



## **Communication and Support for SEND Families from Education Provision In Essex During Covid-19 May Survey Results**

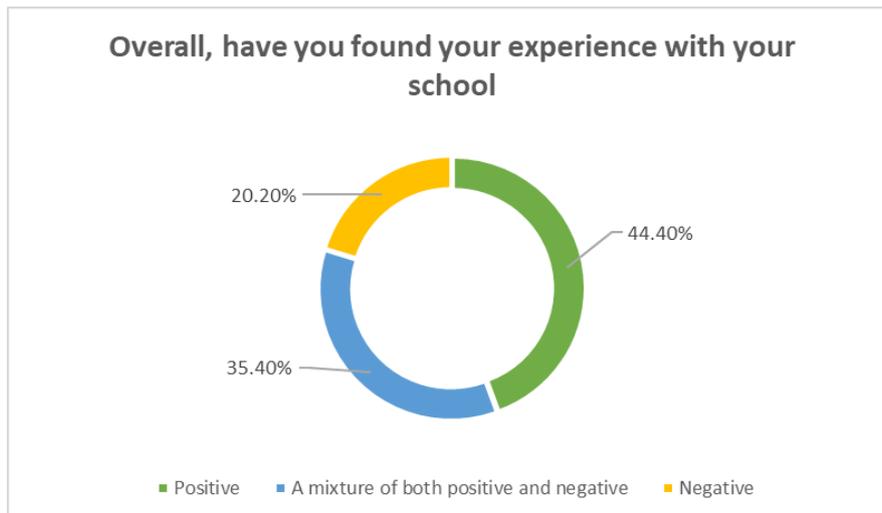
This survey was conducted between 22<sup>nd</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 by Essex Family Forum. The responses included were from parents with EHCP's, those on SEN Support/One Planning and some responses from families who are not receiving any form of official support

The survey data shows that 236 people consented to share their data at the start of the survey with 176 participants completing the entire survey.

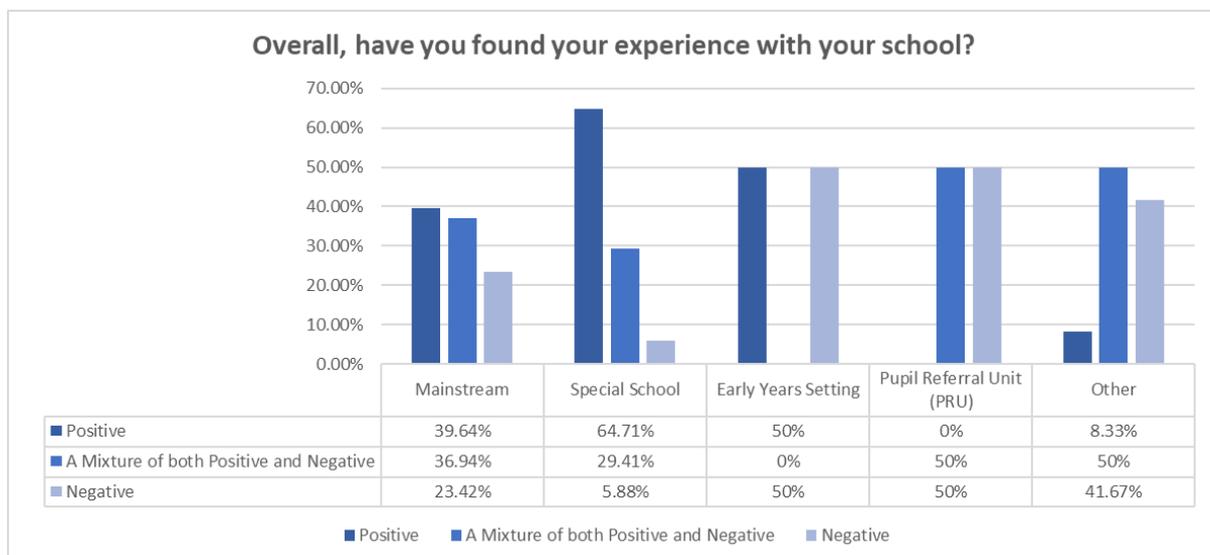
### **Highlights from our findings**

- Families are still having very mixed experiences when it comes to communication and support from their child(ren)'s school. Whilst this varies from school to school, it is apparent from answers given that the experience can vary from teacher to teacher within a school. There is a clear need to establish the reasons behind why this is happening.
- Given that more than half of those whose children have EHC Plans reported that their child's school has either not carried out a Risk Assessment or are unsure whether a Risk Assessment has been carried out, it would appear that schools are still failing to communicate effectively with families.
- Additionally, 21% of respondents whose child has an EHCP said school attendance had not been discussed or that they had requested a school place and been declined by the school.
- Whilst 57% of respondent's overall report that their work being sent home is suitable for their child's needs, that still leaves nearly 43% of children with work that is not suitably differentiated. There is no obvious reason why work that would be differentiated by teachers within a classroom environment cannot continue to be in the current situation. Children with SEND are already at a significant disadvantage academically and for their schoolwork to be impacted in this way during COVID-19 is not acceptable.
- With 30% of those completing the survey indicating that they had little or no contact with the school to check on the well-being of the child and family, this has left both children and their families bereft of their main source of support at a time of unprecedented stress and uncertainty in their lives. Every family's circumstances are different and ever-changing and that is why individual Risk Assessments and regular welfare calls are vital.

We asked parents to consider their overall experience with their education provider.



We have broken this down by the type of setting that their child attends:



It was our hope that many more families reported a positive experience and we are pleased that overall, 44% participants reported a positive experience with a further 35.4% participants reporting a mixed viewpoint.

When we consider the type of provision, it is encouraging that families' experiences with specialist provision have been overwhelmingly positive and that less than 24% of mainstream families report a solely negative experience. However, it is extremely concerning that no positive experiences were indicated for Pupil Referral Units, even though the respondents represent a very low percentage overall.

We firmly believe that agreeing a level of communication that meets the individual family's needs along with providing the appropriate support will no doubt improve families overall experience even further.

## **Essex Family Forums' Suggested Recommendations to Essex County Council**

- ECC feed the information provided within this report to the Quadrant Managers so the School Inclusion Partners & Educational Psychologists can use this feedback to support the work they do with the schools' Senior Leadership Teams
- ECC send a copy of our report to all Headteachers of every school in Essex and all out of area schools with Essex SEND pupils so they can understand fully the positive, mixed and negative feedback provided by our families
- Checks are made to ensure all families with an appointed social worker and/or EHC Plan has had a Risk Assessment carried out in conjunction with the school, social worker (where applicable), and, most importantly, with the family's input.
- Whilst we accept that this could form part of the Reasonable Endeavour's conversations, it should be made clear to the families during those conversations.
- Essex County Council can clarify how they have been monitoring whether schools have delivered the commitment they have made to families in the Risk Assessments.
- Essex County Council acknowledge the receipt of survey with a statement which we can share with the participants of the survey and SEND Families in Essex.

We recognise that this current pandemic will impact on many family's wellbeing and mental health not just those families who have children with additional educational needs or complex health needs.

Many of the comments received through the survey reflect that although families are managing, it is far from easy and the current situation has added significant stresses and strains on the home environment – typically the “safe” environment for a child with SEND. Anxiety levels are rising about the return to school and the impact that will have on children's mental health.

The support provided by schools undoubtedly helps many families and therefore it is key that schools understand what type of support families need at this time. It is also extremely important that schools, and relevant partners are working towards supporting children with increased mental health issues over the coming months in the home environment and, in particular, on their return to school. We know “transition” often present difficulties and behavioural issues for many children with SEND and many children will not only be returning to school, but to new classrooms, with new class mates and new teachers, and in some cases to new schools.

We should like to add that it has been very positive and encouraging to read of such great practice and support that many schools are providing as reported by the participants of this survey. We firmly believe that as schools work with their Quadrants Managers and their “clusters” sharing good practice that this will no doubt improve practice further and indeed schools will then meet the needs of many more families in Essex.

Essex Family Forum

June 2020