Sandwell MBC

SHAPE Survey Results 2020

Final Report

Neesha Patel
11-1-2021

Contents

1. **Executive Summary**

The SHAPE Survey has been conducted bi-annually since November 2014 when the SHAPE Programme was first introduced as a child's voice initiative. It is a means to consult with young people on the five SHAPE themes:

- Staying Safe
- Being Healthy
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Economic Wellbeing

In 2020, the online survey was developed for Primary School children from years 5 and 6 and Secondary School pupils from years 7 – 13. The link to the survey was distributed to all Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in Sandwell. The total number of survey participants was 290.

The questions were devised and developed by a number of stakeholders who deliver services to young people and broken down further into these specific areas: demographics, coronavirus, mental health and wellbeing, support services, social media and gaming, local area, education, youth activities, child's voice and future.

The main findings from the report portray that children and young people have been hugely affected by the pandemic in term of their education and mental health. Although some of the issues such as school work and exams and being bullied have always been themes which have been on the forefront for young people, lockdown, missing education and increase in social media have heightened these issues.

Children and young people need to be listened to so they can be supported adequately and their needs can be met.

Social media has become part of daily life for children and young people starting from primary school age and the influences of social media remain a concern. Young people have become more body conscious and physical appearance is now an emerging issue.

Gaming is also becoming a fast-growing entertainment avenue for younger children and many appear to spend their time gaming rather than going out to places to play.

The perception of Sandwell as a Borough remains negative, due to high levels of crime and deprivation. A greater emphasis needs to be made on the positives and ensuring regeneration and town plans are responsive to the needs of the future generation, ensuring Sandwell retains its developed young people.

Finally, further work needs to be done to improve communication for young people especially youth in secondary schools, so they have a wealth of information they need to support them and their families.

This report provides a detailed account of all the survey results along with a set of recommendations which internal and external stakeholders will adopt to address the needs and issues identified by children and young people.

2. Objectives and Purpose

The purpose of the SHAPE Survey is to consult with children and young people ranging from the age of 8 – 18 years. Council members, senior leaders, officers and partners should be able to understand the experiences, needs, issues and views of young people in Sandwell.

The information from this study will enable stakeholders to reflect on the services they offer to young people and identify from the responses in the survey if any changes need to be made based on the consultation results.

National surveys such as Ditch the Label, Make Your Mark and the Ofcom Survey collect data from young people on specific issues like bullying, views on what national changes should be made by Government and media consultation. However, on a local level the SHAPE Survey offers a cross-section of consultation on a number of topics affecting the lives of young people and is the only consistent survey that is sent to every school in Sandwell on a regular basis.

3. Methodology

There were 2 participant groups for the survey, these included the following:

- Primary School Pupils from years 5 and 6
- Secondary School Pupils from years 7 to 13

An online survey was developed by the Public Health Intelligence Team with the questions formulated by the SHAPE Team and internal and external partners who had an interest in consulting with young people on their services. The following topics cover all the SHAPE themes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic wellbeing and were used to devise the questions asked:

- General – demographic information e.g. age, school year, town
- Coronavirus
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Social media and gaming
- Your local area
- Education & learning
- Youth Activities
- Child's Voice
- Your Future

The survey was developed with similar questions for the 2 groups. Many open-ended questions were included to ensure the children and young people were able to express their views and opinions freely. The survey questions can be found on Sandwell Trends.

Once the survey was developed and tested, the links were sent to all schools through the regular school's communication bulletin via Head Teachers. Head Teachers were asked to distribute the survey for pupils in their schools to complete, as well as staff. Additionally, they were requested to send the survey link for parents through newsletters and email communication.

There were no restrictions in the amount of young people from each school who could take part in the survey, however, schools were offered the incentive that if 25% of pupils on their school roll completed the survey, they would be provided with their school's individual results.

Each group was also offered the chance to enter into a prize draw to win vouchers, as an incentive for more participants to take part in the survey.

The survey was distributed on November 2020 to February 2021.

4. Results

The total number of participants that took part in the survey was 290, the total for each group were as follows:

- Primary school pupils –174
- Secondary school pupils – 116

The following pages provide a breakdown of the results of all the surveys based on the topic areas.

4.1 Demographics and Limitations

Of the 100 primary schools in Sandwell including special schools and pupil referral units, 8% of schools were represented through participants. The number of participants from a single institution varied from 1 to 130.

Of the 25 secondary schools in Sandwell including special schools and pupil referral units there was a representation of 16%. The number of participants from a single institution from this age range varied from 1 to 108.

The number of responses from both groups were considerably lower than 2019 however the period the survey had gone out was during the height of the pandemic and the third wave, resulting in many schools having to manage increased numbers of cases in school and remote learning.

Figure 4.11 provides a breakdown of the age of the participants. For the primary age the largest category was age 10. For secondary, the split was more equal for all age groups, apart from 6th form, ages 17 and 18 where the numbers were low.

As the 16 and over category of secondary pupils only represented 5% of total participants it must be noted that it is difficult to offer definitive conclusions when analysing the results of the survey for this age group.
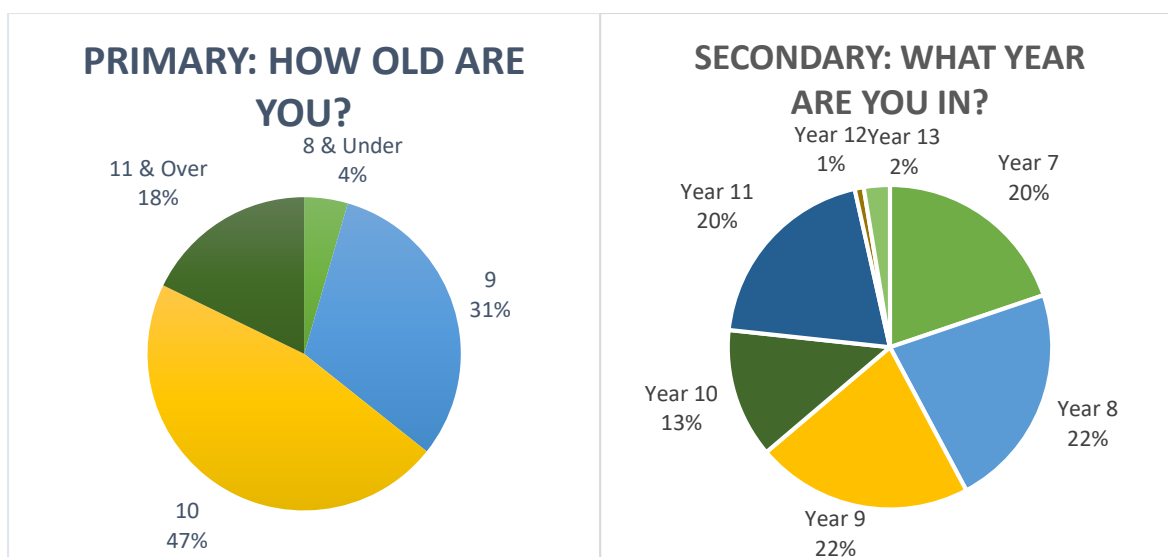
Figure 4.11

The male/ female and ethnicity breakdown are shown in Figure 4.12. The proportion of female responses were higher for both groups.

Please note primary pupils were not asked about their ethnicity but for secondary the majority were mixed, asian or black respondents.

Participants	Male	Female	Other
Primary	44.3%	55.2%	0.6%
Secondary	38.3%	60.9%	0.9%

Participants	White	Mixed, Asian or Black	Other
Secondary	43.5%	51.3%	5.1%

Figure 4.12

The participant groups were asked which town they lived in. The breakdown is provided in Figure 4.13. Although all towns were represented, some presented low numbers. For Primary School, the other category and not sure were the highest. The school with the highest responses was Yew Tree Primary, which is on the boarder of Walsall and Sandwell and hence why some children may live out of the Borough or be unsure if they actually live in Sandwell. For secondary Oldbury and Smethwick had the highest responses.
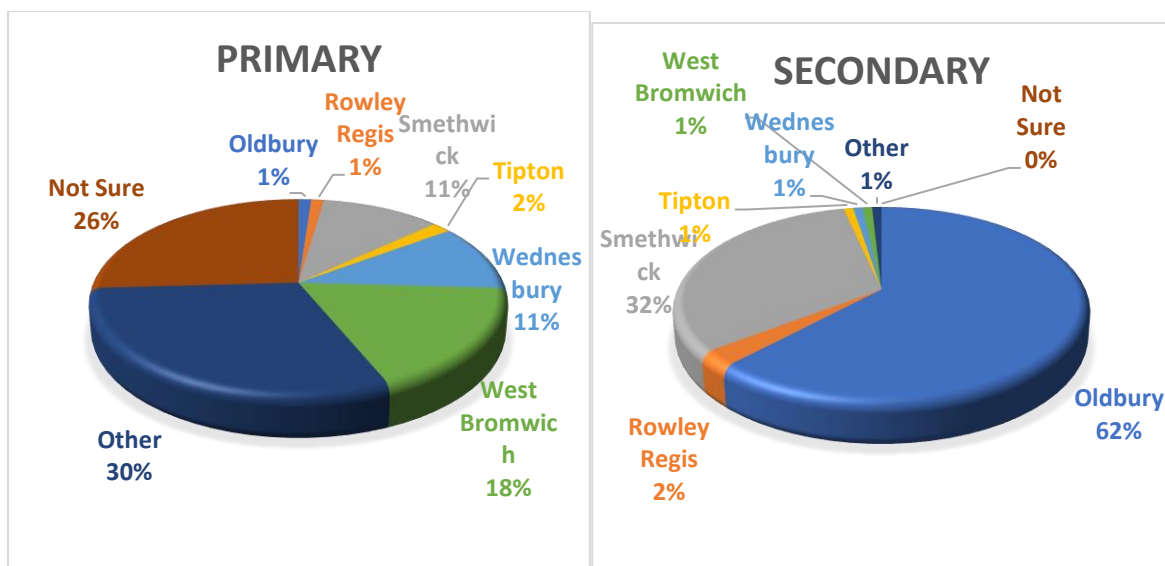
PRIMARY

SECONDARY

Figure 4.13

5. Coronavirus

The questions within this section explored the impact of the pandemic on young people in Sandwell. References have been made to two other local surveys, Sandwell Council's Young People's Services Covid Survey which took place during lockdown (June – July 2020) and had 509 respondents and the back to school survey, which was conducted in March 2021, when children were due to go back to school after lockdown which had 550 respondents.

Figure 5.1 shows at both primary and secondary age, the best thing about the pandemic was the time spent at home with family. Interestingly, for both age groups being away from school and 'nothing' both featured in the top 5 best things which demonstrates mixed feelings from young people about the lockdown. For Primary gaming also featured in the Top 5 this topic has appeared in other areas of the survey results too as well as in the Youth Services Young People's Survey conducted during lockdown with 20.3% of young people stated they learnt new gaming skills.

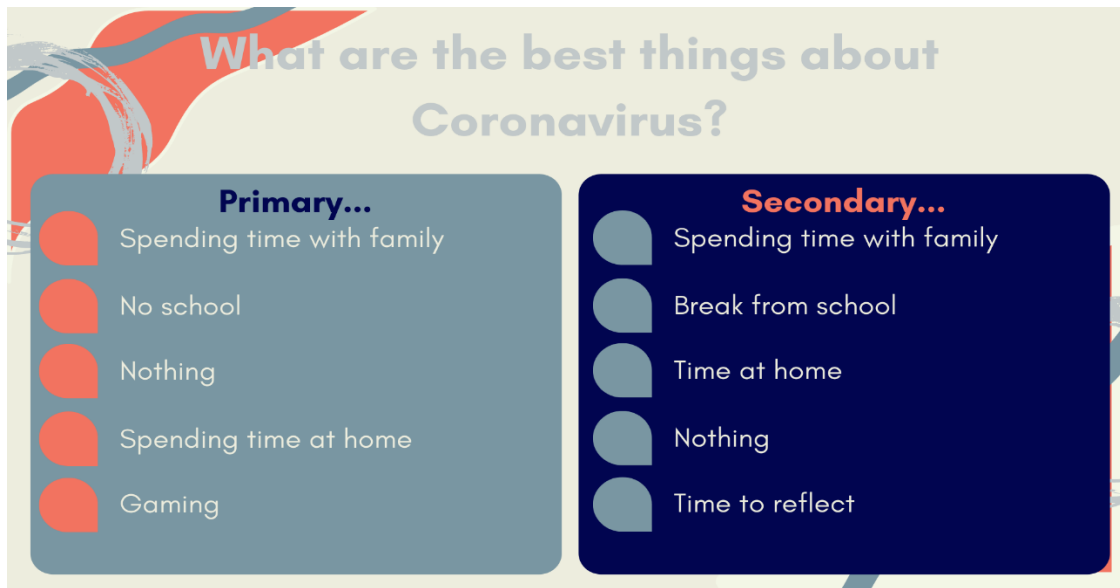At a secondary age the respondents liked having the time to reflect.

Figure 5.1

Figure 5.2 from the study from Birmingham University, "Short and long-term impacts of Covid 19 on Older Children's health- Related bhaviours, learning and wellbeing study (CONTRAST)" by Dr Miranda Pallen, also substantiates our results and indicates that family time played a vital role during isolation with the perception of relationships within their household getting better during lockdown compared to before, whereas for family members outside of household and more so friends, the closeness was less.
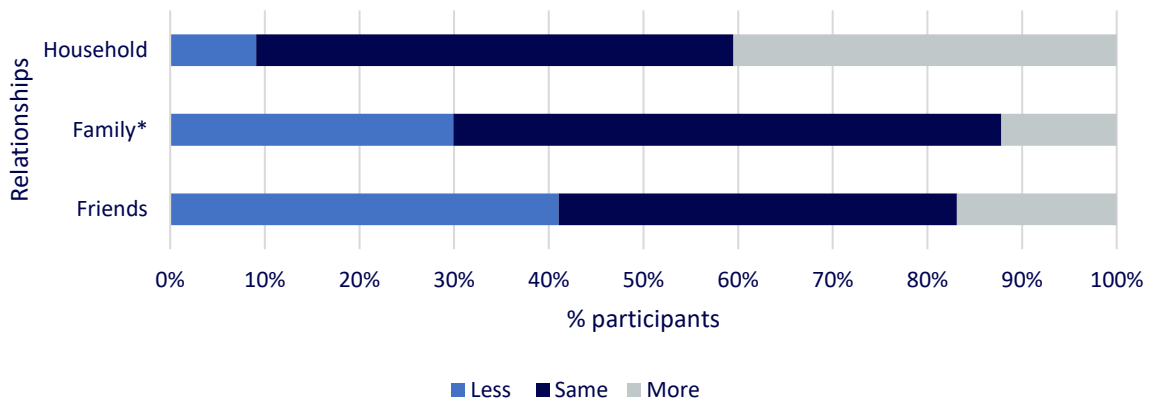

Figure 5.2

Although the young people liked a break from school, missing out on their education and not seeing friends or family were the worst things about covid and therefore isolation also featured in the top 5. As shown in figure 5.3, for both age groups, the impact of covid presented in the top 5, where primary pupils acknowledged the national crisis with the number of deaths increasing while secondary pupils highlighted how the pandemic had impacted them personally with their mental health.

What are the worst things about Coronavirus?

Primary...
- Not seeing my friends
- Isolation
- No school
- Not seeing my family
- The impact of Covid

Secondary...
- Missing out on School
- Not seeing friends
- Not seeing family
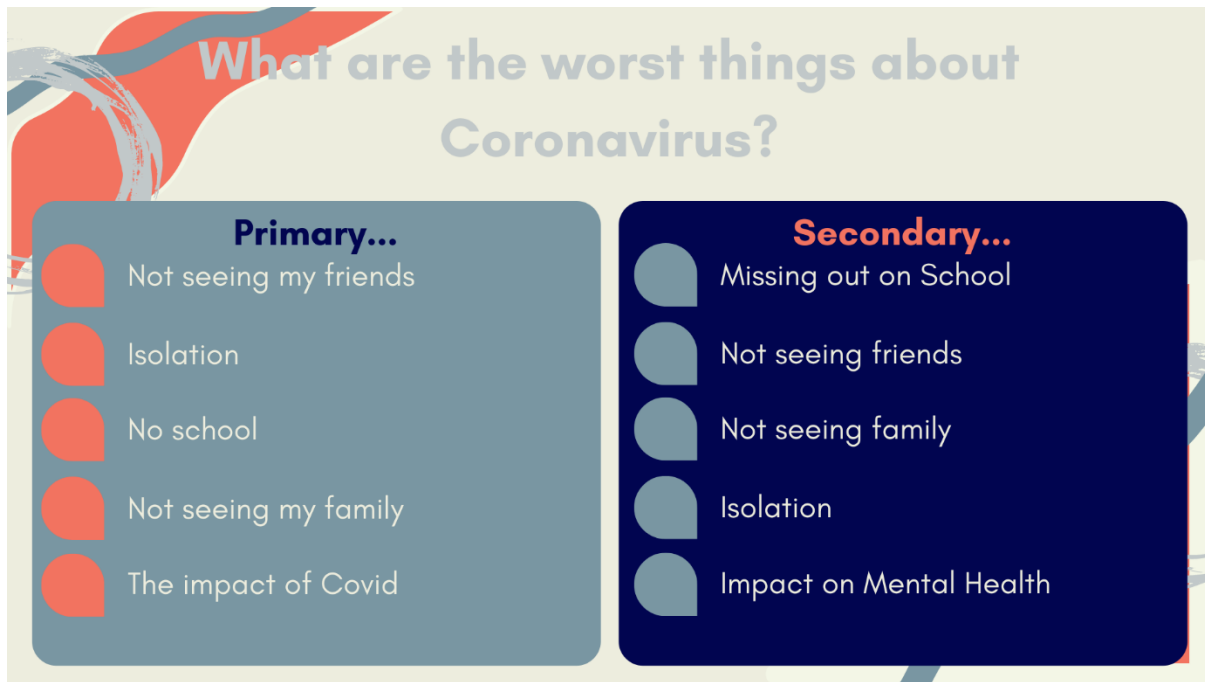- Isolation
- Impact on Mental Health

Figure 5.3

National surveys also reflect the missing out of school and seeing friends had an impact on mental health with The University College London study finding that "loneliness levels were particularly high for young adults in the first month of lockdown, which is similar to trends before lockdown" and the Office for National Statistics Opinions & Lifestyle Survey shows that: "60% of young people aged 16–29 years felt concerned about the impact of lockdown on their friendships, compared to just 34% of 30–59-year-olds" Therefore lockdown has significantly impacted on young people's wider relationships.

As missing out on education was a significant for young people, the survey asked questions about home schooling. Over 80% of primary school children stated that they did receive activities from school to learn at home.

Secondary pupils were asked to rate the support provided from their schools, with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor. Figure 5.4 shows that generally, communication, contact with staff and resources provided was fairly good. Where support may have been lacking was emotional wellbeing.

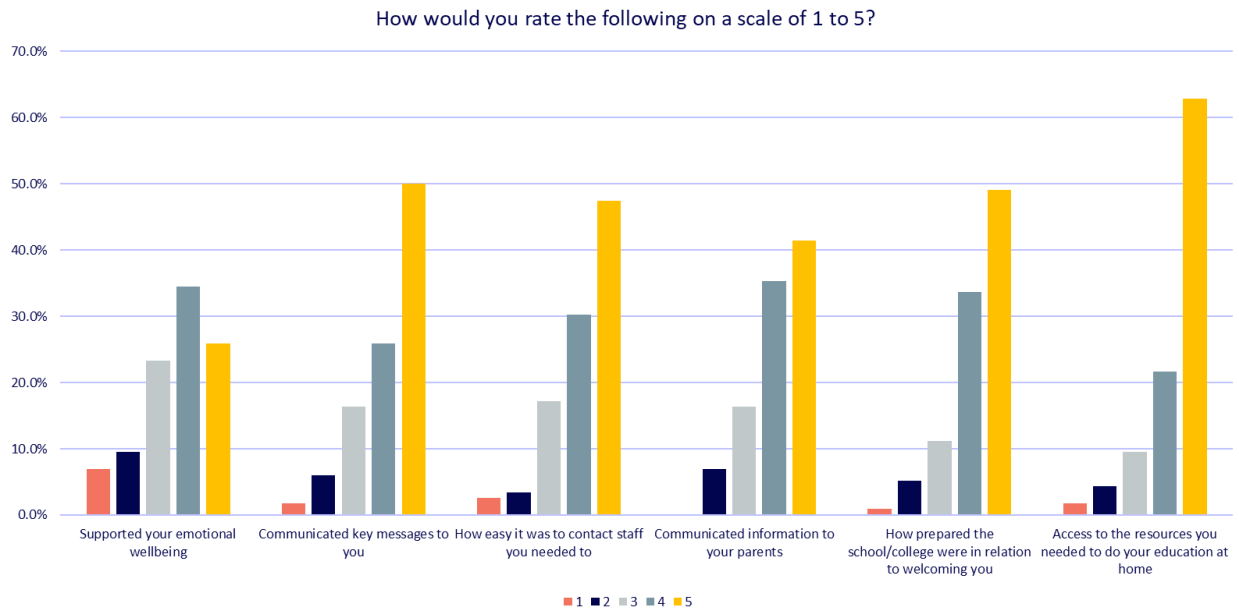How would you rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5?

Figure 5.4

In figure 5.5, young people were asked what they did during summer in lockdown. Primary pupils revealed gaming was still the most popular activity. Playing outdoors, games and spending time with family were also popular choices.

For secondary pupils, there were more varied activities and lots of learning from cooking/baking to arts and crafts, sports, walking and gardening. Friends also featured in terms of socialising through talking and messaging for example.

What did Secondary School Pupils do during Summer?

OUTDOOR WALKING GARDENING TV / MOVIES
ACTIVITY PHOTOSHOOT DAY TRIPS SAW FRIENDS PHONE/
TIME TO MYSELF CAMPING
READING ADVENTURES BIKE RIDING RELIGIOUS EVENTS IPAD
SHOPPING DECORATED NOTHING
STARGAZING ARTS AND CRAFTS CHALLENGES SPORTS
STAYED HEALTHY HOUSE CHORES LEARNED A NEW SKILL EXAM RESULTS DANCE PETS
COMMUNITY WORK WENT ON HOLIDAY
SLEEP FAMILY TIME VISITED PARKS/
COOKING/ BAKING GREEN SPACES
CELEBRATED A FESTIVAL VISITED FAMILY RESTUARANTS
CELEBRATED A BIRTHDAY EXERCISE RELAXED
NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT WRITING SCHOOL
SEWING
TALKED TO BOARD GAMES WORK
FRIENDS GAMING FUTURE PLANNING MADE NEW FRIENDS

Figure 5.5

Following the return to school in September, both primary and secondary age groups in the main were happy to be back at school as shown in figure 5.6.

ARE YOU GLAD YOU ARE BACK AT SCHOOL/COLLEGE? - NOVEMBER 20

■ Primary ■ Secondary

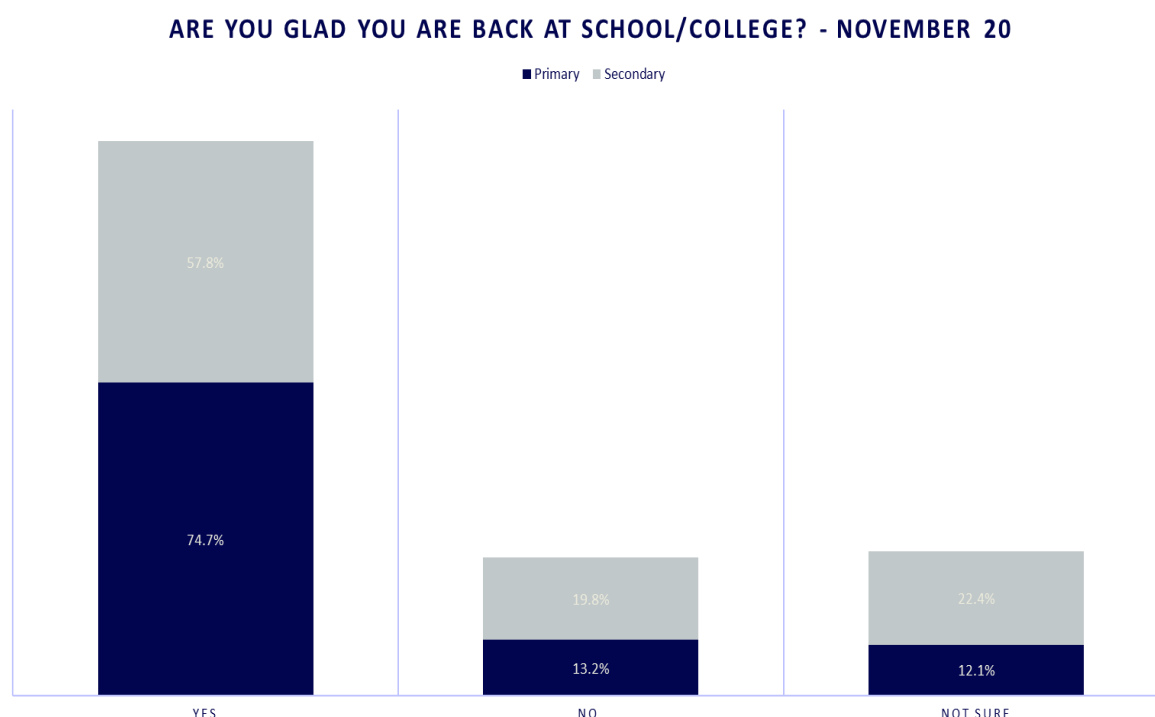|	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Secondary	57.8%	19.8%	22.4%
Primary	74.7%	13.2%	12.1%

Figure 5.6

Figure 5.7 shows before going back primary and secondary pupils felt anxious and worried but most importantly felt safe. After going back for primary pupils, they were not too worried and felt safe. With secondary they felt not too worried and felt safe but still felt anxious.

10

How do you feel about Covid 19?

Legend:
- Primary How did you feel about coronavirus before you came back to school?
- Primary How do you feel now you are back at school?
- Secondary How did you feel about coronavirus before you came back to school?
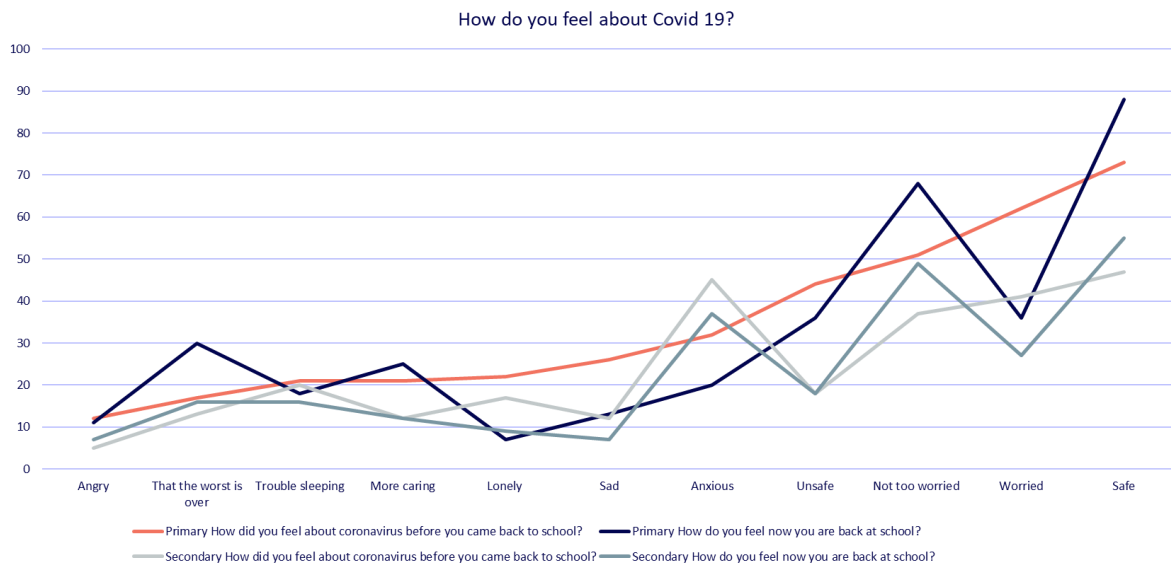- Secondary How do you feel now you are back at school?

Figure 5.7

The biggest changes noticed when back in school by primary age group was social distancing, grouping into bubbles, hand sanitising and the different layouts.

The young people were asked their feelings about going into national lockdown again. 54% pf Primary responses were 'unhappy' compared to 35% stating it's ok. For secondary, 48% were ok with going into a lockdown again compared to 42% who were unhappy.

PRIMARY
- Very happy 7%
- Happy 4%
- It's ok 35%
- Very unhappy 25%
- Unhappy 29%

SECONDARY
- Very happy 5%
- Happy 5%
- It's ok 48%
- Very unhappy 14%
- Unhappy 28%
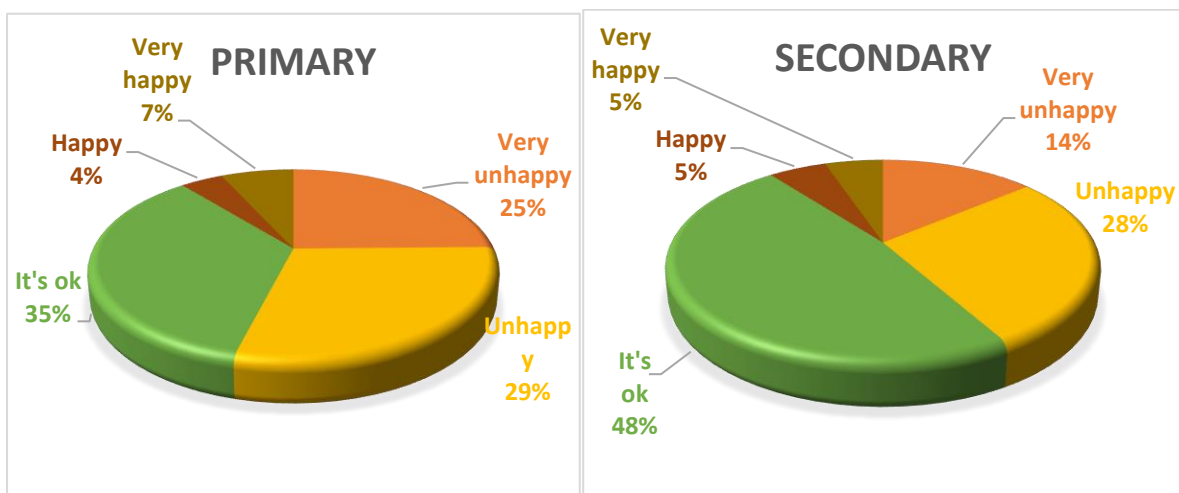
Figure 5.8

In the Back to School survey conducted before the return, on 8th March, after the second lockdown, young people were asked again how they felt to go back to school, Primary were still relatively happy to go back. Secondary felt mainly neither happy nor unhappy or happy.
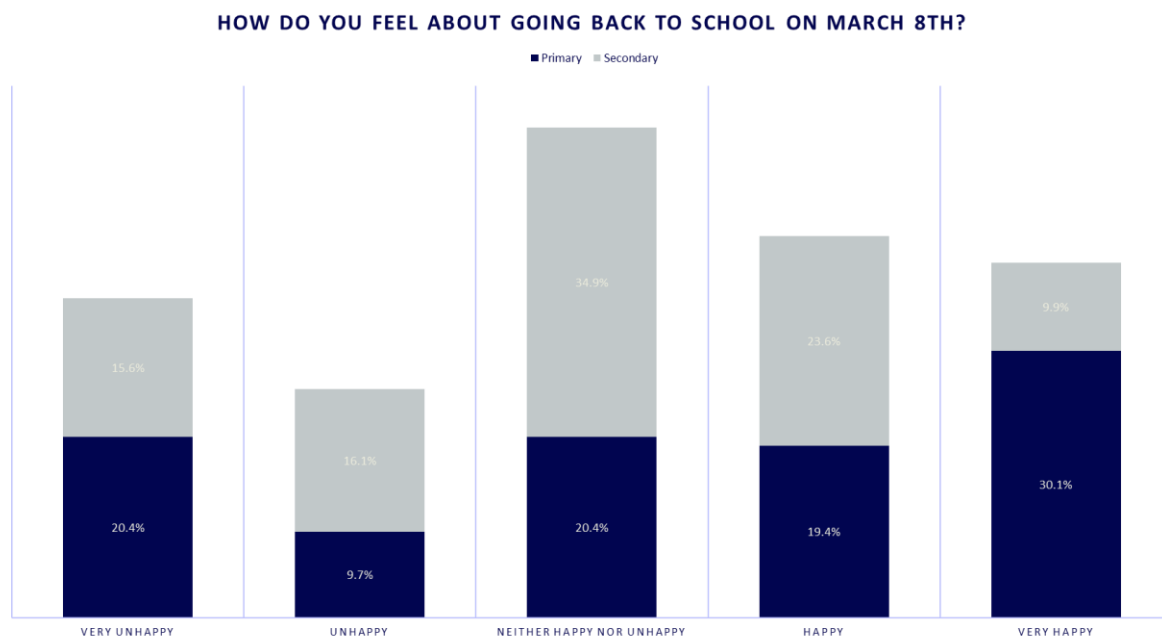
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL ON MARCH 8TH?

Primary ■ Secondary

| VERY UNHAPPY | UNHAPPY | NEITHER HAPPY NOR UNHAPPY | HAPPY | VERY HAPPY |

15.6% / 20.4% ... 16.1% / 9.7% ... 34.9% / 20.4% ... 23.6% / 19.4% ... 9.9% / 30.1%

Figure 5.9

6. Mental Health & Wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing was explored in the context of coronavirus and more generally too.

A question asked in all SHAPE surveys to date, is what the top issues are affecting young people in today's society. Figure 6.1 shows the top 5 issues from 2019 and 2020.

Top Issues Affecting Young People In Today's Society (11 – 19 Year Olds)

2019...
1. Knife Crime
2. School/ College Work & Exams
3. Gangs & Youth Violence
4. Being Bullied
5. What to do after GCSE's

2020...
1. School/ College Work & Exams
2. Physical Appearance
3. Being Bullied
4. Impact of Covid-19
5. What to do after GCSE's
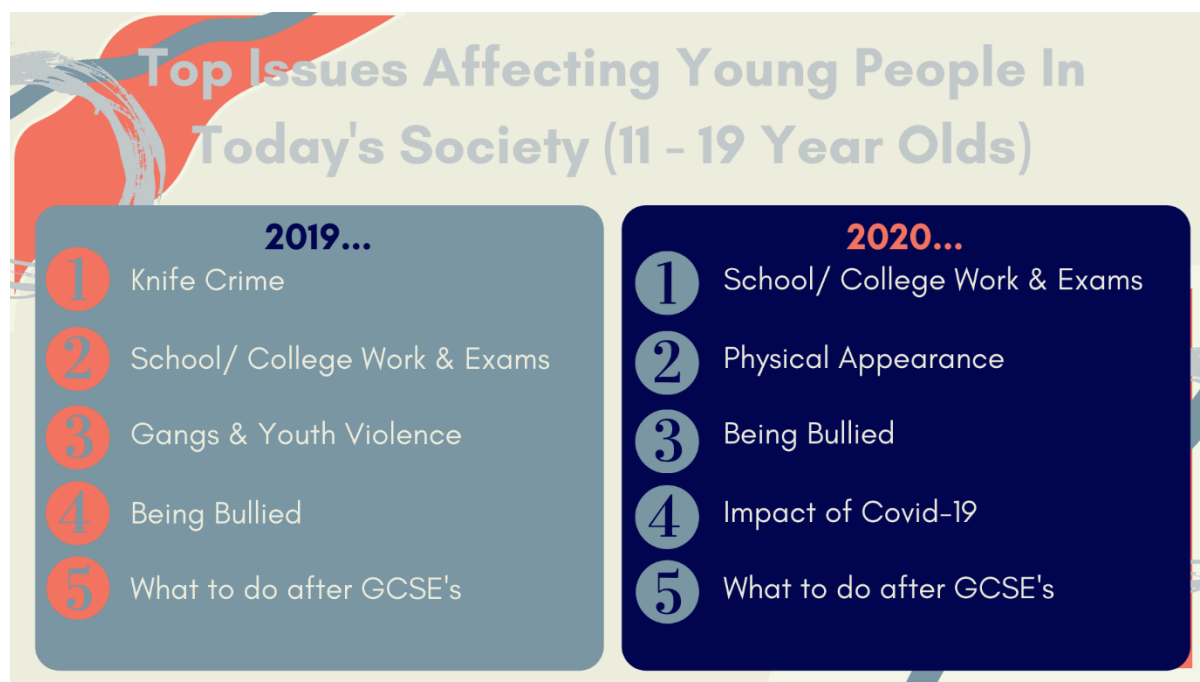
Figure 6.1

Issues over the last 2 years have changed for secondary age group. In 2019, crime featured highly as an issue, with knife crime, gangs and youth violence. In 2020, crime did not feature in the top 5, however being bullied did feature again with school work and exams particularly for those over 16 doing GCSEs. In 2020 we also see the impact of covid 19 as an issue. A new emerging issue is physical appearance which was the second highest response.

School/college work and exams were seen as being stressful and the pandemic heightened the stress due to young people missing out on their education and therefore it was not surprising to see the impact of covid 19 as an issue. This stress makes young people feel more anxious.

The pandemic has also had an impact on why physical appearance would have now become an issue, as one young person stated, "social media makes most teens feel insecure". Young people are worried about what everyone thinks and therefore change their appearance to impress as they become more self-conscious, "Due to current 'standards' in society, we are forced to change our physical appearance to pursue the standard". This expectation can also cause stress to young people.

Black Lives Matters and the issues of racism has also raised the topic of physical appearance being an issue and also bullying. These issues have an effect on a young person's mental health too.

In figure 6.2, young people were asked to rate their happiness in different categories, for secondary pupils, they were most happy about their home, family and hobbies but least happy with their community, other relationships and local area
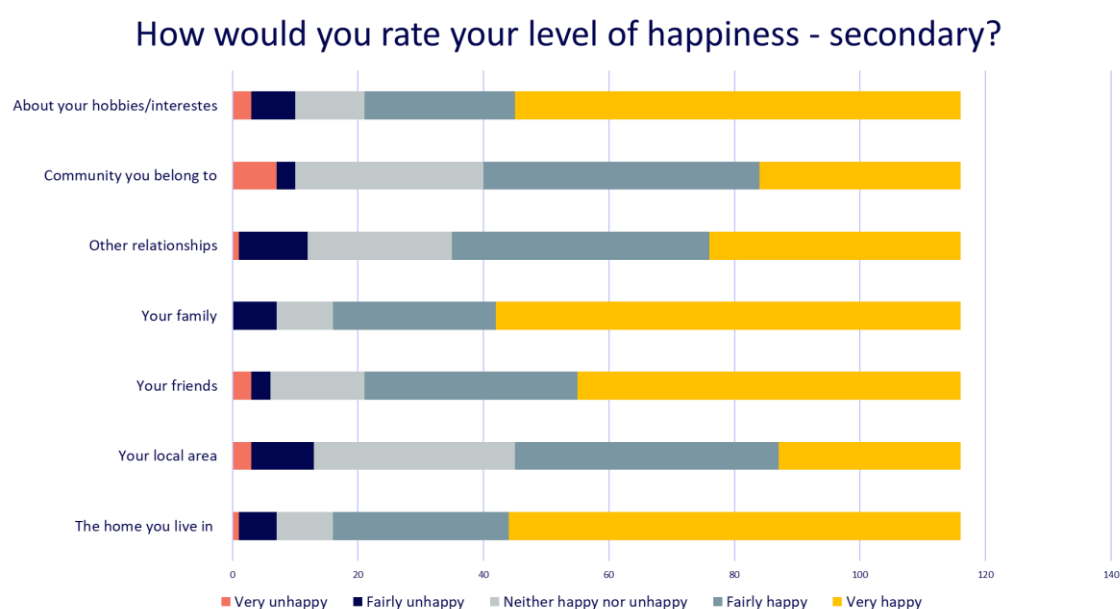

Figure 6.2

This was a similar picture for primary school children in figure 6.3, who were provided with additional categories to choose from, additional categories and within these, appearance, also featured as one of the least happiest categories along with confidence and freedom.

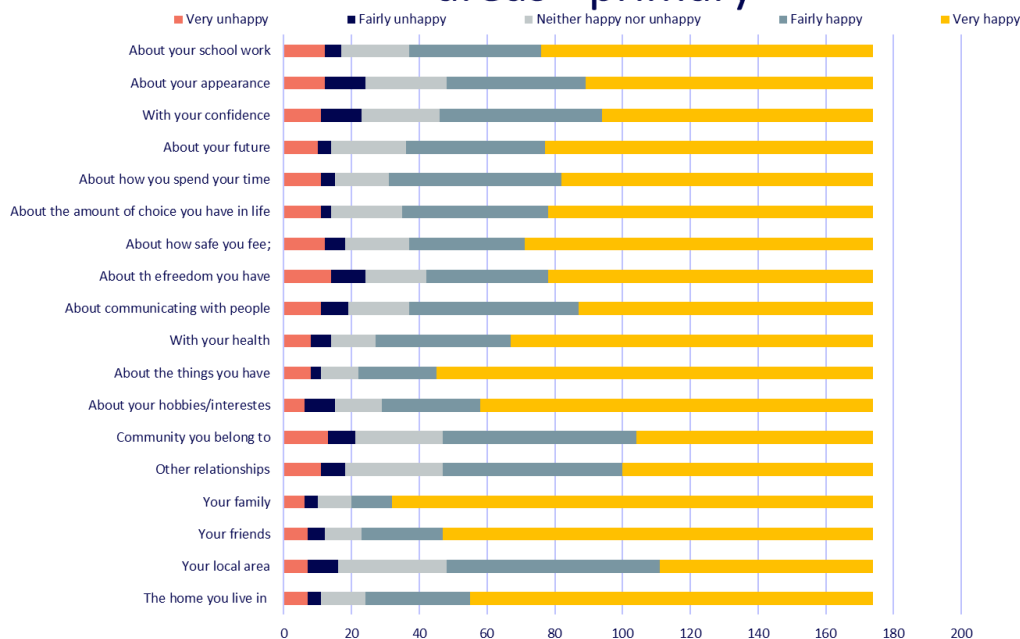# Rate your level of happiness in the following areas - primary

Figure 6.3

However, in figure 6.4, a large proportion primary school children (40.2%), overall did feel happy about life at the moment which was positive. Those that answered they were not happy, stated their primary reason being the pandemic and the effects of people dying, lockdown and not seeing their family and friends.

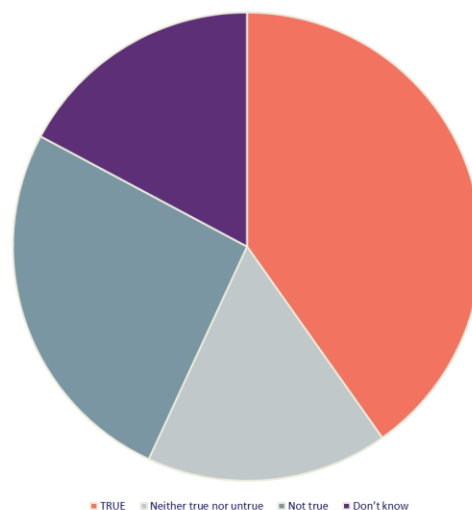## 'I feel happy about life at the moment'

Figure 6.4

When the secondary age pupils were asked what impact the coronavirus crisis has had on their mental health, overall 58.6% felt their mental health was worse. The Young minds survey results shows a similar picture nationally and in fact far worse

14

than Sandwell – over 80% stated that their mental health was worse. However, mental health did start to improve when they were back in school with figures reducing.

Secondary age pupils were asked whether they have any lessons that promote emotional health and wellbeing, 49% stated they did, but over a third stated they didn't and 20% didn't know as shown in figure 6.5. When asked if their school had mental health champions, two thirds were unaware if they did.
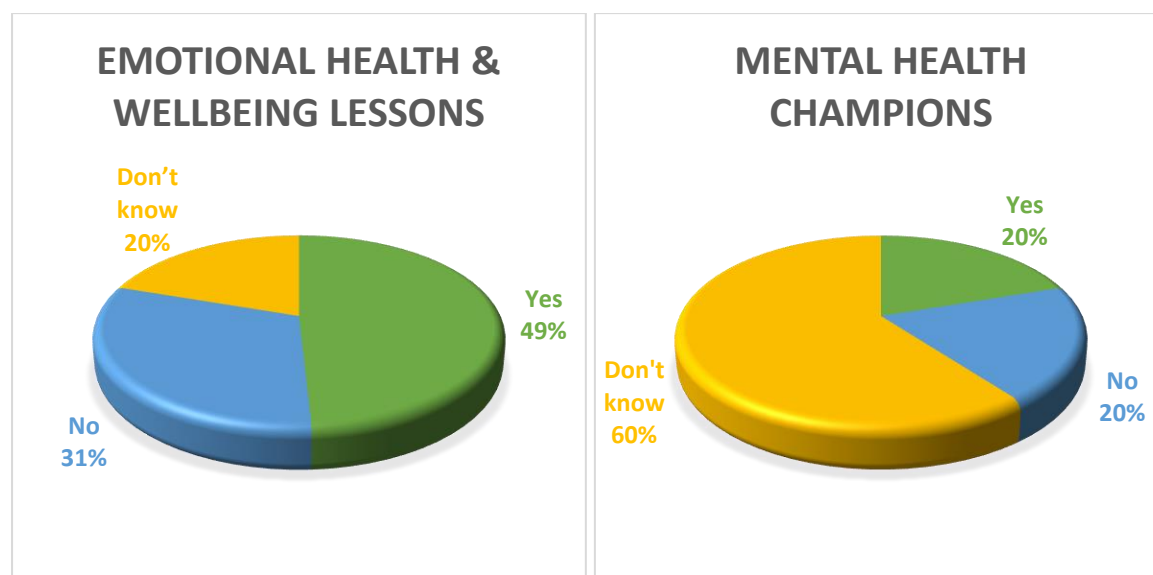

Figure 6.5

They were then asked what would improve their mental health and wellbeing and the top answers over last 2 surveys conducted have been extra exam support during exam season and also including someone to talk to and being able to voice views and opinions as shown in figure 6.6. In 2020 they also wanted support to plan for their future and more places to go to hang out with friends.

For primary pupils, they similarly wanted to achieve their goals and transition to secondary school as well as being offered more activities. Interestingly their other reasons matched the 2019 secondary reasons which were family support for deprivation and tackling bullying issues.

Figure 6.6

7. Keeping Physically Fit & Healthy

When asking young people how they keep themselves physically fit and healthy, for primary this was varied with walking, running or jogging and playing outdoors.

For secondary there was a lot of walking, exercise and eating healthy.

There was acknowledgement in comments from the young people that due to covid they felt they needed to go for a walk or exercise to keep themselves occupied as they had been in lockdown for so long.

Figure 7.1

When asking why they exercise, the reasons were to get fitter/stronger, better stamina and more energy and with some people it improved their mood, again this could be a reflection on being in lockdown and in isolation as shown in figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2

Young people at secondary age were asked if the council could do more to help directing to available sporting/physical activity facilities, with 49.1% agreeing that the council could do more.

8. Support Services

8.1 School Health Nursing

Schools in Sandwell are offered the School Health Nurse Service. Both age groups were asked questions on whether they use the service and their views regarding the service.

There was a lack of awareness and understanding of the School Health Nurse and services are a barrier to engagement. The survey responses indicate that 44% of children and young people did not know they have access to a School Health Nurse. Children and young people report that they would like to access support from their School Health Nurse service through face to face drop-ins (55%) followed by online support (18%), being able to book an appointment (17%) and text messaging (10%).

Of those children and young people who have accessed a School Health Nurse, 87% have done so for emotional health and wellbeing support including self-harm and exam stress. Both groups, reported Anxiety, Worry & Depression as the main health concern that children and young people face today.

Children and young people report that they would like Universal support for a variety of health and wellbeing related topics from a School Health Nurse Service as outlined in Figure 8.11. Awareness of other support services including Sandwell Youth Services and Pastoral support teams in schools is high.

Sandwell Council also conducted a parents, carers and school staff survey which again showed the lack of awareness of the School Health Nursing Service. Parents/carers would like to access support and advice from the School Health Nursing Service via text message (29%) followed by virtual appointments via phone call or Zoom (24%).

Parents/Carers and School Staff would welcome a greater SHN presence within schools with regular drop-ins and with greater promotion of services through a variety of platforms including direct communication with Parents/Carers.

Figure 8.11 shows the types of support and advice that a School Nursing Service should offer as outlined by children and young people, parents, carers and school staff.
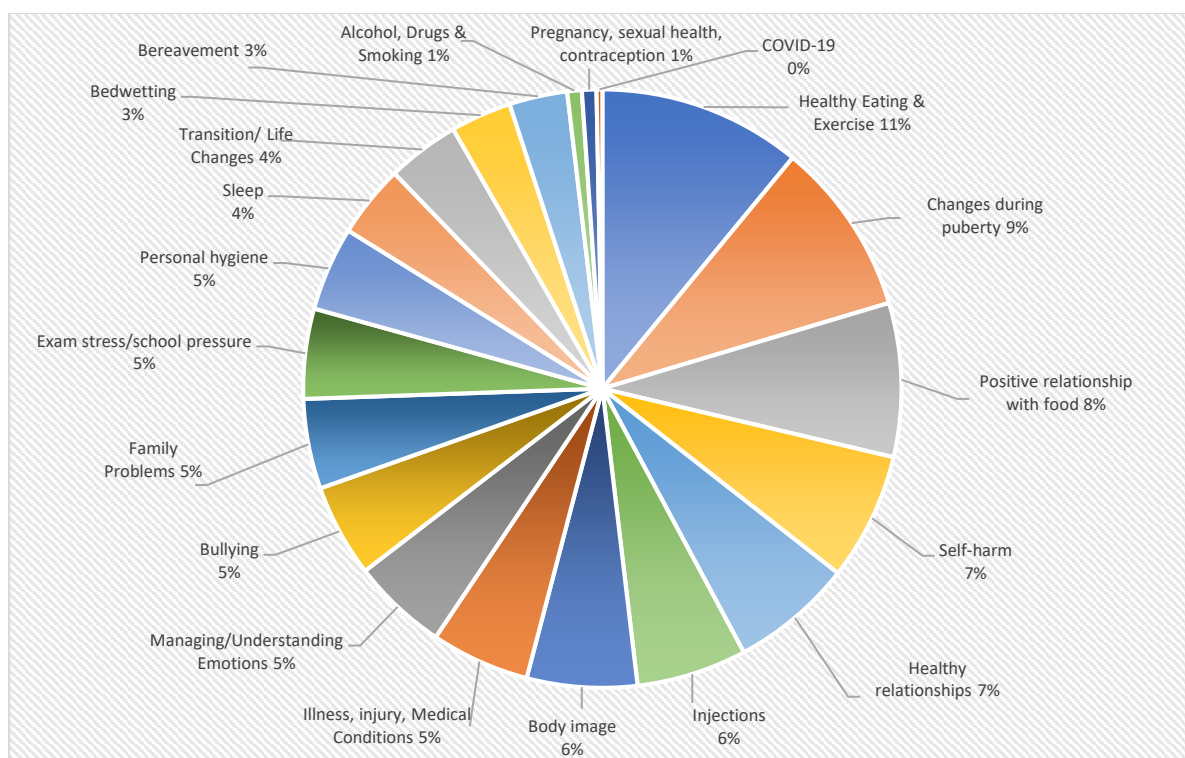
Figure 8.11

8.2 Policing

Two questions were asked about policing, these were whether the pupils knew who their local/link police officer was, and secondly would they know how to report something. The results are shown below are significantly lower than last year's survey.

	Do you know who your local/link Police Officer is?		Would you know how to report something to the Police?	
	Primary	**Secondary**	**Primary**	**Secondary**
Yes	17.8%	9.6%	58.0%	72.2%
No	82.20%	90.4%	17.2%	14.8%
Not Sure	N/A	N/A	24.7%	13.0%

Figure 8.21

The results show that although many pupils are unaware of their local police officer, however positively or secondary age they 72.2% are aware of reporting something to the Police.

70% of primary school children felt that they could trust people in authority to look after them such as their teachers or police.

Do you trust the people in authority to look after you?

Yes   No   Sometimes

Figure 8.22

8.3 Other Support

Young people were asked if they had a problem at home that they couldn't talk to their parents or carer about, who if anyone would they talk to about it or ask for help from. Figure 8.31 shows primary age pupils chose their teacher or an adult at school as their top 2 answers and so did secondary pupils, although turning to their friends for support, received the highest responses for the older age group.
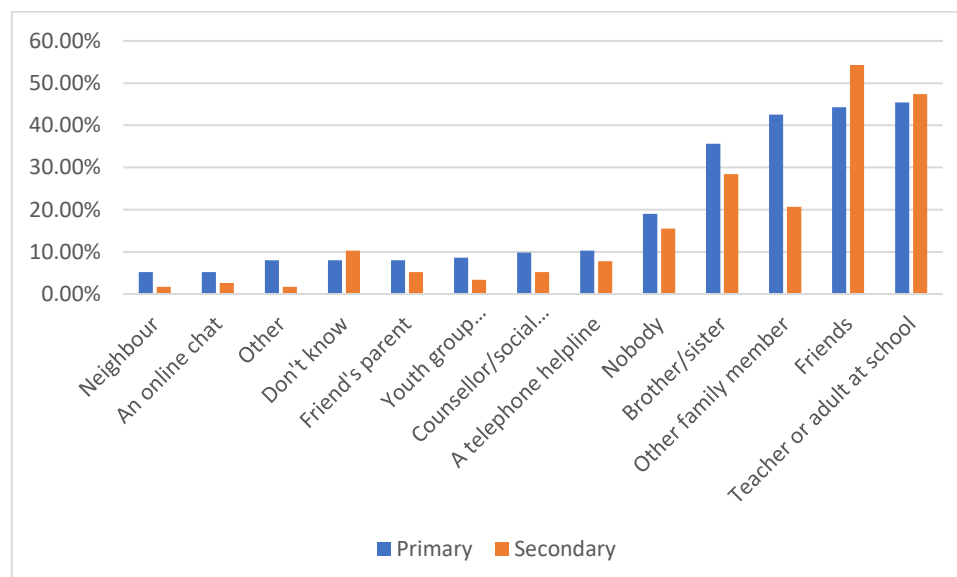

Figure 8.31

In Sandwell there are a range of services available to support your emotional health and well-being. The secondary pupils were asked which services they were aware of. Sandwell Council's Youth Service and pastoral support were the services that they were most aware of. In terms of partner and external services, Kooth and Beam were most known.
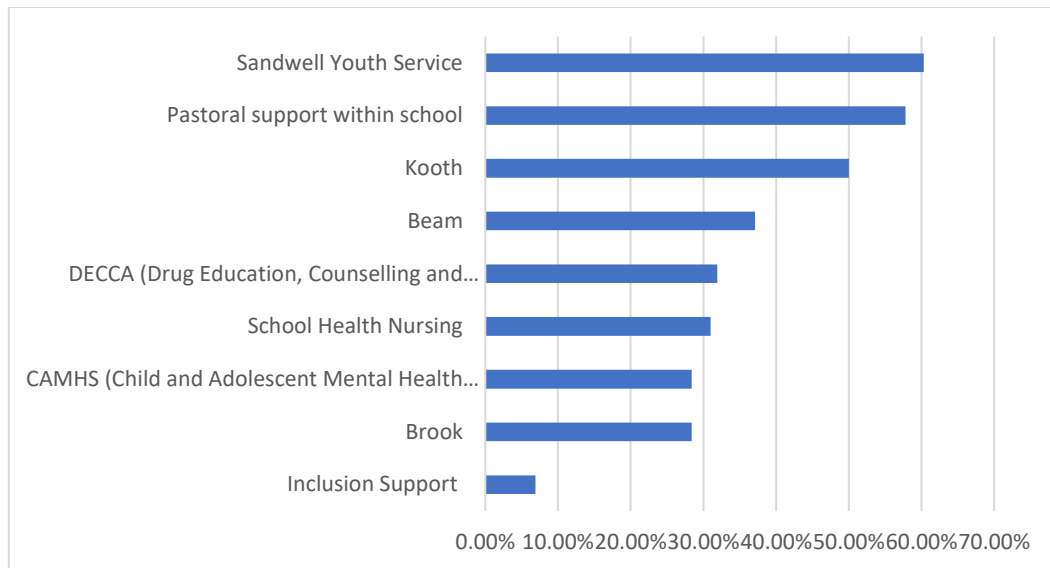
9. <u>Social Media and Gaming</u>

The following series of questions focuses on internet, social media channels, usage and gaming.

9.1 Internet

99.4% of primary school children stated they used the internet at home. When asked what they used the internet for, figure 9.11 shows that is being widely used for a number of reasons beyond school work including over a 1/3 stating they use for gaming and 19% for chatting and 18% for social media bearing in mind they should not legally even have social media profiles or be using the channels.
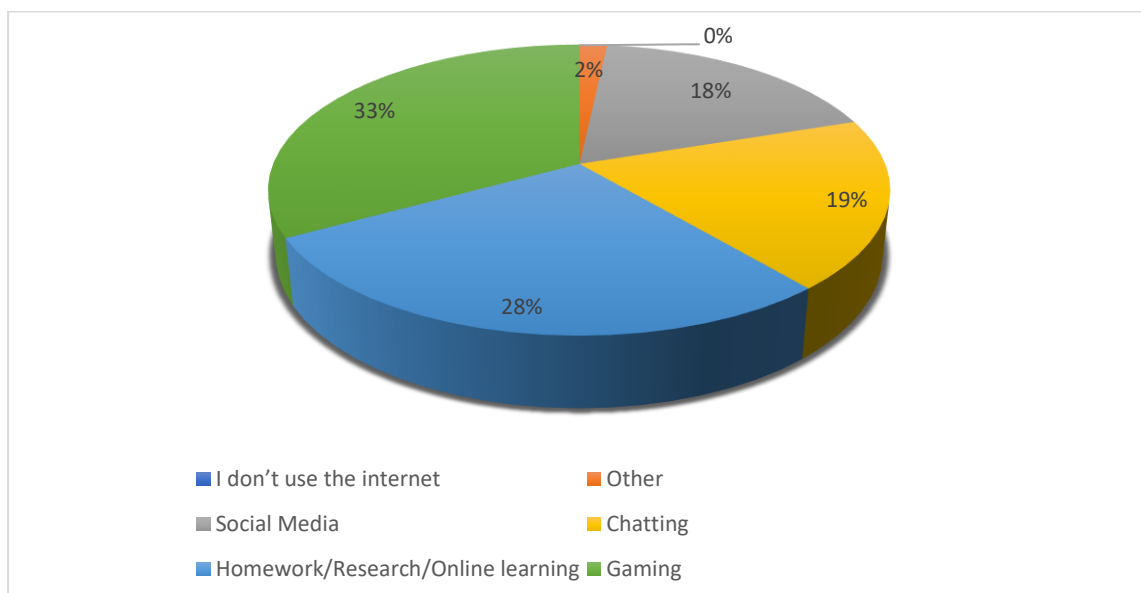
Figure 9.11

When asked about how often they use the internet for the purposes above, all the options apart from homework/research/online learning received over 60% of daily usage.

9.2 Social Media

When asked about platforms, figure 9.21 primary age pupils demonstrate the most popular channels being You Tube, Tik Tok, Whats app and Snapchat, with the most popular reason for using them being chatting, watching videos and messaging. Tik Tok is also used for making videos. It is good however to see that there are some channels this age group are not using. Whats interesting is Snapchat and You tube have been used for chatting which you wouldn't normally associate with these platforms.

PRIMARY

Legend: Chatting, Watching videos, Making videos, Messaging, Posting pictures, Gaming, News/gossip, Do not use
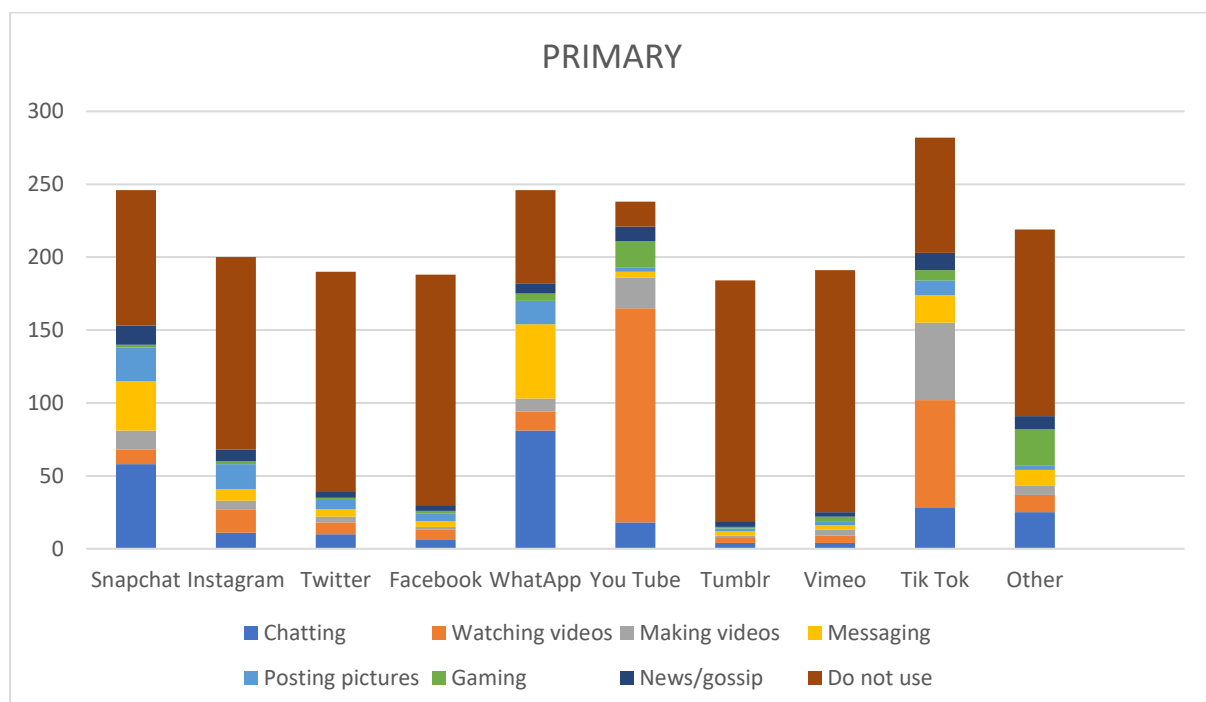
Figure 9.21

For secondary pupils, the most popular channels are Instagram, Whatsapp, Snapchat and TikTok, for chatting, watching videos and messaging. Facebook used to be popular but from figure 9.22, it is evident that it is no longer used by many young people.
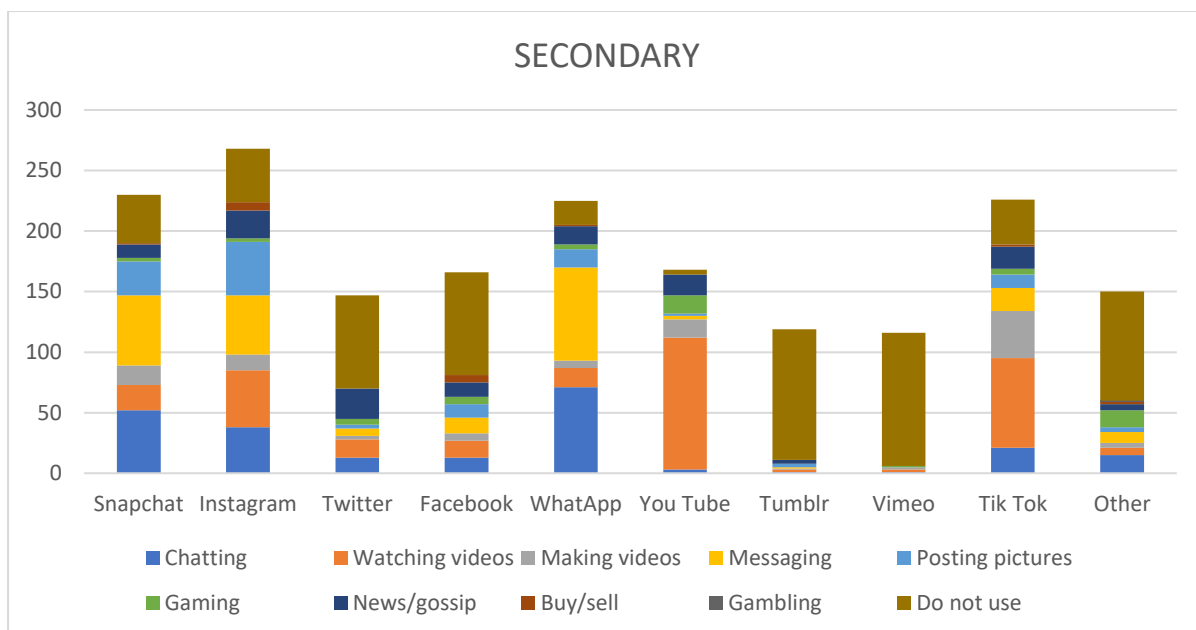
SECONDARY

Figure 9.22

Young people were asked what issues they experienced online from various options. In figure 9.23, for primary age group, issues are encountered but are minimal and range from some name calling and cyberbullying with some elements of racists comments and sexist comments.

However, at a secondary age this significantly increases and there is more cyberbullying and comments whether its racist, sexist or homophobic.
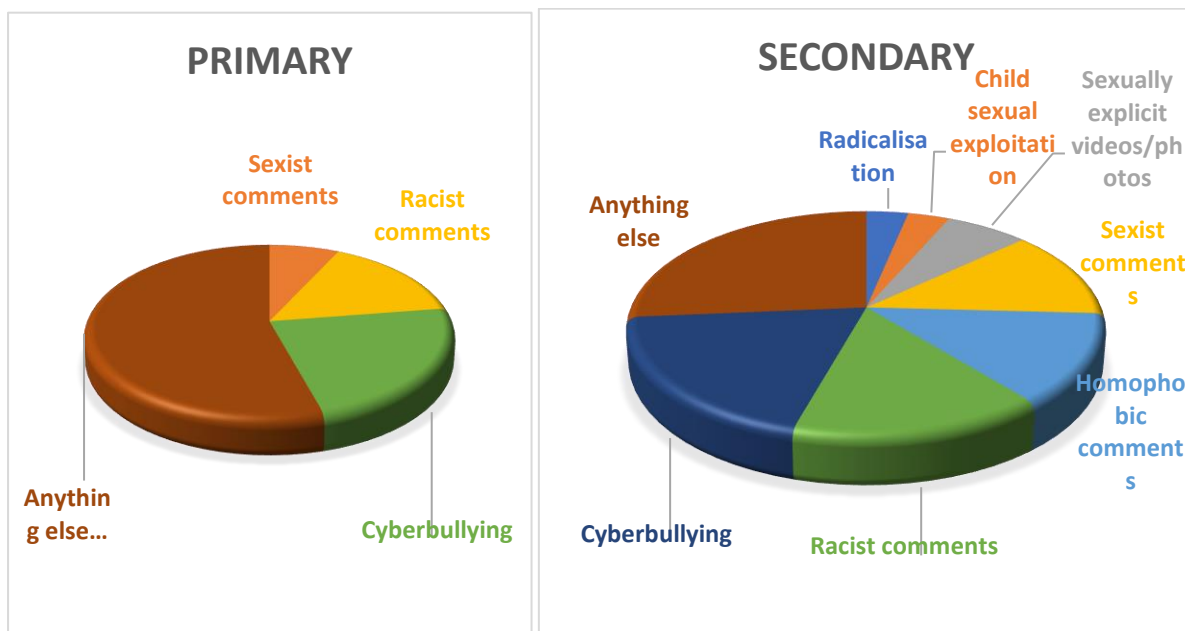

Figure 9.23

9.3 Gaming

Gaming for primary age children is hugely popular and emerged as one of the top 5 best things during the pandemic. When asked why they are gaming, the most popular answers were to play, it's exciting and chatting. National stats from Ofcom's Children Media use and attitude shows that girl gamers are on the increase and their Children's Media Lives Report from February 2020 also stated that gaming had now been developed to include in-game purchasing which increase the pressure to make the purchases and this has doubled from 21% to 42%. Elements of gamification and increased self-consciousness have also been identified relating to how children represent themselves online.
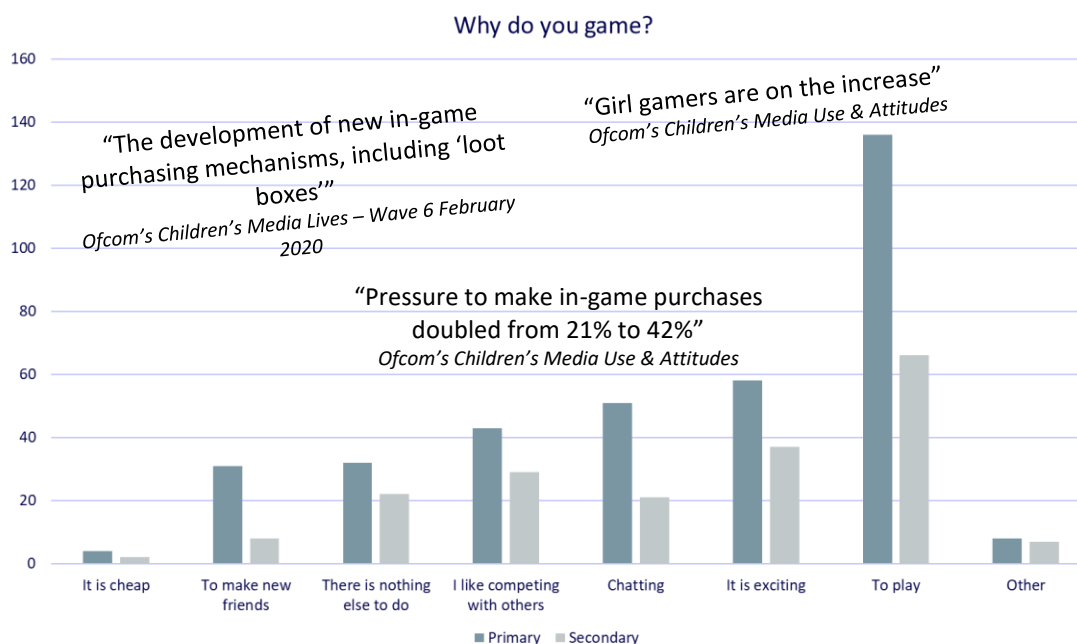
Figure 9.31

9.4 Communicating Information

Young people were asked about information and where they get their information from. This was very equally split between the news, friends and family and social media
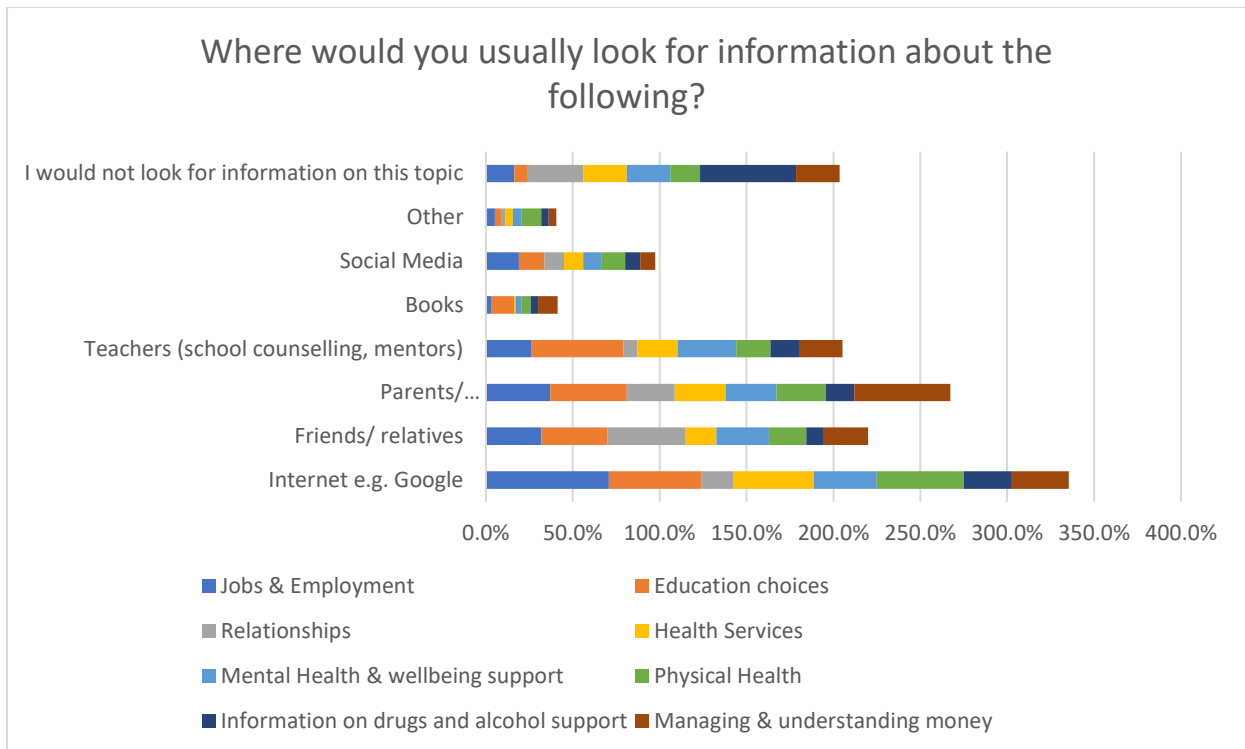
Figure 9.41

Most information is looked for on the internet or young people turn towards their parents and carers. Therefore, it's important to ensure we have a place for young people to get their information online so for us, development of the Just Youth site is crucial, and making sure it is publicised and communicated to every young person in Sandwell. Figure 9.42 shows that the young people's, platforms which when the survey went out were in its infancy were not known or not used by majority of young people.
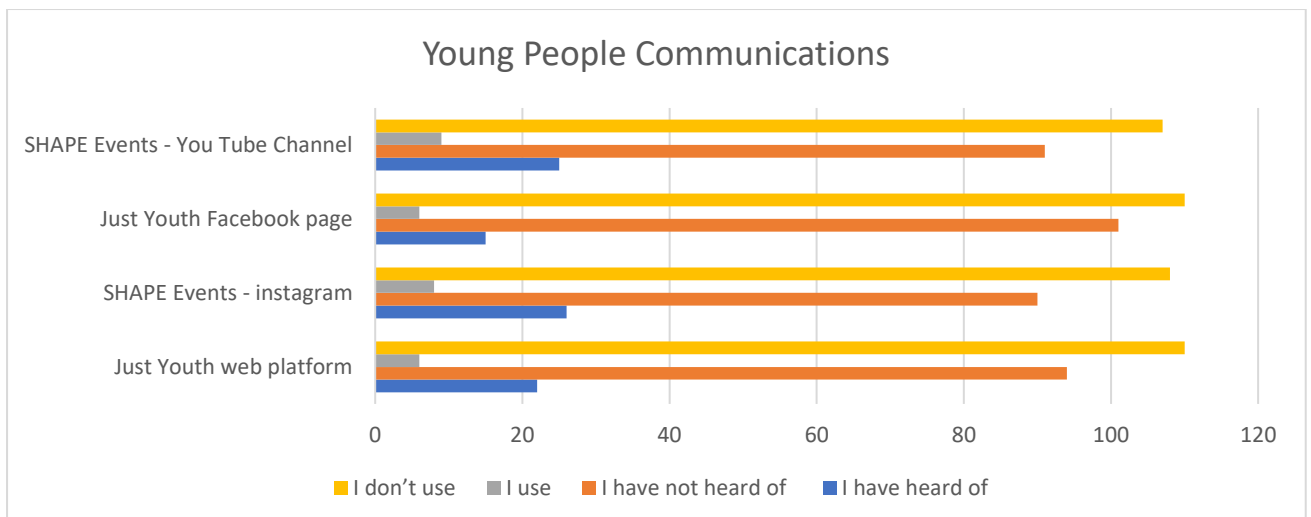

Figure 9.42

Young people like to find information through video content, social media or via email/text. Majority again via the internet. Ofcoms Children's media use report also stated that there is an increase in the proportion of 12-15-year olds who use social

media to support causes and organisations which is a positive shift for stakeholders like us.

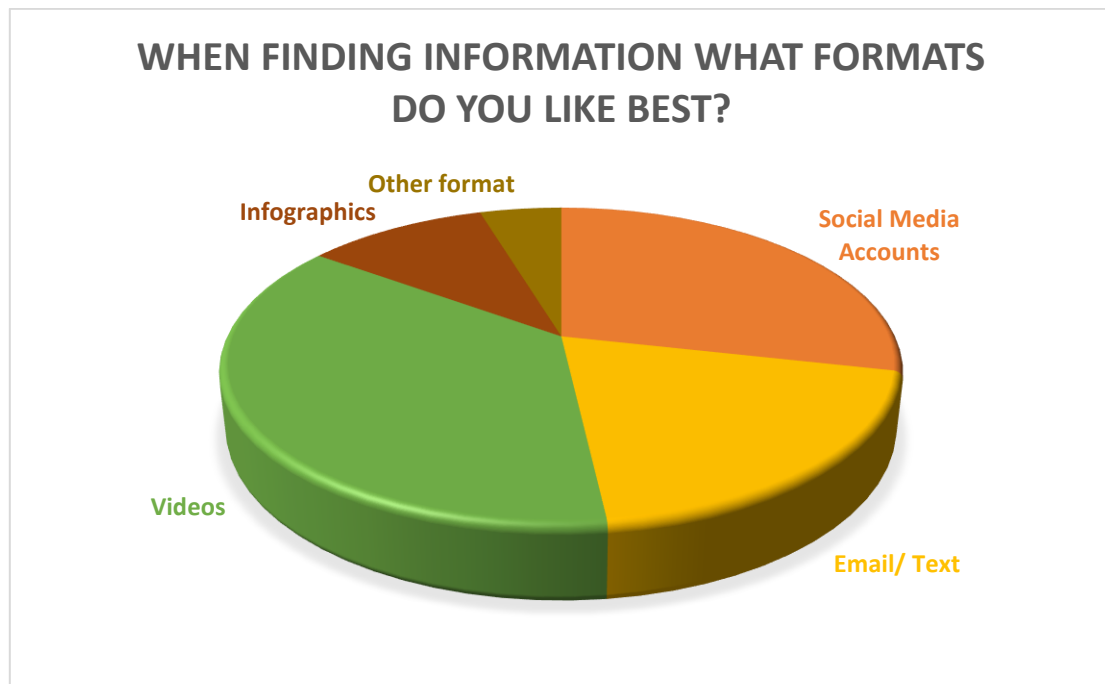**WHEN FINDING INFORMATION WHAT FORMATS DO YOU LIKE BEST?**

Figure 9.43

When asked what information content they would like to hear about this was a variety of information stated, but predominantly highlighting support for their future, life skills and maintaining their mental health and wellbeing.

10. **Local Area**

Generally young people think their local area is either very good or fairly good. Opinions shift slightly at secondary age to be less favourable.
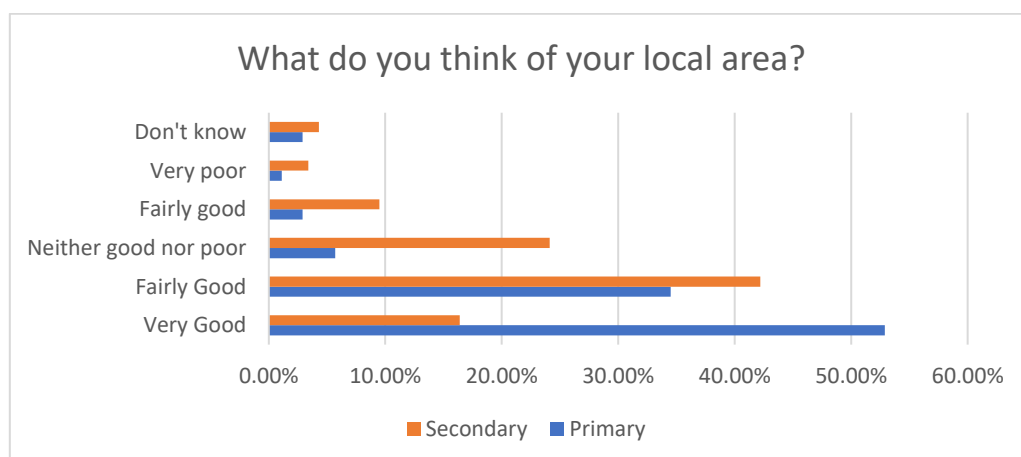

What do you think of your local area?

Figure 10.1

Young people opinions on parks and play areas are positive at a primary age but at secondary the majority state the play areas are neither good nor poor. Some of the positives about play areas include the football pitches, nice environment to walk in and

enough play equipment. Some of the negatives included that the parks were dirty, full of litter, there was dog fouling, it was unsafe and the equipment and facilities were vandalised.
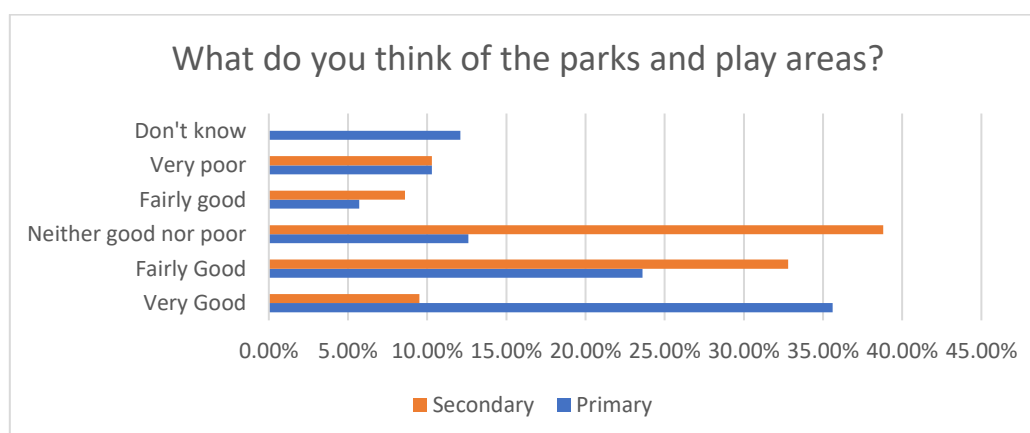
For Primary age range the 3 things they felt would do the most to make their area better are clean and less litter, safer roads and more or better shops. For secondary age they agreed with the area being more cleaner and less litter and safer roads, but their second choice was for their area to be safer or have less crime.
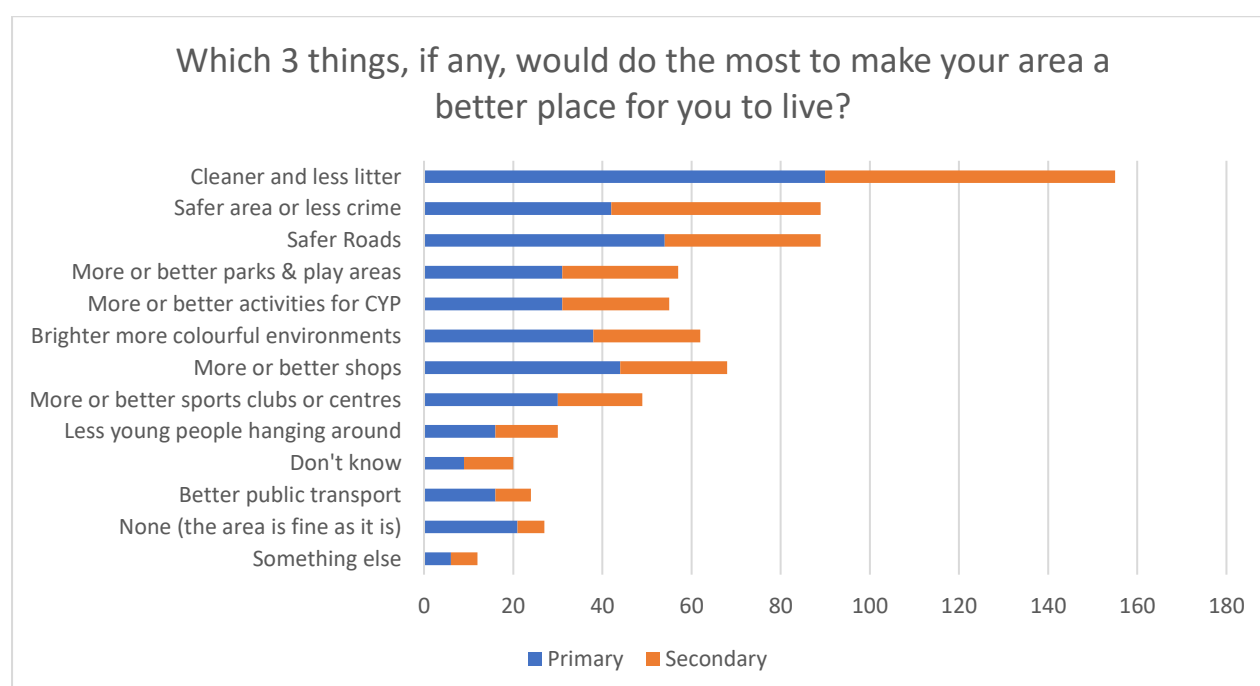
In terms of safety, both primary and secondary age very safe or fairly safe at home and in their school environment however only 52% of primary age very safe or fairly safe on public transport and even less at secondary age of 42.3%. For secondary age, only 49.2% also felt safe in their local area.
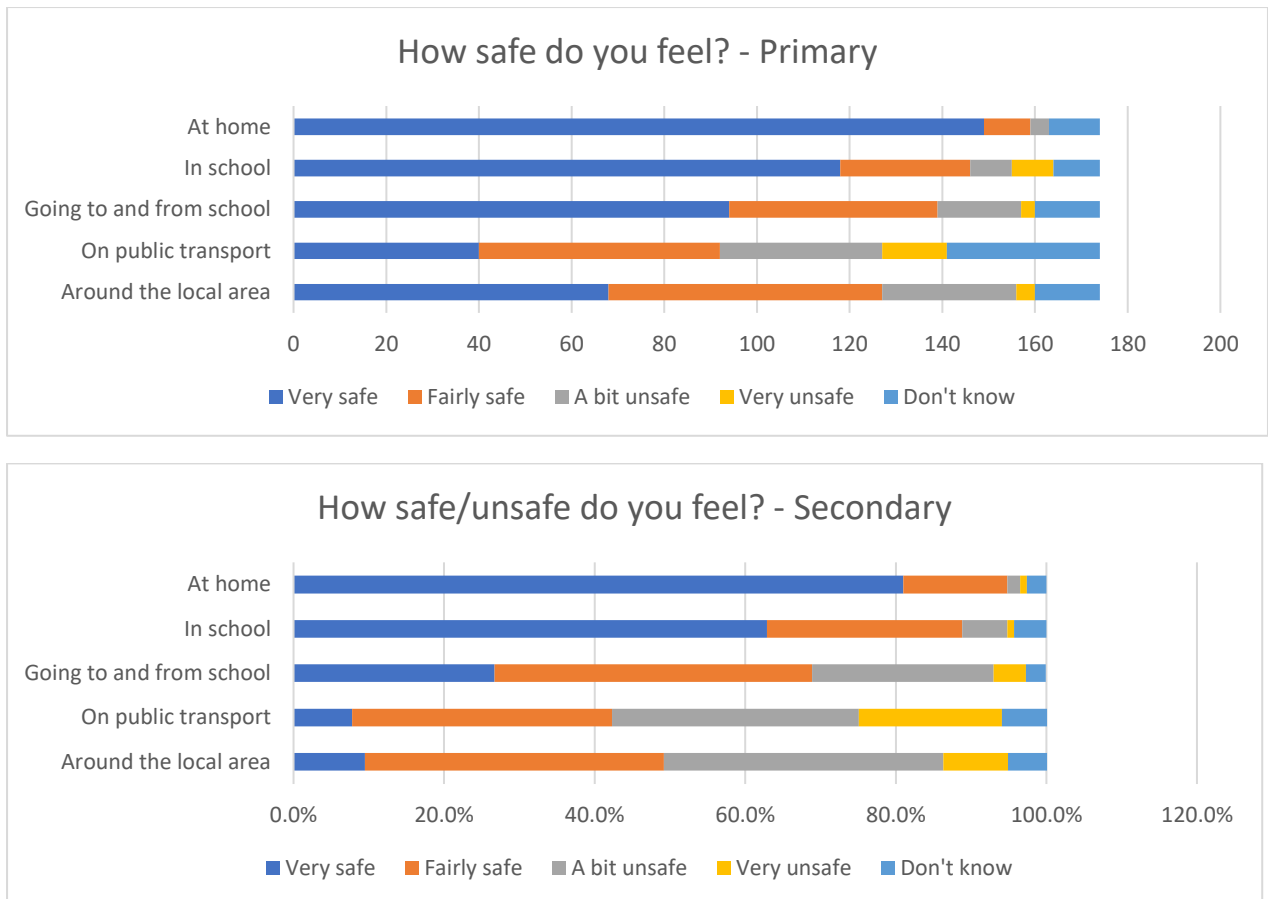
How safe do you feel? - Primary

How safe/unsafe do you feel? - Secondary

Figure 10.4

11. Education & Learning

Other than the education questions explored in the coronavirus and mental health and wellbeing sections, this section included questions about children's likes and dislikes at school, bullying, coping with school work, transition to secondary school and topics they would like to learn about in school.

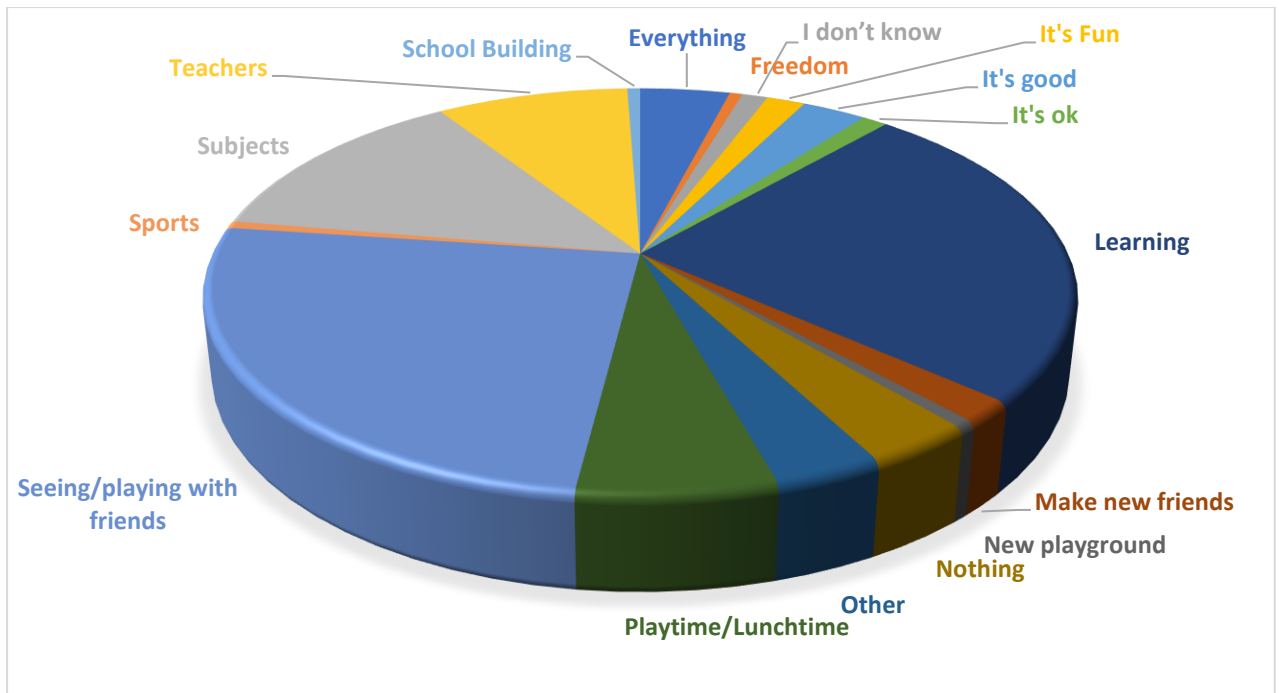For Primary pupils, what they like most about school is the learning and seeing/playing with friends.

Figure 11.1

For secondary pupils, like primary, learning and seeing their friends were positives of school and also support from their teachers.
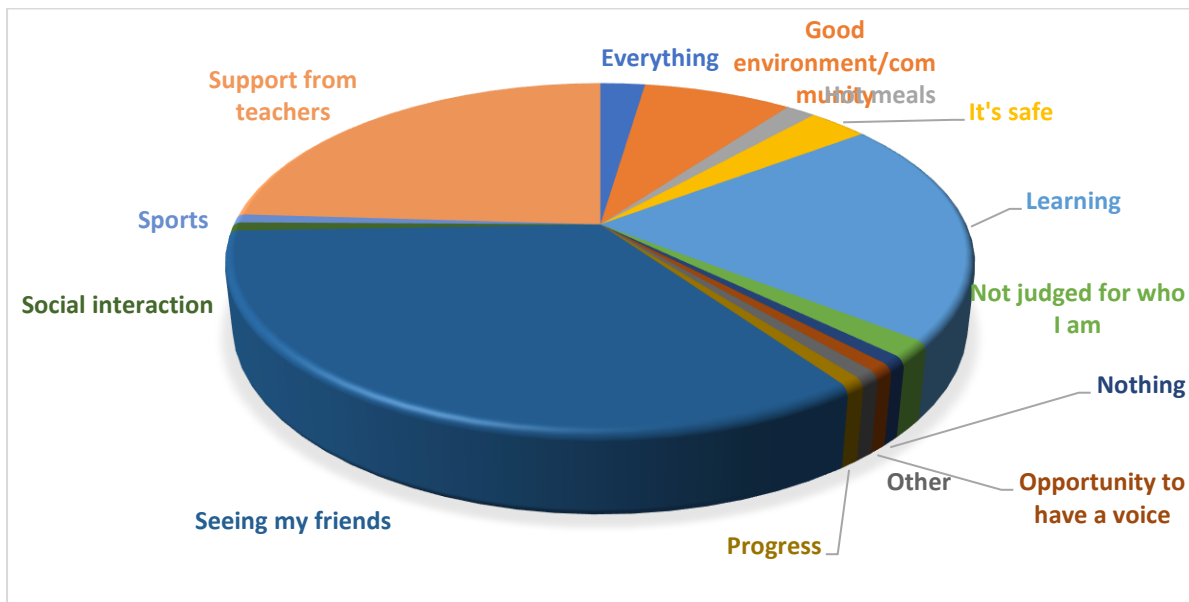

Figure 11.2

Although there were many things highlighted which children didn't like about school, the majority of primary school pupils stated there was nothing they didn't like apart from certain subjects which did not interest them. Also the behaviour of children was something quite a few children didn't like.
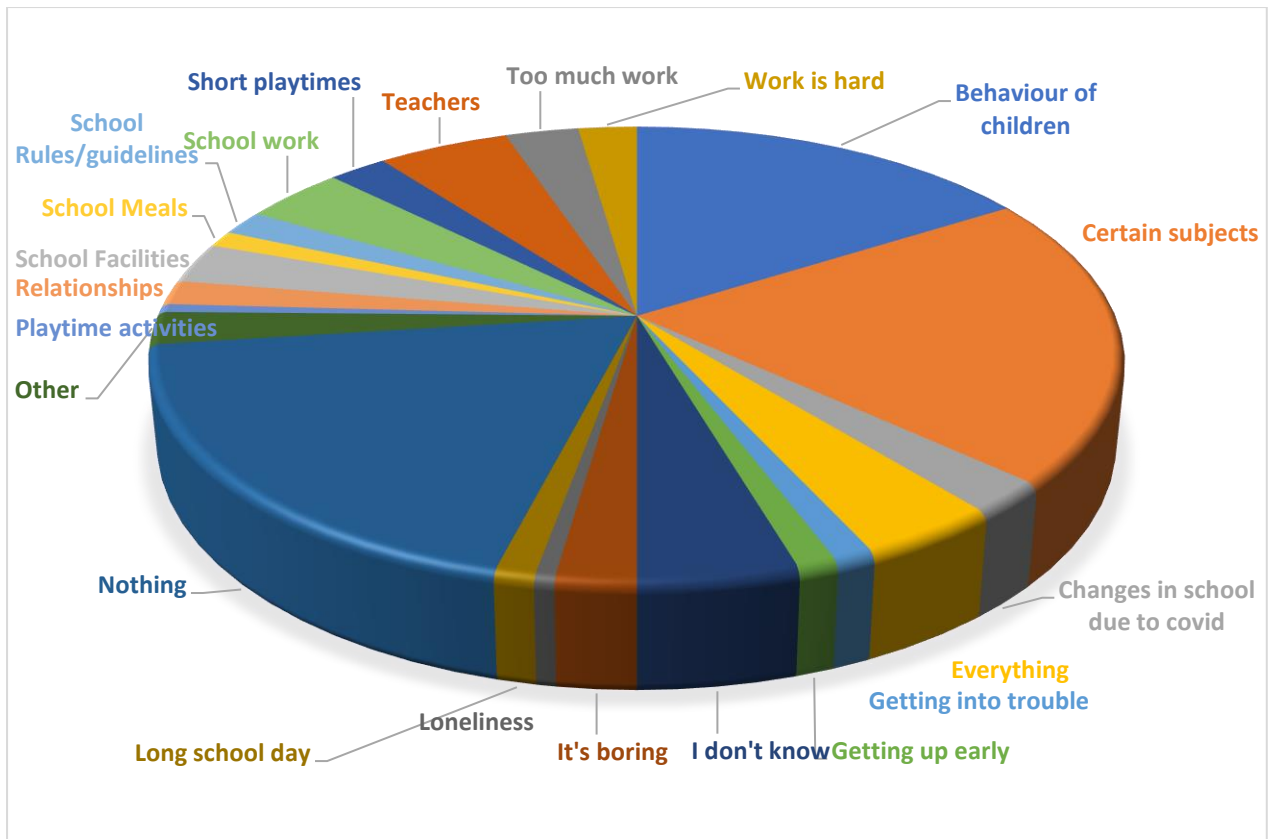
Figure 11.3

Like primary pupils, secondary pupils, as demonstrated in figure 11.4, didn't have many negatives about school, but there were many varied answers. Workload and stress were negative factors and also lack of mental health support. Some young people did not like early starts and the rules and guidelines of their secondary school.
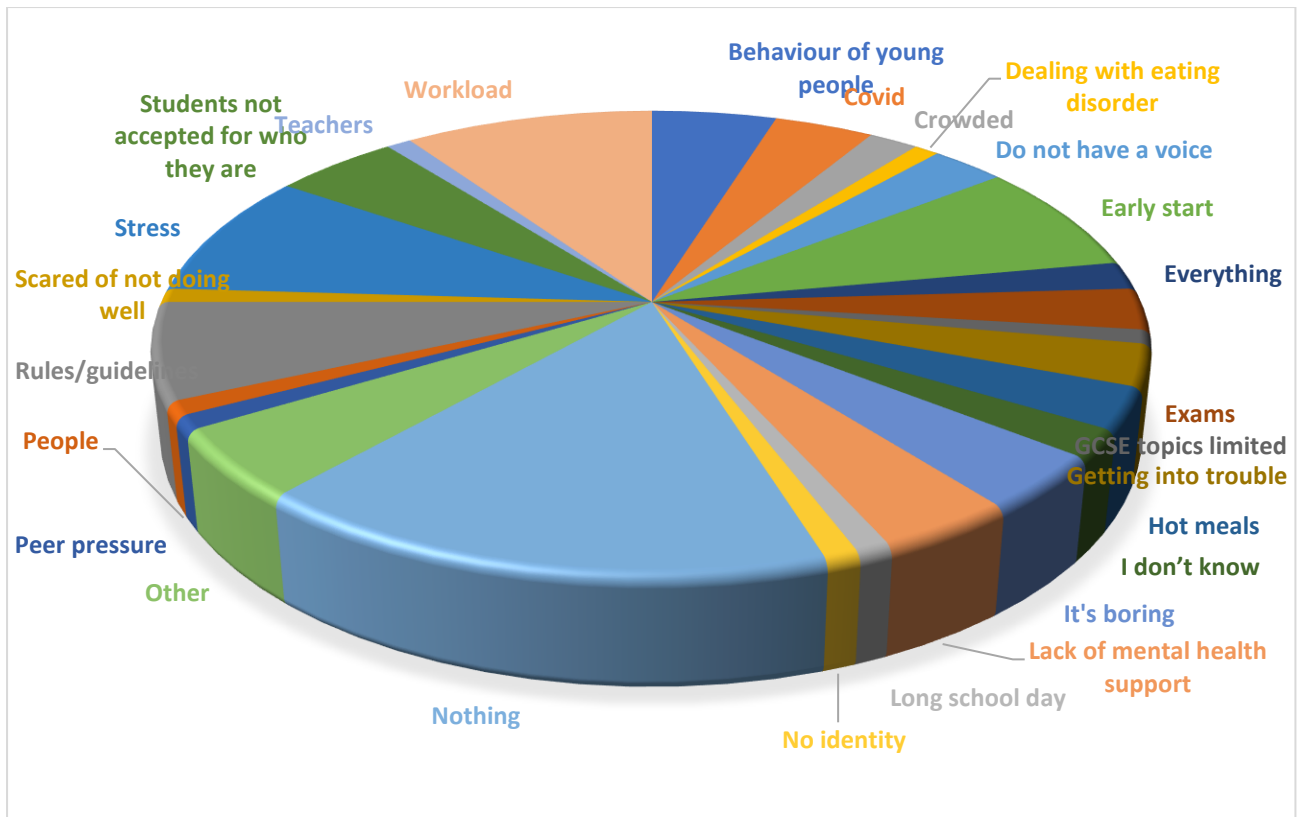
Figure 11.4

Young people were asked what things would help them to do better in school. Both groups stated more fun/ interesting lessons as their top choice. For primary they wanted more creative activities and fewer bullies, closely followed by a quieter/better behaved class or group. For secondary they would like more support from teachers and smaller class/groups followed by somewhere quiet to do their homework.
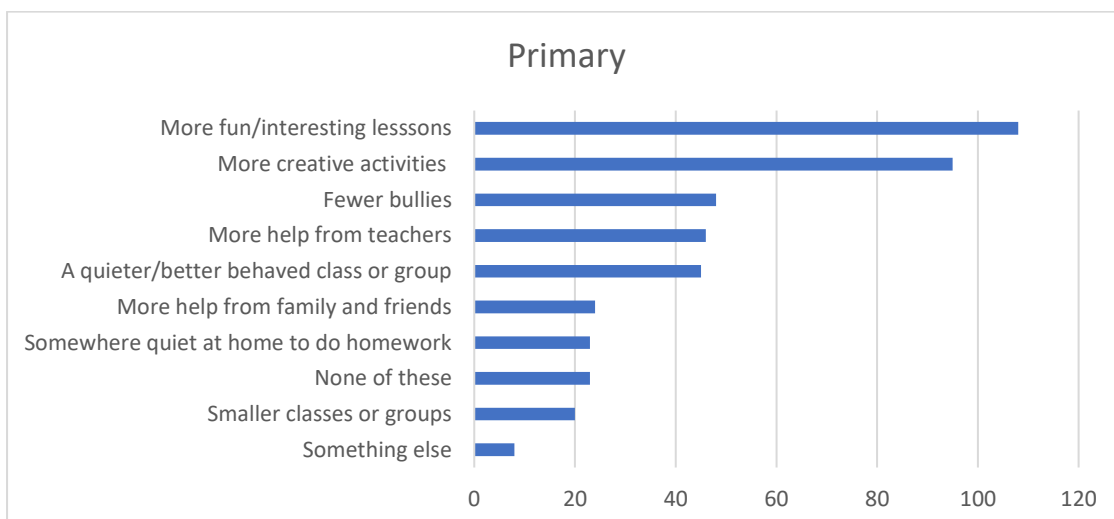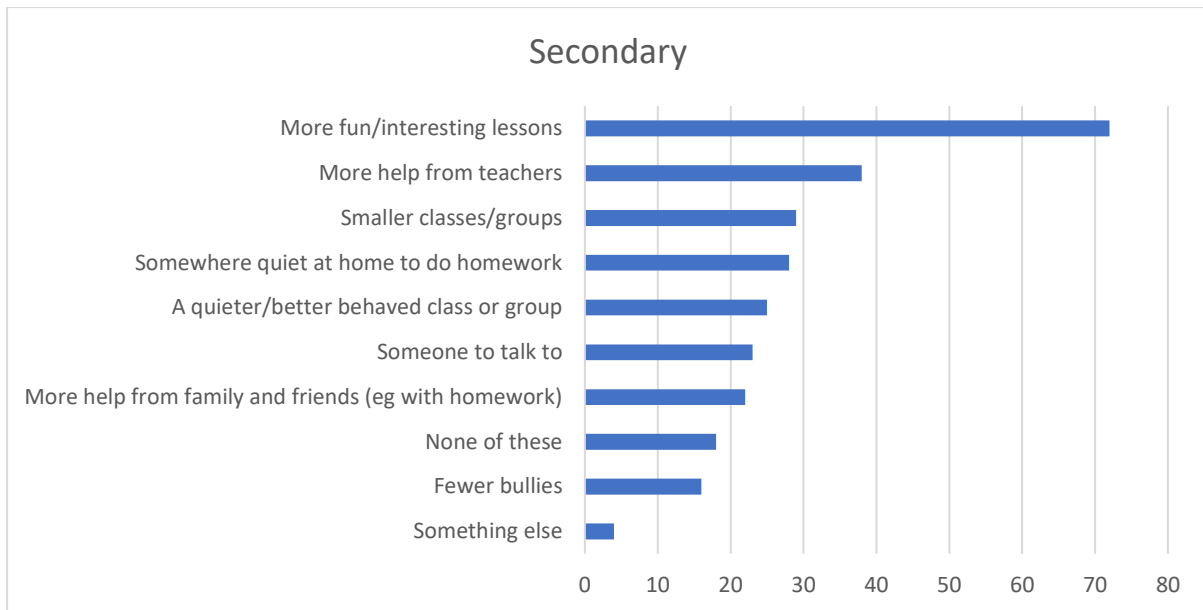
Figure 11.5

Although bullying incidents are relatively low for the respondents of this survey, 16.7% (29) of primary school children had been bullied in the last four weeks. Approximately two thirds of primary and secondary school children felt their school dealt with bullying very well or quite well, with 15% in Primary stating not very well, 6% in secondary and only 6.3% at primary thought bullying wasn't a problem in their school compared to 17.2% in secondary.
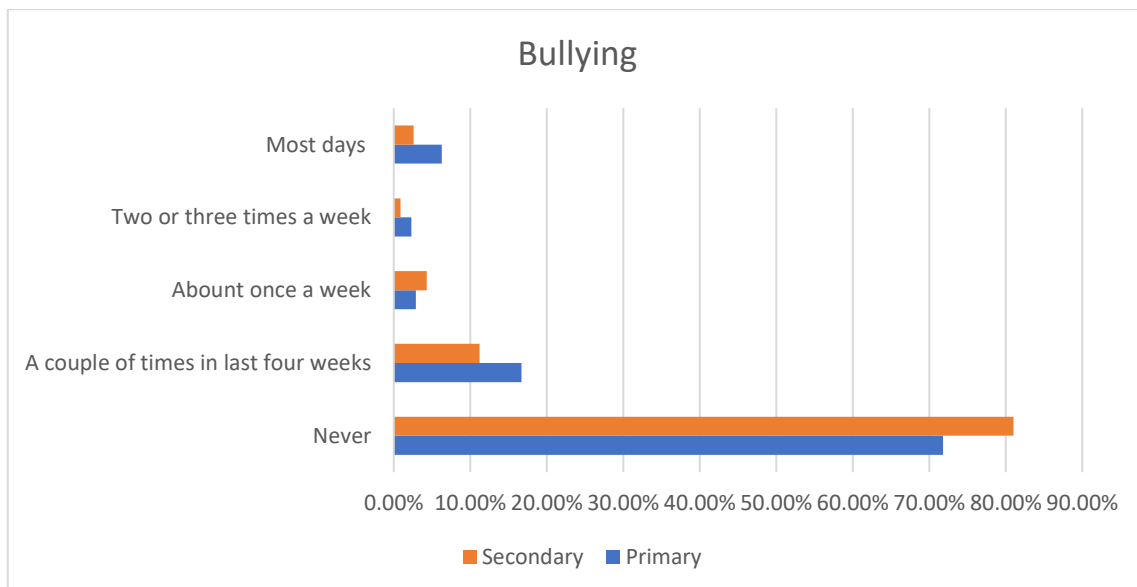

Figure 11.6

Primary aged children appeared to be coping well with levels of school work considering the difficult period experienced during the pandemic, however only 53.4% from secondary felt they were coping well, with 20.7% unsure and approximately a quarter stating they weren't coping well. The ones not coping well were asked how

things could be improved for them and many felt they were getting too much work, needed more support from teachers as they were feeling too much stress.
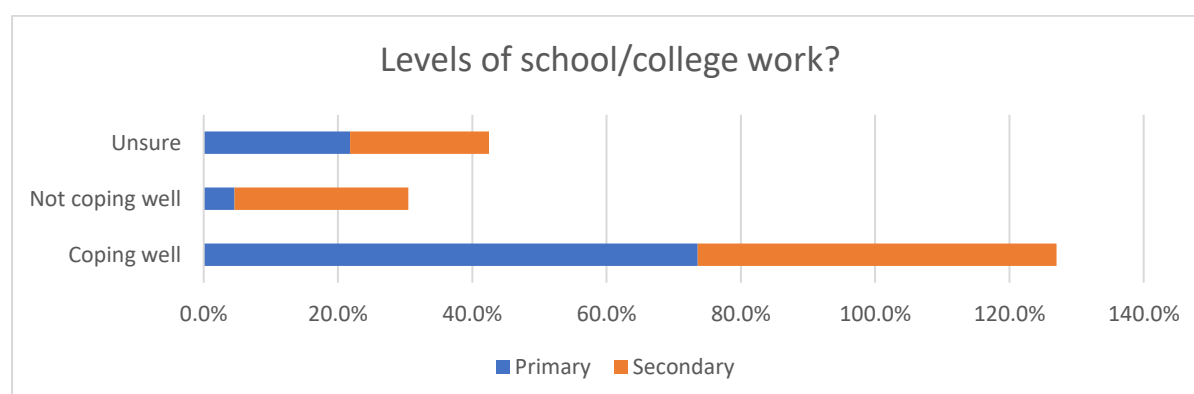

Levels of school/college work?

Figure 11.7

64% of primary school children were looking forward to going to secondary school but over a third were not.

ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO GOING TO A SECONDARY SCHOOL?
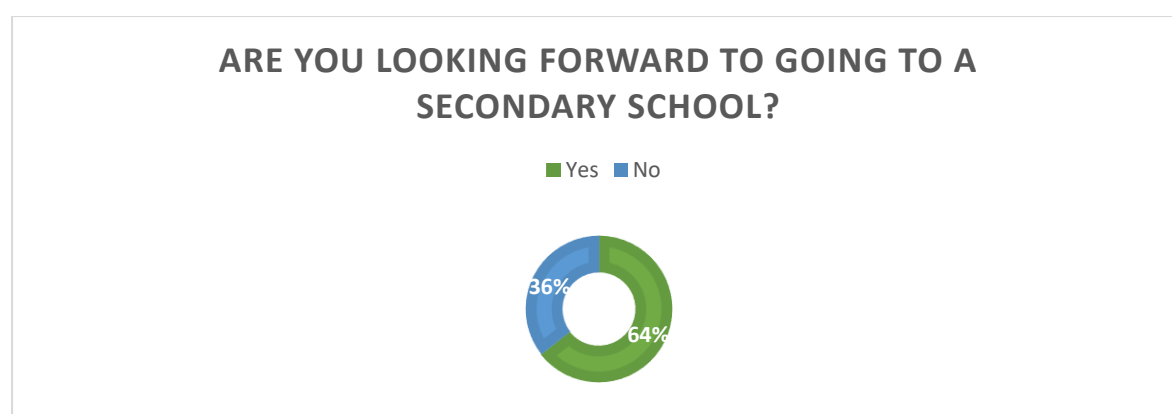
Figure 11.8

Secondary age group were asked a few more questions about their education. Only 50.0% felt a valued member of their school/college community with 32.8% stating they were not sure and 17.2% stating they did not feel a valued member. Those who didn't feel valued was because their opinions were not taken into consideration or they feel ignored, with comments such as "I often feel invisible", "I am misunderstood by many" and "I'm just one of those background characters". There were many young people who didn't know why they felt this way. Those who did feel valued, made comments like, "Feel included and respected", "good relationships with teachers" and "I'm welcome to contribute my voice".

Which of the following would you be interested in?
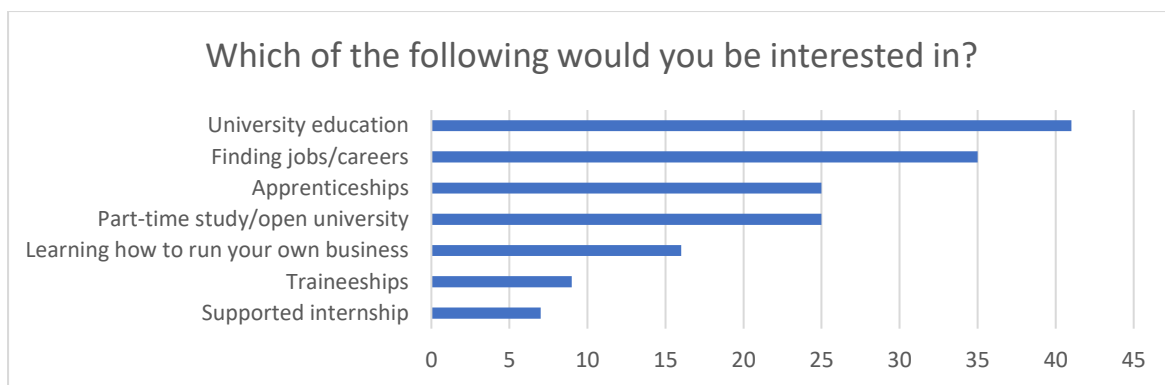
Figure 11.9

They were also asked if there were any skills not taught in school which they would like to learn about. The top answers were:

1. Taxes
2. Managing Finance
3. Food Technology
4. Buy/rent a house
5. General life skills
6. Getting a job
7. First Aid

12. Youth Activities

This section focussed on play for the primary aged children whilst for secondary the questions were tailored to ask the young people how they felt about activities in the area and practicalities, such as travelling to them.

Of the primary age group, 70.2% children felt they had enough or loads of time for playing or hanging out with their friends. However, when asked about playing or hanging out outside with friends, without an adult, figure 12.1 shows, the responses were less, with nearly 22% claiming they do not play or hang out with friends outside at all.
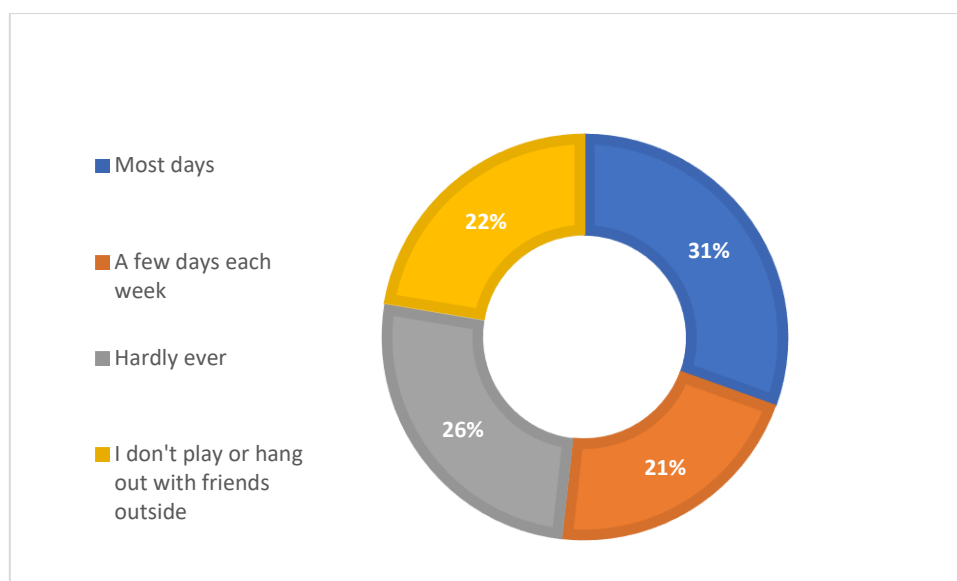
Figure 12.1

The children stated, adults are ok and happy with them playing or hanging out, they may keep an eye on them. Some children said adults get mad or angry and a few said they look suspicious.

Figure 12.2 shows primary age pupils playing in the house, with the garden being the second most popular response. However only 31% stated that they could play in all the places they would like too and 60.3% stating that they could play in some of them.
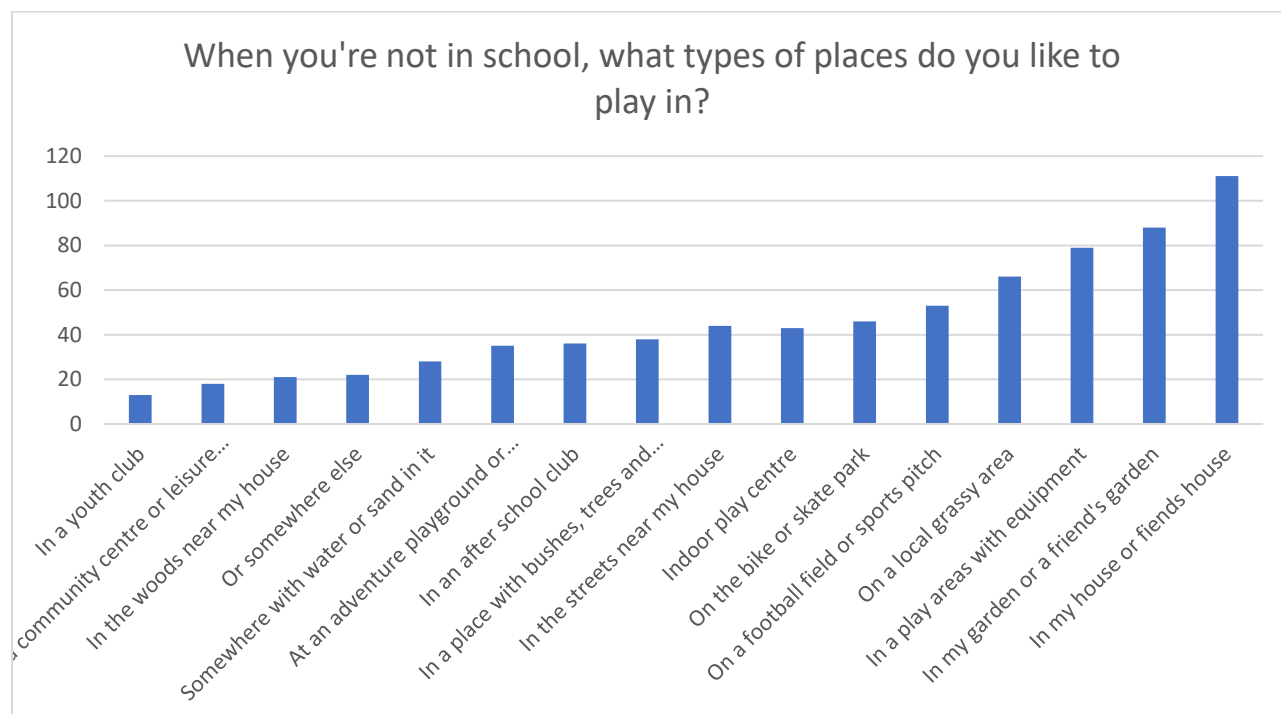
Figure 12.2

Generally, the places the children played in were thought to be very good or good.

HOW GOOD ARE THE PLACES YOU PLAY IN?

Very Good: 47.7%
Good: 22.4%
OK: 28.2%
Fairly Bad: 0.6%
Bad: 1.1%
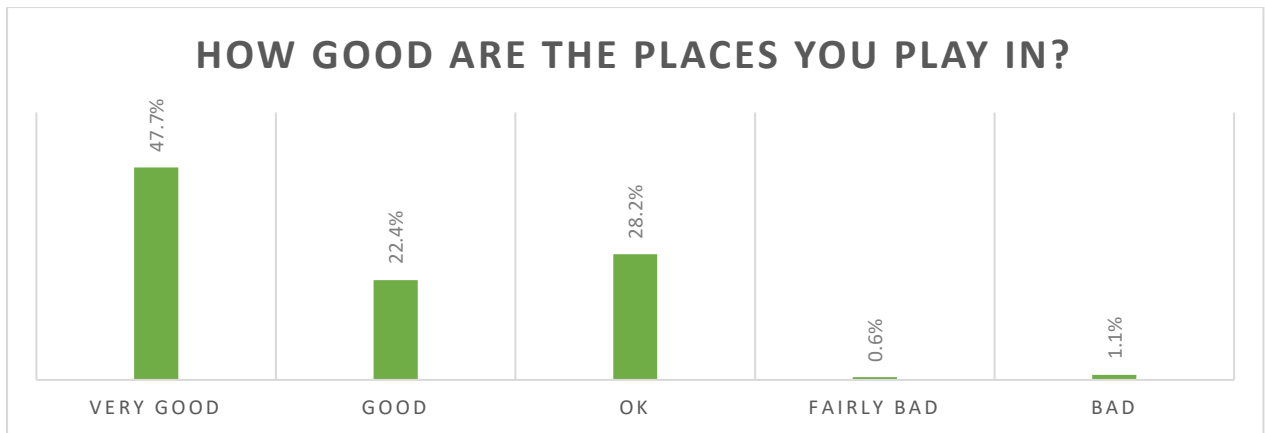
Figure 12.3

The most popular mode of transport for children at primary and secondary school age is with an adult by car or walk/ride to school and to places they like to play.

How do you usually travel?

- How do you usuallly get to school?
- How do you usually get to the places where you play?

Figure 12.4

When asked about activities in their local area, 75% of primary school children thought they were good enough compared to only 50% of secondary school pupils.
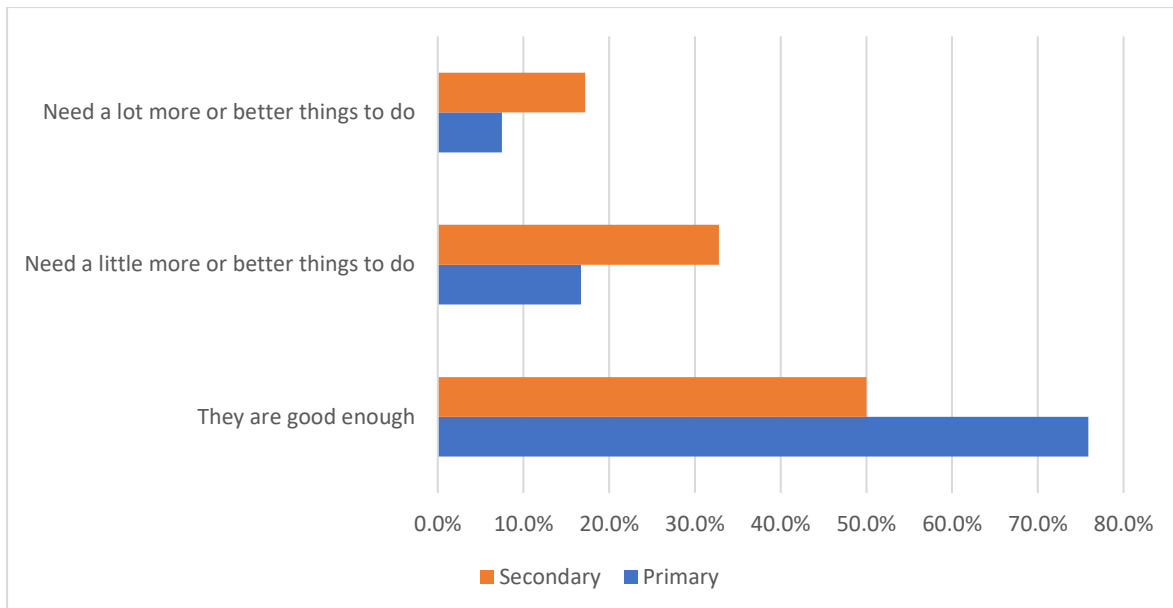
Secondary aged pupils were asked what stops them from doing activities and due to the pandemic the most popular response was government guidelines as demonstrated in figure 12.6. However, the next response was that the activities are not near them. Not having time or parents not allowing them to do the activities were also popular answers. Some young people also stated that they were unsure of what was available.

Both groups were asked what activities they would like to do and where. For primary aged pupils they were keen better parks, including more activities such as a petting zoo, bike track and more equipment. Other suggestions included sports such 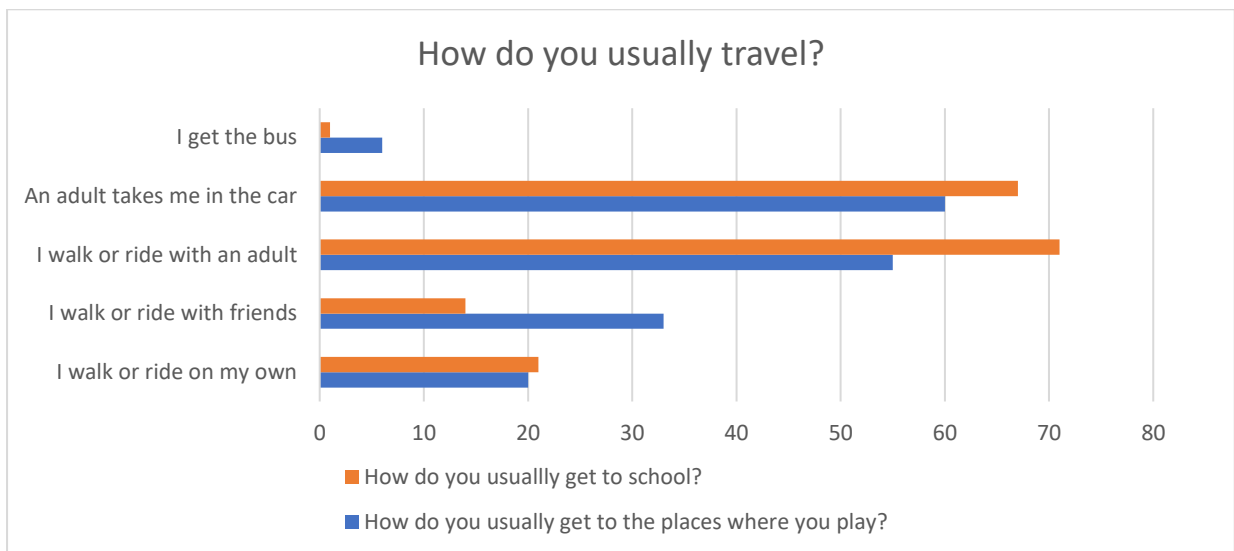as cricket, swimming, football and gymnastics. Some children wanted more adventurous activities such as a climbing wall, tree swinging, play fighting and others wanted more crarts and crafts and dance.

For the secondary age group, they also suggested better park activities and a variety of sports from football, cricket, swimming, boxing, basketball, golf, rock climbing. Their interest of sport had a few suggestions of a gyms being available for their age group and community sport activities. There was again interest like primary children in art, music and dance. A few young people suggested more academic topics, such as a book club and language classes. At this age, entertainment activities were also suggested. Youth clubs were stated and they should be located near to the secondary schools so the young people can meet after school.

In terms of location of activities, near to home for primary was preferred and near to school or local area was preferred for secondary aged pupils.
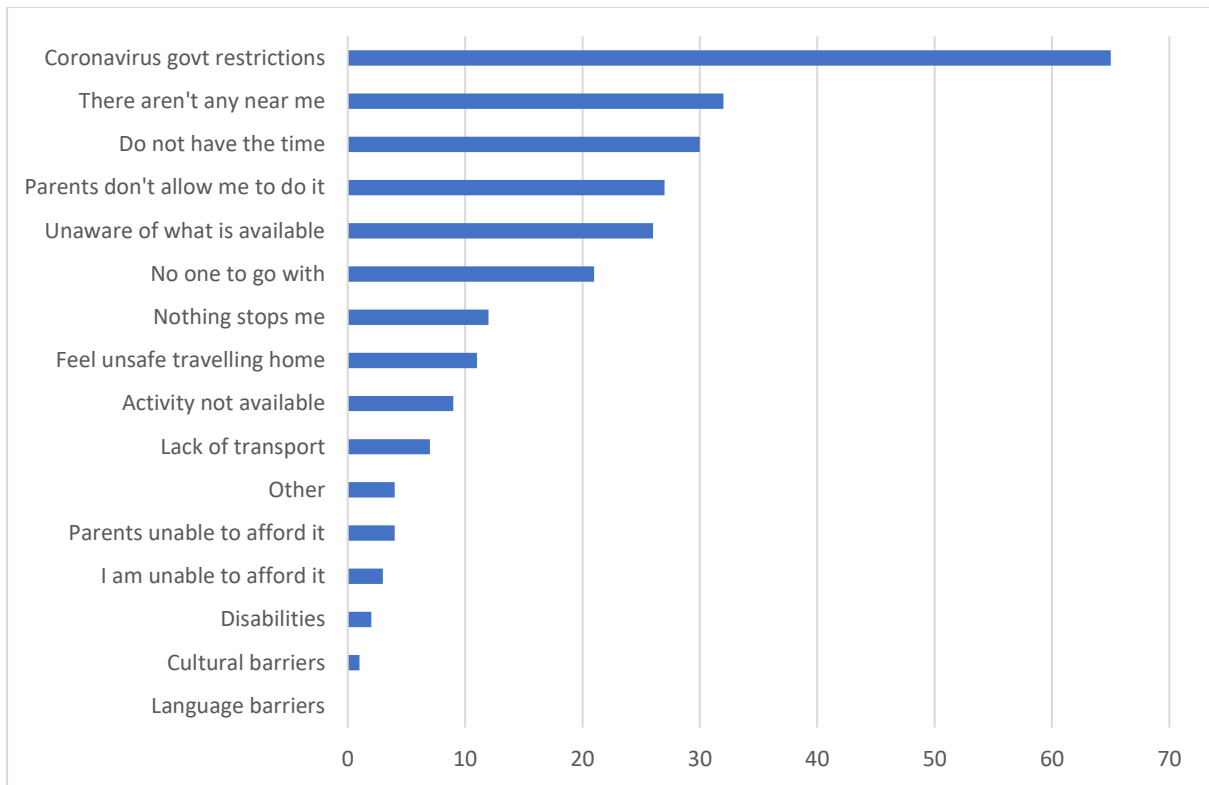
The idea of a virtual youth club had a mixed response with 50% saying they wouldn't use it.
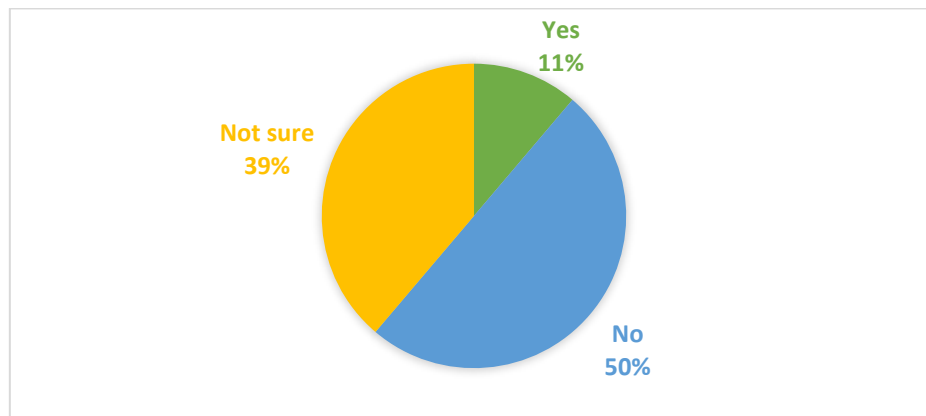
Those who would use a virtual club said they would like to see activities such as games or quizzes, learning, dance, movies, karaoke and gaming at this type of club.

13. Child's Voice and Helping

The children and young people were asked about child's voice and how they helped within the community.

When questioned about what they had done over the last year, most had raised money for a charity or community group. The secondary pupils were offered more options to choose from and they had took part in voting locally and in national ballots.

It was pleasing to see that some young people had been a member of a school council or forum group including SHAPE but numbers were still low.
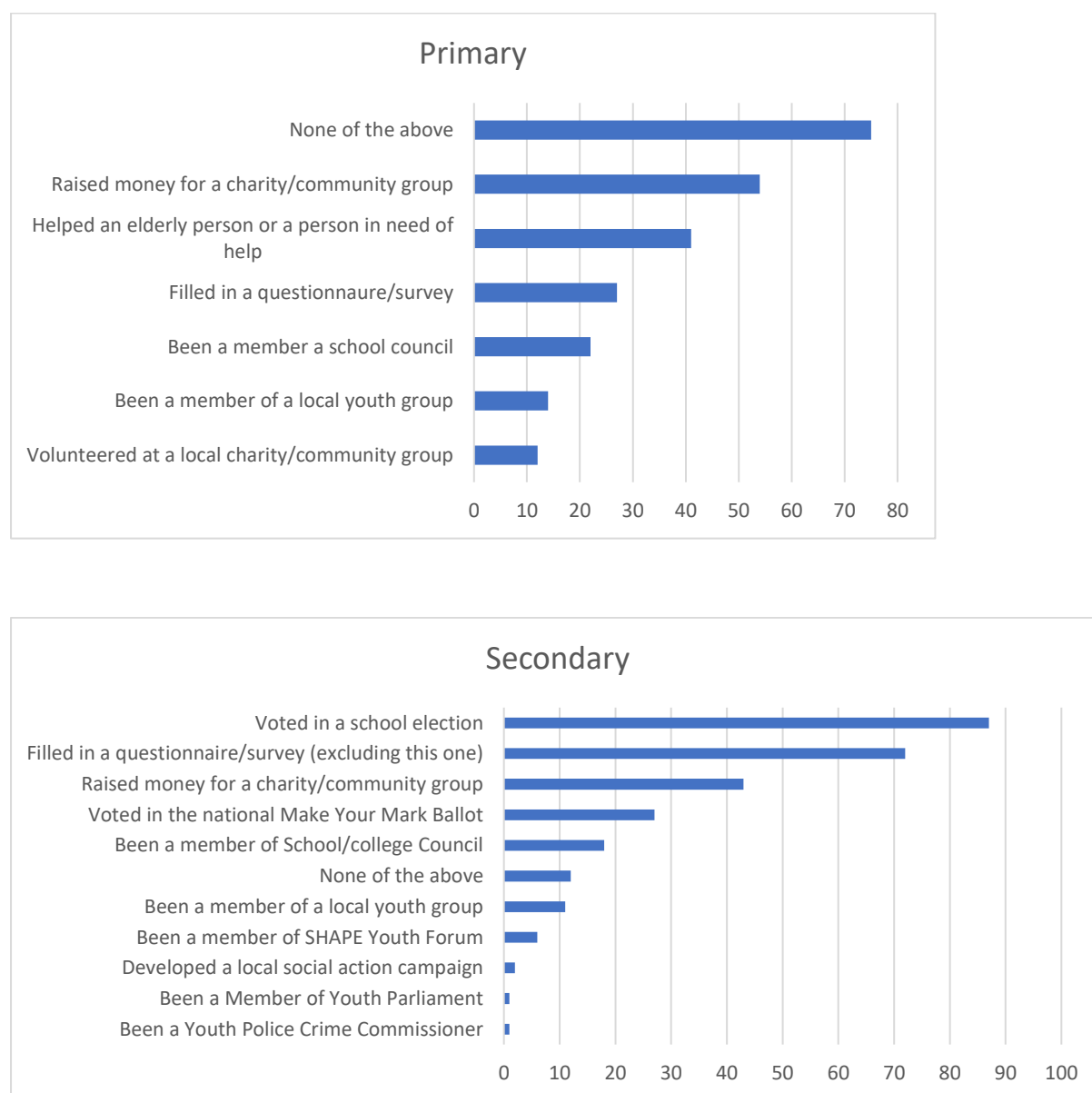
All age groups were asked how much their views were listened to in school. Results shown in figure 13.2 show the top response was a fair amount. However, when secondary were asked how much their views were listened to about their local area, the response 'Not very much' was the most popular.

PRIMARY

Category	Value
NOT AT ALL	1.70%
NOT VERY MUCH	5.70%
DO NOT KNOW	20.70%
A GREAT DEAL	33.90%
A FAIR AMOUNT	37.90%

SECONDARY

- How much are young people's views listened to in decisions about their school/college?
- How much are young people's views listened to in decisions about the local area?

Figure 13.2

Primary pupils were asked if they were in charge of Sandwell Council what one problem would they solve and how. The top 5 answers were:

1. Stop bullying – tell a teacher, punishing bullies, cameras in school, stop racism
2. Helping the homeless – house elderly, build homeless shelters
3. Stop littering – more recycling bins, organise litter picks
4. Reducing poverty - provide clothing or food, free meals, better education
5. Reduce crime – more security, stricter rules, more police on streets

Secondary pupils were asked what things Sandwell Council should invest in as a priority and the top 5 answers were:

1. Helping everyone to be happier – improve mental health
2. Having more and better job opportunities for young people – Promote in schools
3. Reducing poverty – more job opportunities, more social housing
4. Better higher education opportunities

5. Better and cheaper public transport – electric buses

14. Your Future

In 10 years' time the primary school children would be aged between 19 – 21 and the secondary will be aged from 22-25.

They were asked what job they see themselves doing in 10 years' time. For primary aged children the top response was other, where some children stated they didn't know what they wanted to do, others stated being a you tuber or footballer. A few children listed scientist and jobs working with animals. Being famous was the 2nd most popular response.
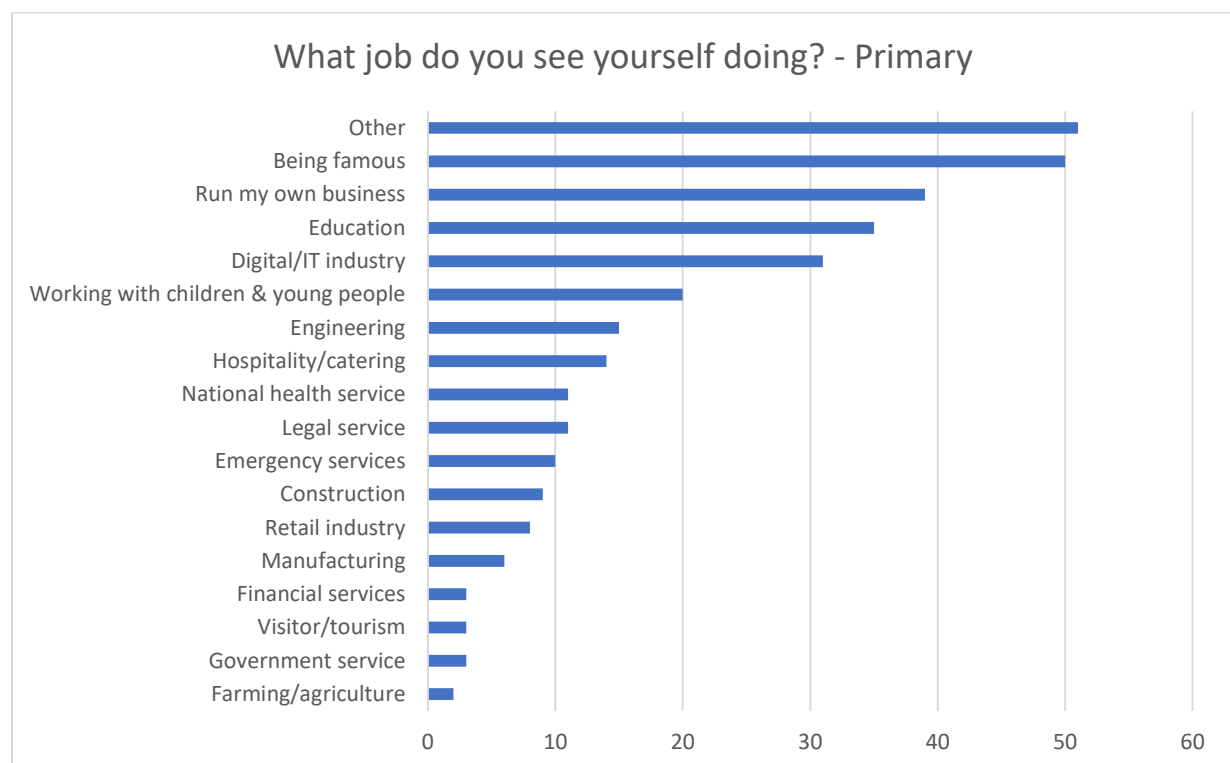
With secondary pupils the choices were more realistic as shown in figure 14.2, again other was the top choice and this referred to jobs such as media, scientist, working with animals and architect. However, like the younger age group, some children did not know what job they saw themselves doing.

What job(s) do you see yourself doing in 10 years time?

Figure 14.2

Both groups were asked what would stop them from getting the job they wanted. Primary aged pupils were quite confident and felt nothing would prevent them from getting the job. Although many also stated they didn't know. Losing focus, not having the knowledge and people not wanting you to succeed could also be a barrier.

Both primary and secondary pupils understood that education was key to getting the job they wanted as well as skills relevant to the role.

Secondary pupils believed their grades could prevent them from getting the job they wanted and lack of focus or motivation. Some also stated their mental health could be a factor including stress or anxiety. A few stated there may be a lack of opportunities.

In figure 14.3, primary children were asked whether they would like to continue to live in Sandwell when they are older and only 44% responded with yes. Secondary aged pupils were asked if they would continue living in Sandwell after college or university and the response was even less at 29% stating yes and 48% being unsure.
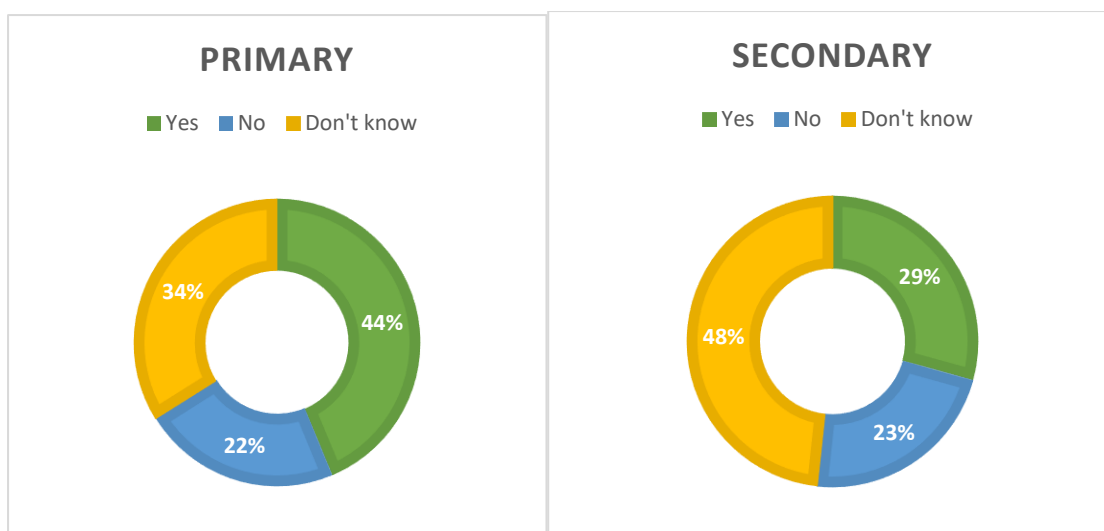
PRIMARY	SECONDARY

Yes No Don't know

PRIMARY: 44% Yes, 22% No, 34% Don't know

SECONDARY: 29% Yes, 23% No, 48% Don't know

Secondary pupils were then asked what would help them to stay in Sandwell to which the popular answer was lots of interesting job opportunities and higher education opportunities. Family and relationships were also an important factor which would keep them in Sandwell.

- Lots of interesting job opportunities
- Family / Other relationships (eg…
- University or Higher Education Opportunities
- To feel safe in Sandwell
- To feel a sense of belonging in Sandwell
- To have a good culture and nightlife offer for young…
- Brilliant leisure activities eg sports centres, parks
- More support available for physical and mental health
- There is nothing wrong with Sandwell
- I love everything about Sandwell, but would still prefer…
- Other

Figure 14.4

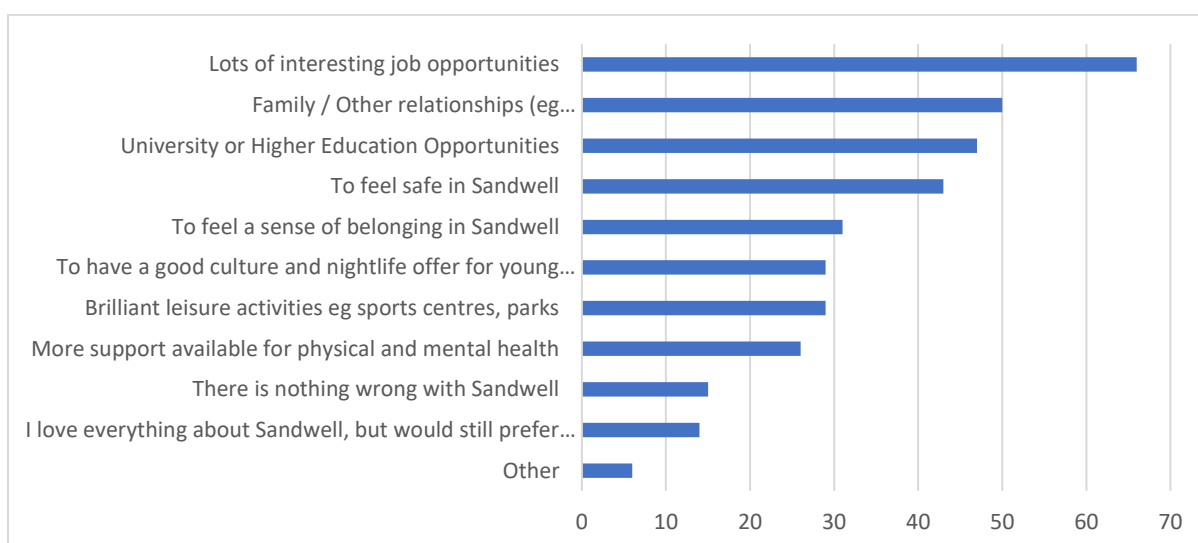## 15. Being a young person in Sandwell

Primary Pupils

Most pupils answered no, giving reasons such as they were happy, and being a young person today was "Fun". There was acknowledgement from a few young people that they enjoyed being young as they knew when they became an adult, things would be different, "I like being young because when you grow older you have to do more work and study more".

43

They had observed and heard from their parents that being an adult was hard too, "I Don't Really Want To Grow Up Because My Parents Say It's Not Very Good Being An Adult".

There was awareness from a child about the changes to their body which can be difficult to deal with as a young person, "Being a female is ever so hard because you have your period and it's ever so scary"

There were very few concerning comments, but these centred around parent rules or guidelines which may have a detrimental effect on the child, "You don't get anything what you want. And you can't even get a phone or an iPad. You will get killed by an adult and beaten up like hulk. You can't get pocket money either".

References were also made to not being listened to by adults, "It's kinda hard because when your young nobody believes u" and "Not being able to speak for my/our rights and being too shy".

Overall the positive comments outweighed the few negative comments from primary school pupils.

Secondary Pupils

The literal answers from secondary pupils were a complete contrast to what Primary Pupils had responded with. Most young people answered that it was stressful being a young person today, this included references to exam stress, peer pressure to look good, living up to expectations and bullying.

Similar comments were made as with primary pupils about young people feeling they are not listened to or are judged: "Us as young people are not heard. We don't get a say about half of the things that go on around the world and in our local area"; "That the adults around us need to actually listen to use for once instead of just brushing us off"; "When we tell adults about anything important, they instantly reply with your just a kid or something. And when we will take responsibility for the ocean and the rubbish in it, the adults will blame us even though they started it."

A few young people felt unsafe in being a young person due to crime and gang violence and others made quite concerning comments about their life and being a young person today, "IT IS TERRIBLE I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT"; "it's hard, I need help I feel sad and lonely and don't know who to talk to. I don't like talking face to face or being known because I don't like being vulnerable and I don't want anyone to worry. I need friends"; "I hate my life".

16. Conclusion

This detailed survey report can, even with its limitations, provide a good indication of the needs of young people from their perspective and also provide some recommendations about what the local authority and other agencies should be implementing to meet the needs.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on children and young people from March 2020 to present day and likely to be beyond this period. Even though there were some positives identified about the pandemic by young people, with the main one being,

spending time with their families, taking time to exercise, reflect on themselves and learn new skills, the negative impact seemed to outweigh the benefits.

In particular at a secondary age, critical education time has been lost and mental health issues have increased. Schools did not provide adequate support for young people around mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic, however they did provide resources for home schooling to allow young people to continue their education as best as they can, although for those studying for exams this clearly was not enough and valuable time in school with support from teachers was required.

School itself is seen as not just an educational institution but for young people, social interaction at school is so important and not seeing friends during lockdown, caused social isolation. School had many benefits, but young people felt school could be improved through more fun, creative and interesting lessons. Life skills and living independently continues to be topics young people would like schools to cover in the curriculum

Social isolation due to the lockdown and pandemic has increased social media usage for all age groups and gaming at a primary age. The effects of social media have meant influences from these have affected how young people feel about their physical appearance.

Body image and physical appearance as well as racism issues heightened by the Black Lives Matter movement, increased bullying issues particularly bullying incidences online.

School work and exam stress continues to be an ongoing issue however there is acknowledgement from young people that their grades and education is important to achieve their future careers and ambitions, therefore this stress is not necessarily negative. However, during exam season, they do require further support from their teachers.

There is still a lack of awareness of support services available to young people, both in and out of school such as the School Health Nursing Service and Police Link Officers. Although there are so many partner agencies that work with young people and schools, further work needs to be done to ensure they are known.

Although social media platforms are widely used by young people, Tik Tok and You Tube emerged as the most popular for watching and making videos during the pandemic. However, they are not a source of information for young people. Work has already commenced on the Just Youth web platform for young people and should continue to be a primary source for young people to find information they require, as the internet and search engines are most utilised by young people, therefore a central platform, when promoted by all agencies would prove to be beneficial. As videos are hugely popular, young people do like these as a way to communicate with them.

Although young people think their local area is fairly good, they rated this as one of the lowest areas of happiness, which shows there are improvements which can be made to Sandwell and its six towns, in particular to make them cleaner and safer. Young people also highlighted the Council should invest in improving prospects in

Sandwell, whether that was by offering more job opportunities or helping the homeless or providing cheaper and better public transport to ensure poverty gap is reduced as well as tackling issues such as mental health and bullying so people were happier.

Regeneration and improvements to facilities for young people Sandwell may encourage more young people to stay in the Borough as well as the opportunities mentioned above. Although children love the play areas and parks in Sandwell, the crime, vandalism of equipment and general cleanliness of parks can sometimes make them unappealing.

Youth facilities in Sandwell may be offered but children and young people want more sporting activities and for the youth gyms and entertainment centres are a popular choice. Young people do not want to travel to get to youth clubs or activities, they would prefer them to be based locally or near to their school.

Although the pandemic had an impact on mental health, this issue continues to come up as a vital factor in the lives of young people today and supporting their wellbeing has never been so crucial as it is now. Making sure young people have support at school and to help them plan for their future is important to them. However, they also need to be listened to and want to have someone to talk to, so they can voice their views and opinions. Many references were made to the feeling of stress in young people and adults not willing to listen or not treating their views with importance. Even when they were asked an opinion, often they felt they were ignored.

Overall being a child in Sandwell at a primary age can come with its challenges but is generally seen as enjoyable, however becoming a young person from secondary to adulthood can become extremely difficult, from school or their personal life, the impact on young people's mental health can be detrimental. Young people have ambition and drive to succeed but the barriers and influences around them with social media and the pandemic have frustrated young people today. They want to be acknowledged, listened to and supported to address their needs and issues.

17. Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey and conclusions made, please find below a list of recommendations for internal and external partners.

Issue	Recommendation	Lead organisation