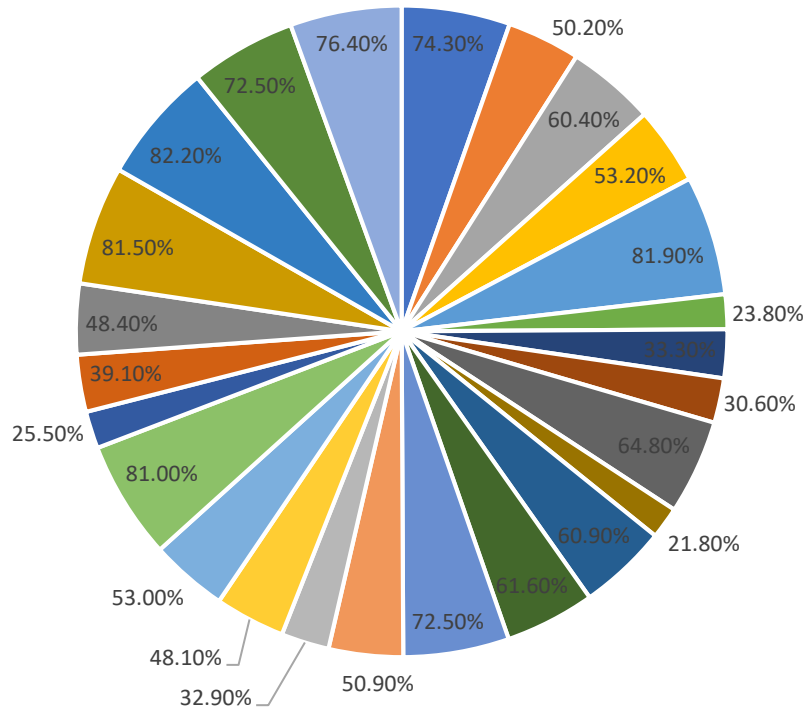'Chatting about it'

'Having wellbeing books'

'More time to talk to friends and teachers about how this has affected me'

'Counselling sessions, 121 chats with children regarding feelings on anxiety'

'I don't think they should go back until after Easter. My kids have followed all rules, but we see so many kids outside mixing with multiple other kid's hours at a time from the same school & some from the same year they could be spreading virus & I don't want my kids around them at school until I know it's safe for them and us'

**RESPONSES FROM SECONDARY STUDENTS**

What type of safety measures are in place at your school?

- One-way systems in place
- Staggered start/finish times
- Staggered lunch times
- Staggered break times
- Sanitising stations
- Teachers remaining in one bubble
- Teachers moving around rather than children/young people
- Cleaning kits for workstation/resources
- Regular cleaning throughout the day
- Temperature checks for staff
- Covid 19 testing
- Allocated areas for school dinners
- Allocated entrances/exits
- Allocated toilets
- Allocated resources
- Seating plans/changed classroom layout
- Floor and/or wall markings for social distancing
- Ventilated rooms (open windows and/or doors)
- Regular times for handwashing
- Limits to the number of parents/carers allowed on school site
- Limits to the number of visitors in school
- Adults wearing face coverings
- Children/young people wearing face coverings
- Smaller/no assemblies
- No changing for PE

What type of safety measures are in place at your school?		
One-way systems in place	321	74.30%
Staggered start/finish times	217	50.20%
Staggered lunch times	261	60.40%
Staggered break times	230	53.20%
Sanitising stations	354	81.90%
Teachers remaining in one bubble	103	23.80%
Teachers moving around rather than children/young people	144	33.30%
Cleaning kits for workstation/resources	132	30.60%
Regular cleaning throughout the day	280	64.80%
Temperature checks for staff	94	21.80%
Covid 19 testing	263	60.90%
Allocated areas for school dinners	266	61.60%
Allocated entrances/exits	313	72.50%
Allocated toilets	220	50.90%
Allocated resources	142	32.90%
Seating plans/changed classroom layout	208	48.10%
Floor and/or wall markings for social distancing	229	53.00%
Ventilated rooms (open windows and/or doors)	350	81.00%
Regular times for handwashing	110	25.50%
Limits to the number of parents/carers allowed on school site	169	39.10%
Limits to the number of visitors in school	209	48.40%
Adults wearing face coverings	352	81.50%
Children/young people wearing face coverings	355	82.20%
Smaller/no assemblies	313	72.50%
No changing for PE	330	76.40%

How do you feel about going back to school on March 8th?
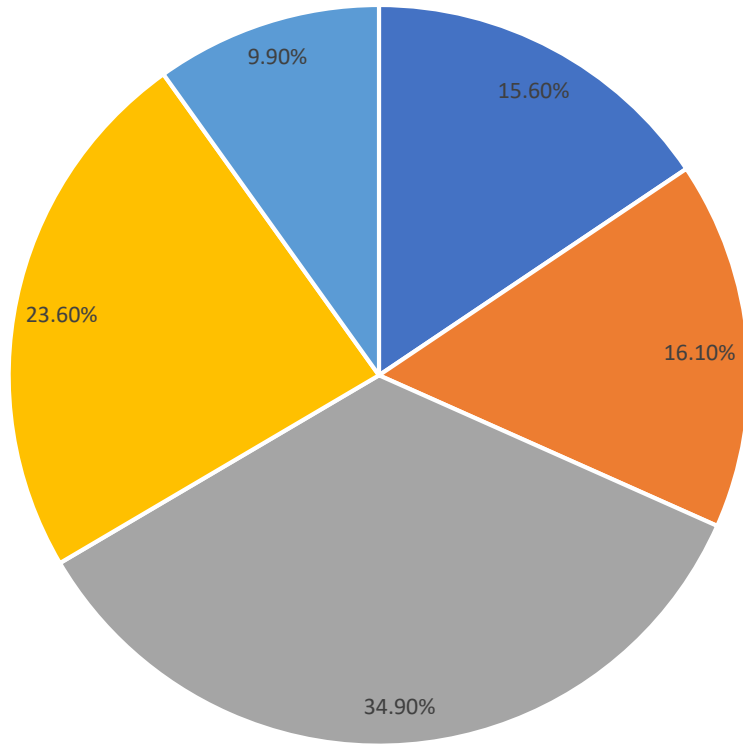
How do you feel about going back to school on March 8th?		
Very unhappy	68	15.60%
Unhappy	70	16.10%
Neither happy nor unhappy	152	34.90%
Happy	103	23.60%
Very happy	43	9.90%

What would support you with school work?
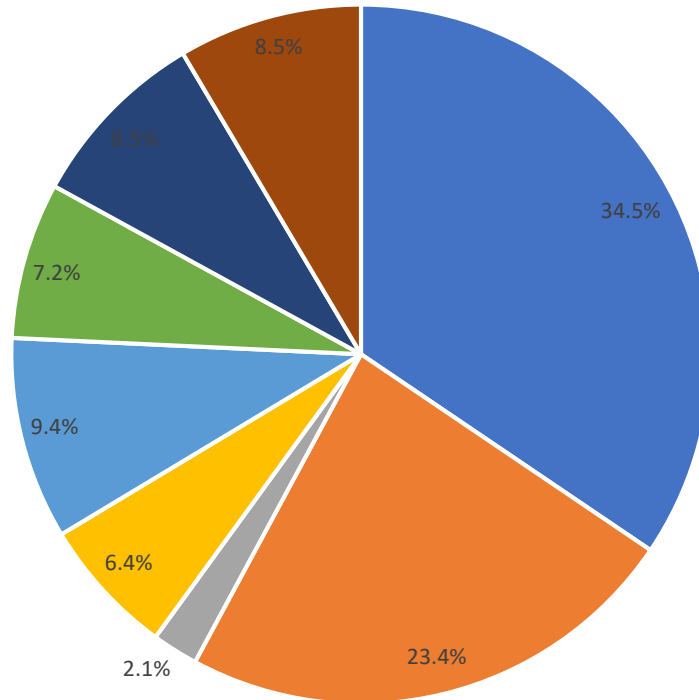
|		
More Support in Class	81	34.5%
Revision of work done during lockdown	55	23.4%
Advice / support with mental health / anxiety	5	2.1%
Less pressure put on students	15	6.4%
Other	22	9.4%
Enforcement of COVID rules	17	7.2%
Extra classes	20	8.5%
No Support needed	20	8.5%

Q5 What kind of support would help with your wellbeing?
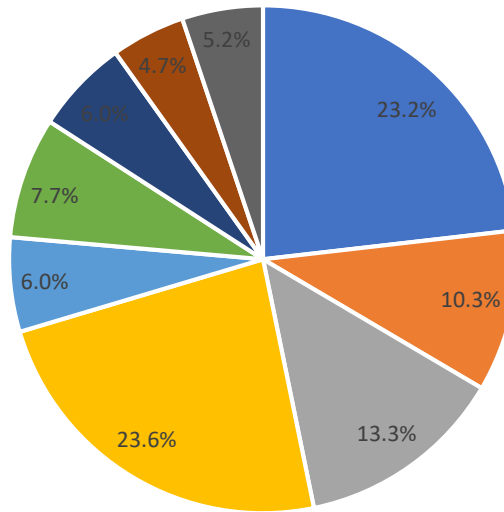
Legend:
- None
- Focussed lessons on mental health & wellbeing
- Less Pressure
- Time to talk / knowing you have someone you can talk to
- Other
- Outdoor / other activities
- Sticking to COVID Rules
- Friends
- More support in class

None	54	23.2%
Focussed lessons on mental health & wellbeing	24	10.3%
Less Pressure	31	13.3%
Time to talk / knowing you have someone you can talk to	55	23.6%
Other	14	6.0%
Outdoor / other activities	18	7.7%
Sticking to COVID Rules	14	6.0%
Friends	11	4.7%
More support in class	12	5.2%

Is there anything more you would like to tell us about going back to school on March 8th?
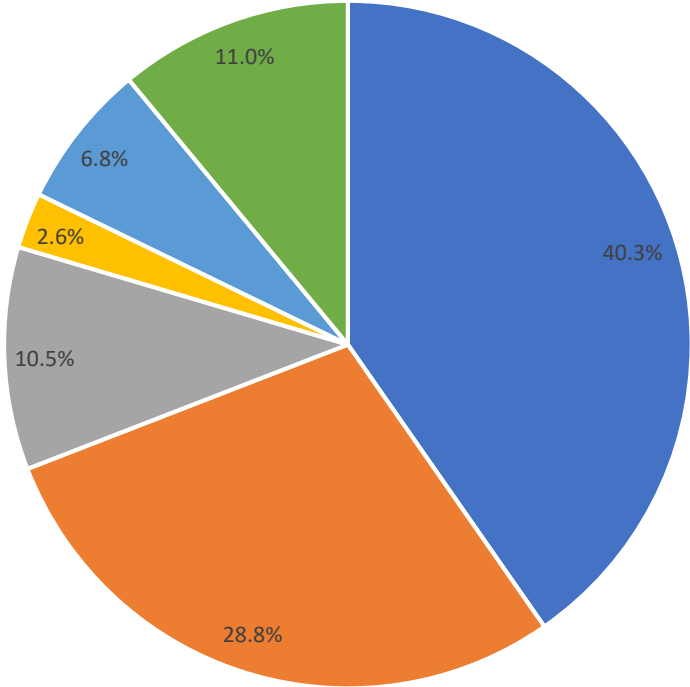
No comments	77	40.3%
COVID concerns / too soon to go back / transmitting infection	55	28.8%
General anxiety	20	10.5%
Feel too under pressure	5	2.6%
Other	13	6.8%
Happy to return	21	11.0%

Quotes

'Some revision over the online topics we have done, no tests at first'

'Mixing happens outside the school while waiting to get in. No one checking what's happening'

'I think teachers would consider giving time to children for them to learn the topics in lessons slowly because many of my friends and me didn't understand the tasks, so we needed help.'

'Extra adults in the room so teacher can teach, and other adults can go around the room and help the young people'

'The teachers are always willing to answer question that any students have, and they try to help wherever they can.'
'More lessons to reviews content missed during the lockdowns'.

'Less pressure to perform to the standards we used to, we have been in a pandemic, a traumatic event, we don't need to lose the rest of our childhood to stress and poor mental health. Be forgiving, we are trying our best.'

'Teachers having a little conversation on how we are feeling and if we require any help.'

'Teacher checking in on us regarding friendships and how we have been at home.'

'If I'm honest, I've been nervous about COVID-19 since it started. I mean it's the first time I'm going through something like this and I'm worried about the safety of the people I care about, so if I can know that what we are doing is the best way possible now to help contain the virus I think I'll be a big support.'

'being taught how to deal with depression and anxiety'

'I'm super excited and don't want those schools to close again, so just be careful, wash your hands and stay safe and save lives:)'

'I want to go back to school but only because I have so little to do at home all day and I have to spend too much time with my family. And at home I just overthink situations and feel overwhelmed with things and dwell too much and it makes me sad and feel alone and I don't have anyone to tell it to.'

'I travel by bus and there are no seats, extra buses would help or school understanding I can't always get on the bus I need because they are full'

'I do not feel it is safe, especially as someone who lives with high risk people, I would feel safer if at least the staff were vaccinated before we return. I do not want to be responsible for my families' deaths.'

'I am just very happy to go because I needed a lot of support at home with my work and I felt depressed since i couldn't go out due to lockdown.'

And Finally: 'Kindness.'

What are your children missing most about attending school
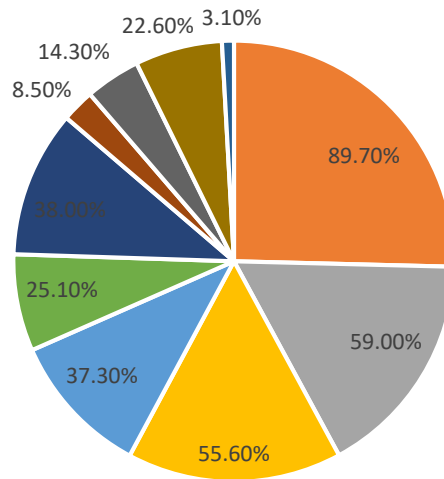
| What are your children missing most about attending school?		
Friends	900	89.70%
The routine	592	59.00%
Teachers/support staff	558	55.60%
Enriched learning experience	374	37.30%
Independence	252	25.10%
Outside space	381	38.00%
Lunches	85	8.50%
After-school activities	143	14.30%
PE lessons	227	22.60%
Other	31	3.10%

How do YOU feel about your children returning to school?
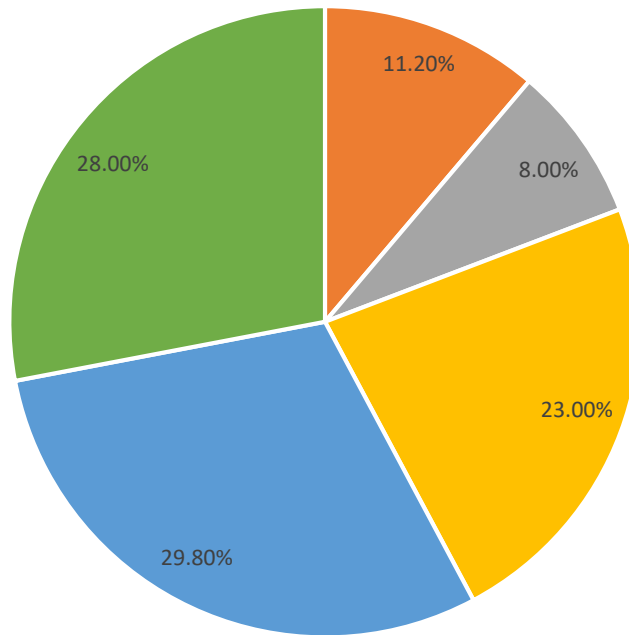
How do YOU feel about your children returning to school?		
Very unhappy	113	11.20%
Unhappy	81	8.00%
Neither happy nor unhappy	233	23.00%
Happy	302	29.80%
Very happy	283	28.00%

How do YOUR CHILDREN feel about returning to school?
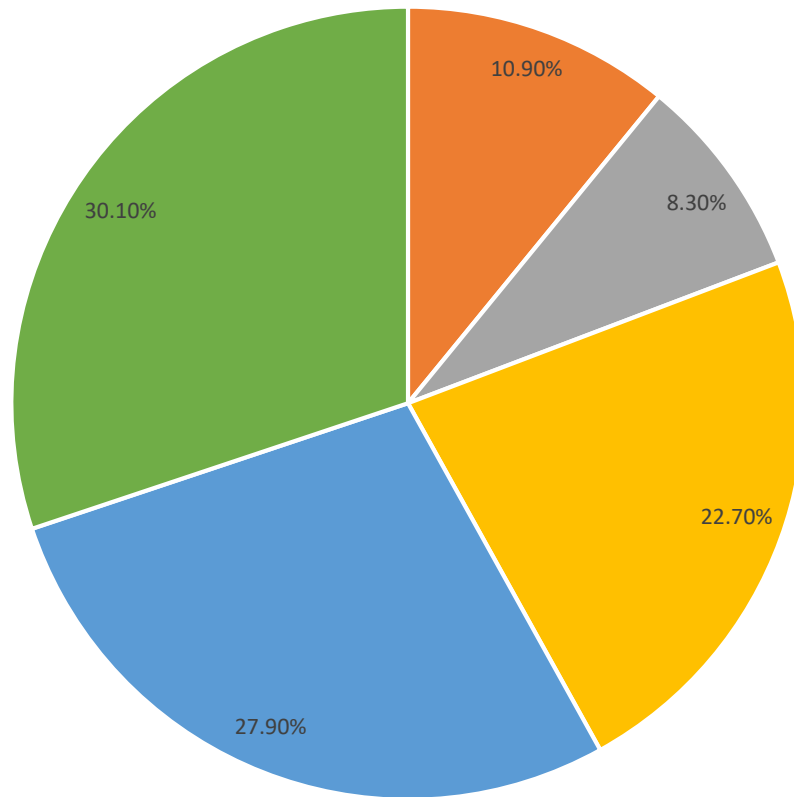
How do YOUR CHILDREN feel about returning to school?		
Very unhappy	110	10.90%
Unhappy	84	8.30%
Neither happy nor unhappy	229	22.70%
Happy	282	27.90%
Very happy	304	30.10%

What type of safety measures are in place at your school?

Pie chart data labels:
- 52.70%
- 62.90%
- 40.80%
- 36.90%
- 47.10%
- 45.80%
- 27.00%
- 24.20%
- 14.80%
- 37.30%
- 14.50%
- 24.70%
- 44.10%
- 25.00%
- 16.00%
- 31.80%
- 25.00%
- 35.80%
- 34.40%
- 39.40%
- 38.20%
- 44.60%
- 17.70%
- 36.50%
- 53.90%

Legend:
- What type of safety measures are in place at your school?
- One-way systems in place
- Staggered start/finish times
- Staggered lunch times
- Staggered break times
- Sanitising stations
- Teachers remaining in one bubble
- Teachers moving around rather than children/young people
- Cleaning kits for workstation/resources
- Regular cleaning throughout the day
- Temperature checks for staff
- Covid 19 testing
- Allocated areas for school dinners
- Allocated entrances/exits
- Allocated toilets
- Allocated resources
- Seating plans/changed classroom layout
- Floor and/or wall markings for social distancing
- Ventilated rooms (open windows and/or doors)
- Regular times for handwashing
- Limits to the number of parents/carers allowed on school site
- Limits to the number of visitors in school
- Adults wearing face coverings
- Children/young people wearing face coverings (secondary only)
- Smaller/no assemblies
- No changing for PE

| What type of safety measures are in place at your school?		
One-way systems in place	505	52.70%
Staggered start/finish times	603	62.90%
Staggered lunch times	391	40.80%
Staggered break times	354	36.90%
Sanitising stations	452	47.10%
Teachers remaining in one bubble	437	45.60%
Teachers moving around rather than children/young people	259	27.00%
Cleaning kits for workstation/resources	232	24.20%
Regular cleaning throughout the day	358	37.30%
Temperature checks for staff	142	14.80%
Covid 19 testing	139	14.50%
Allocated areas for school dinners	237	24.70%
Allocated entrances/exits	423	44.10%
Allocated toilets	240	25.00%
Allocated resources	153	16.00%
Seating plans/changed classroom layout	305	31.80%
Floor and/or wall markings for social distancing	240	25.00%
Ventilated rooms (open windows and/or doors)	343	35.80%
Regular times for handwashing	330	34.40%
Limits to the number of parents/carers allowed on school site	378	39.40%
Limits to the number of visitors in school	366	38.20%
Adults wearing face coverings	428	44.60%
Children/young people wearing face coverings (secondary only)	170	17.70%
Smaller/no assemblies	350	36.50%
No changing for PE	517	53.90%

Q2a What are your children missing most about attending school? Other, please specify
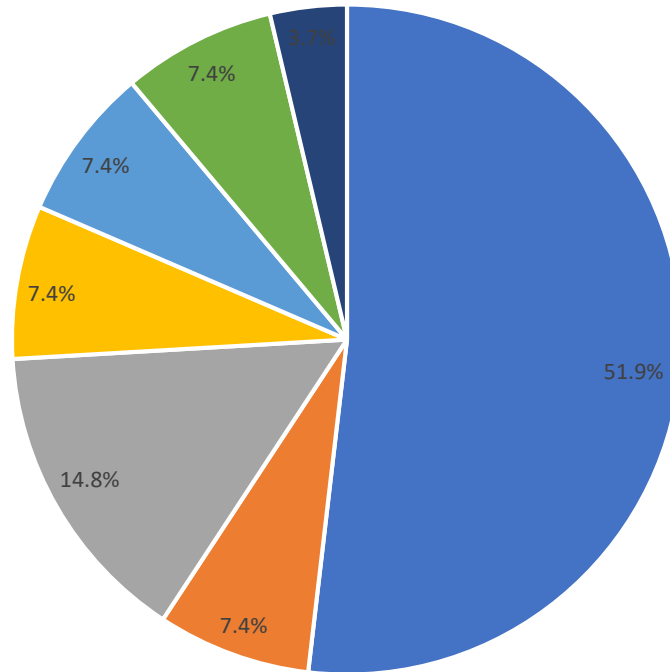
|		
Nothing	14	51.9%
Friends	2	7.4%
Resources and support from teachers	4	14.8%
Don't want to return / anxious	2	7.4%
Having time away from siblings / time out of the house	2	7.4%
Still attending school	2	7.4%
Mental wellbeing	1	3.7%

Q6 What kind of support would help with your wellbeing?
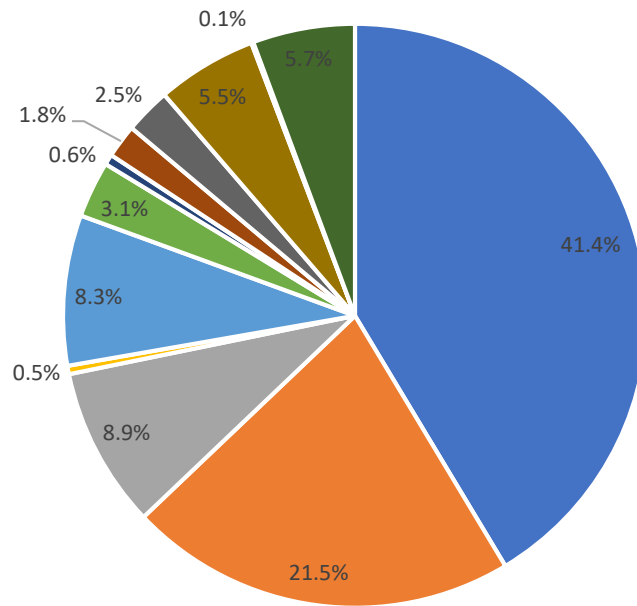
|		
Nothing / No comment	358	41.4%
Reassurances around COVID rules in school & parents	186	21.5%
Too soon to return	77	8.9%
Updates from school around child's progress etc	4	0.5%
General anxieties	72	8.3%
Other	27	3.1%
Transition time	5	0.6%
Additional Support for their child	16	1.8%
Concerns around wearing masks	22	2.5%
Answered yes, but not specified	48	5.5%
Loneliness when children are back at school	1	0.1%
Concerns around parent's adherence to rules	49	5.7%

Q7 Would YOUR CHILD/REN benefit from receiving additional support with their mental health and wellbeing?
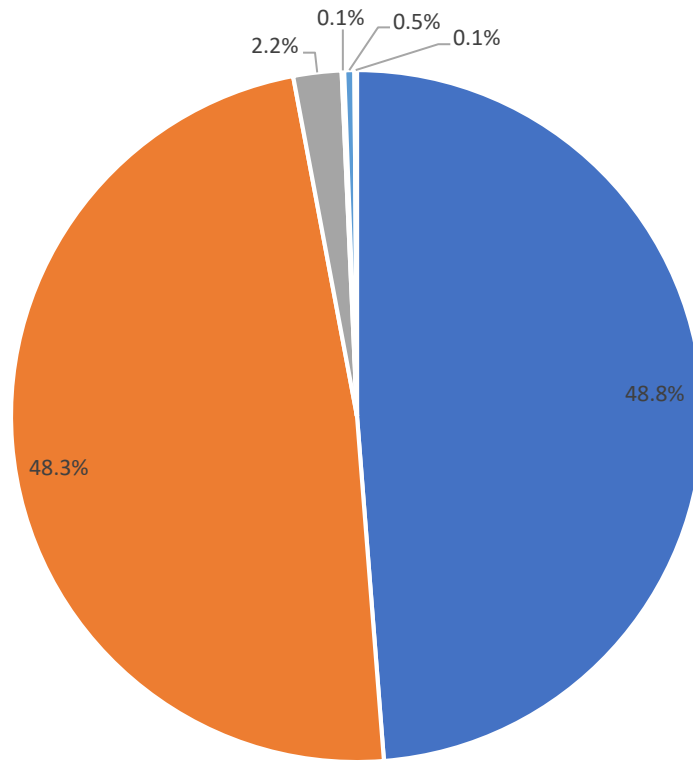
No comment / Nothing	412	48.8%
Yes - support needed	408	48.3%
Social & outdoor activities / time to talk	19	2.2%
Other	1	0.1%
Additional Support in School	4	0.5%
No Issues	1	0.1%

Q8 Do you feel YOU would benefit from receiving additional support/ information in any of these areas?

0.3%   1.6%   0.8%

30.4%

66.9%
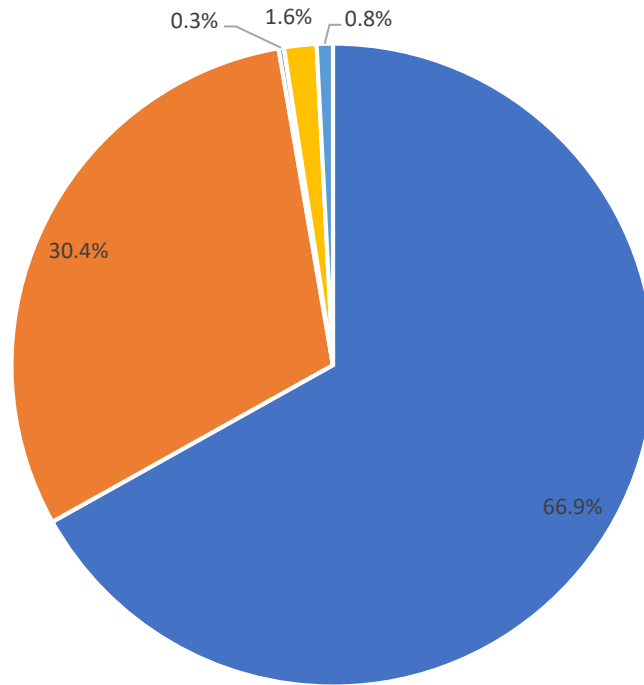
- No Support Needed
- Support Required
- Other
- No Comments
- Additional meetings / support from school to update on progress

No Support Needed	493	66.9%
Support Required	224	30.4%
Other	2	0.3%
No Comments	12	1.6%
Additional meetings / support from school to update on progress	6	0.8%

Q9 Is there anything more you would like to tell us about going back to school on March 8th?
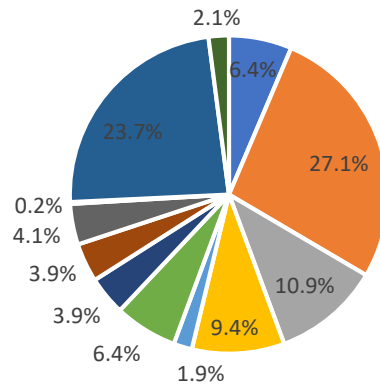
Legend:
- Happy with what school have done
- Re-inforcement of COVID Rules
- Happy that they are back at school for some normality
- Children shouldn't be back in school
- Time for fun activities / more time outdoors
- Other
- Extra Support in class / Re-visit lessons done online
- Regular Check-ins with Students / Welfare orintated
- Worried around wearing fae coverings / testing
- More contact from school around progress / areas for development
- No comment

Happy with what school have done	34	6.4%
Re-inforcement of COVID Rules	144	27.1%
Happy that they are back at school for some normality	58	10.9%
Children shouldn't be back in school	50	9.4%
Time for fun activities / more time outdoors	10	1.9%
Other	34	6.4%
Extra Support in class / Re-visit lessons done online	21	3.9%
Regular Check-ins with Students / Welfare orientated	21	3.9%
Worried around wearing face coverings / testing	22	4.1%
More contact from school around progress / areas for development	1	0.2%
No comment	126	23.7%
Make returning to school a positive experience	11	2.1%

Quotes

'I worry about my child not having anyone to play with for the last 3 months whilst I have been working full time at home. Isolation can't be healthy'

'Parents failure to follow the rules when dropping off and collecting their children. Not standing in line or wearing face coverings when on school grounds. Then hanging around school gates which in turn then doesn't allow for social distancing when entering or leaving school grounds for other people.'

'None. I am confident they are safe when they go back to school. They are healthy children and look forward to going back to school.'

'I'm vulnerable and concerned kids bringing infection home so I just want continuous precautions in place more than before.'

'Happy because it is what they need however a bit nervous because of Covid 19 still in the Community'

'Limited teachers still self-shielding and disruptive children being mixed with high achievers which has made my child despondent'

'Yes, I continue to worry about c-19 exposure. I feel he is more at risk going to school. I do, however, think the mental health benefits outweigh this.'

'Yes, I do my son can't wear a mask or be tested on medical grounds and his school has been one of the worse hit schools in Sandwell. My son has Autism and a severe form of anxiety and to say he is scared to catch the bus and attend school is an understatement'

'No. Both my children's schools have been amazing at informing parents and sending work and support'

'I feel it is still too early for children to return to school and I am concerned my child will be at risk. School have managed home schooling extremely well and my child has thrived. I can also see the benefit of continuity for my child since learning from home compared to the unpredictability of having to stop / start school in bouts in response to infection rates. I also feel teachers are being put at risk and vaccinations should have been offered at an earlier opportunity to them. I feel a great deal has been expected of teachers and I should imagine many are exhausted, especially when hopping between home versus on- school premises learning. I feel for the teachers and the students' wellbeing and for academic attainment to be assured, continuity is key. we should remain home learning until statistics reflect there is a low possibility of on-school premises education being disrupted repeatedly. In addition, I feel as a parent I have assessed the return to school as an 'at risk' activity for my child, despite this, the decision will be taken away from me and I will have forced to send my child due to sanctions that would be applied for non-attendance. Furthermore, my child has asthma and to protect self and others will have need to wear a face mask throughout the day which exacerbates his condition even when offered to leave the classroom when needed to remove mask.'

'My child has had excellent support from school so is happy.'

'YES. THIS LOCKDOWN HAS BEEN REALLY HARD AND SHE MISSES SEEING AND PLAYING WITH HER FRIENDS SO MUCH. FUNDING SHOULD BE PUT INTO FUN ACTIVITIES FOR THE CHILDREN TO TAKE PART IN WITH THEIR FRIENDS NOT SO MUCH CATCHING UP ON SCHOOL WORK'

'potentially as i have seen effect on them but i think being in school with friends will help them and as family we monitor it and have open conversations and communication my kids know about support and don't want counselling themselves they feel they can manage it informally i personally feel they could explore it as it would not hurt to.'

'It's a shame that the government has followed such and all or nothing approach to education that hasn't encouraged small, outside, socially distanced activities via schools and community groups, as I think these would do a lot for children's physical and mental wellbeing. Keeping the focus on overall wellbeing is also much more important than 'catching up' knowledge-based content - as an ex-teacher I know that healthy, happy, well balanced kids learn (and catch up) much more effectively than those under pressure to perform at all costs.'

'I think that they will need to be back at school before any problems emerge'

'Some open discussion to process what they have been through and share perspectives would be good. I also feel education around why we needed to have a lockdown and who it benefitted would be good, so that children can understand the crucial part they have played in keeping society safe.'

'We have already noticed that this lockdown has had an effect on our child mental health. I do think my child would definitely benefit from extra support.'

'My child misses his school friends so anything that safely promotes being back with friends would be great.'

'Think it ought to be available in schools for the children to talk to someone if they need to.'

'Mental wellbeing support needs to be available especially in secondary school. Teenage boys find it more difficult to talk about their feelings, so it needs to be seen as a support function within their peers. I feel my children talk openly about lockdown and how they are feeling but this pandemic has left many young children vulnerable'

'My eldest has already been having wellbeing calls from a teacher at her school. School staff have been wonderful. They deserve so much recognition.'

'Yes, (wellbeing) this has been the focus of my home schooling because my daughter has had many meltdowns. Being in Y6 & a mixture her hormone levels haven't helped her to stop feeling like she's not normal. She's needed so much encouragement & being isolated with just her as a child in the house, she thinks that it's just her going through this & feels that there is something wrong with her. Urgent help.'

CONCLUSION

Although there are parents who feel that it is too soon for children to be going back to school, there is also a realisation that being back with friends and getting back to some form of routine will be a real benefit to the students.

Although most seem to be aware of all of the safety measures put in place by schools, the concerns around management of COVID19 rules, both inside and outside of school is a concern to both parents and students. They feel that some people, both parents & students don't take them seriously enough and this needs to be borne in mind by schools.

In secondary students, worries have been raised about testing and parents are also voicing concerns that it is not compulsory, therefore only as good as the number who take the test.

In primary school children, parents and children want the focus to be on fun and getting children to enjoy school again. These children have been exposed to many worrying things over the past 12 months and although parents fully accept the need for them to 'catch up', they also need their children to regain their love of school and not see it as a scary place.

Most students state that they have missed their friends and see the return to school as an opportunity to learn how to socialise again.

One of the real issues to emerge from this survey is the need to keep talking. Students from all ages have said that they need someone they can talk to and someone to 'check in' with them. They need to feel supported and be able to discuss their worries and how they feel. Many have had to deal with bereavement and don't know how to deal with their emotions. They have asked for focussed sessions on mental health and wellbeing, but also the offer of 1:1 chats when they need it.

Parents have also said that they have their own mental health issues. Many have said that they have put their own worries to one side, whilst the children were at home, but with the return to school, they have time to think about themselves and have realised that they would welcome support.

The survey has highlighted that wellbeing and mental health are 'top of the list' in concerns and something that we need to address.