
9. Parent and whānau perspectives on their child's learning and school

In this section we present parent and whānau perspectives on their child's experiences of school, views on their child's teachers, and their own experience of the school as parents and whānau. This includes information they receive and their own participation in school activities. We also look at whether the school was their closest school, and whether it was their first choice.

The survey comprised mostly closed-response questions. At the end of the survey, parents and whānau were invited to add a comment about their child's schooling. Just under 40% wrote comments, whose themes we report.

We note any differences in responses about their child's experiences and their own in relation to parental ethnicity (Māori and non-Māori), and school decile.

We also include parent and whānau perspectives in other sections in this report about provision for te reo Māori and ākonga Māori; provision for Pacific students; provision for students with disabilities or needing learning support; curriculum, assessment and reporting to parents and whānau; and school trustees' perspectives.

Parent and whānau respondents

These perspectives come from 395 parents and whānau from 170 schools—48% of the schools in our national survey sample. It is not easy to get a national picture of parent and whānau perspectives which is representative of schools and the social characteristics of parents and whānau. We sent each school in our sample sufficient surveys for one in 50 of their students' parents and whānau, and asked them to send these to a random selection of the school's families. We gave advice about how to make a random selection. The surveys included information about how to access and complete the survey online; 52 parents and whānau chose to do this instead of filling out the paper version. We asked parents and whānau to focus on their youngest child at the school. We had a good spread of responses across most year levels, but with lower proportions in new entrants / year 0, and years 7 and 8.

The response rate for the parent and whānau survey was 17% ($n = 395$ of a total of 2286 parent surveys sent to schools). The median parent response rate for the schools that took part was 33%, with a range from 4% to 100%.

We had an over-representation of parents and whānau from decile 8 and decile 10 schools, and an under-representation of parents and whānau from decile 2 and decile 5 schools. The median school roll was 286, much larger than the national median roll for primary schools of 177.

The approximate margin of error for the parent and whānau responses is around 4.9%.³²

As in previous rounds of the national survey, the majority of parent and whānau respondents were women (88%), with higher qualification levels than the general population. Over half (52%) had degree qualifications, higher than the 35% who did so in the 2016 survey, and higher than the 28.8% aged 30–64 who had degree qualifications in the 2018 Census. Ten percent of parents and whānau had no formal qualifications—much the same as in the 2016 national survey, and somewhat fewer than the 13.9% aged 30–64 who had no qualifications in the 2018 Census.

The national picture we can provide here is skewed somewhat toward the experiences of parents and whānau in large primary schools, and decile 8 and 10 schools, and towards the experiences of parents and whānau who have degree qualifications.

The ethnic composition of the parents and whānau responding³³ was:

- 74% NZ European / Pākehā
- 14% Māori
- 10% Asian
- 7% Pacific.

Twelve percent of parents and whānau said their child had a disability or needed learning support, and a further 4% were not sure. There were some differences in responses for parents and whānau whose child had a disability or needed learning support, and these have already been reported in Section 5.

Pākehā parents and whānau were more likely to have a child at a higher decile school—51% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school were Pākehā, compared with 67% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 3–4 school, and 80% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 5–10 school.

Whānau Māori were more likely to have a child at a decile 1–2 school: 46% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school were Māori, compared with 15% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 3–4 school, 8% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 5–8 school, and 6% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 9–10 school.

Most parents and whānau said their child attends their first choice of school, and for many this was their closest school

Many parents and whānau responding to the survey (89%) said their (youngest) child attended their first choice of school. For 73% of these parents and whānau, this school was also their closest primary or intermediate school. Overall, 71% of parents and whānau said their child attended their local school, the primary or intermediate school closest to them. This is up from 63% in 2016. In the 2019 data, there was no association between school decile and whether a child attended their first choice of school, or attended their local school.

³² This is an approximation since we asked schools to distribute the surveys randomly, with guidance, but cannot guarantee that the distribution was random.

³³ Parents and whānau were able to identify with multiple ethnic groups, so the total percentage reported here exceeds 100%. The 2018 Census figures for ethnicity give 70.2% identifying with a European ethnic group, 16.5% with the Māori ethnic group, 15.1% with an Asian ethnic group, and 8.1% with a Pacific ethnic group. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/new-zealands-population-reflects-growing-diversity>

School zoning also influences the school a child attends. Over half of all parents and whānau (58%) reported that living in their school's zone enabled their child to enrol at their current school, similar to the 54% in 2016. There was an association by decile: parents and whānau with a child at a higher decile school were more likely to say that living in zone enabled their child to get into the school (64% of those with a child at a decile 7–8 school, and 69% of those with a child at a decile 9–10 school, compared with 46% of those with a child at a decile 1–2 or decile 5–6 school, and 52% of those with a child at a decile 3–4 school). Conversely, parents and whānau with a child at decile 1–6 schools were more likely to say their child was at a school with no enrolment zone (26% of those with a child at a decile 1–2 school, 15% of those with a child at a decile 3–4 school, and 39% of those at a decile 5–6 school, compared with 8% of decile 7–8, and 4% of decile 9–10). Overall, 15% of parents and whānau said their child was at a school with no enrolment zone (23% in 2016).

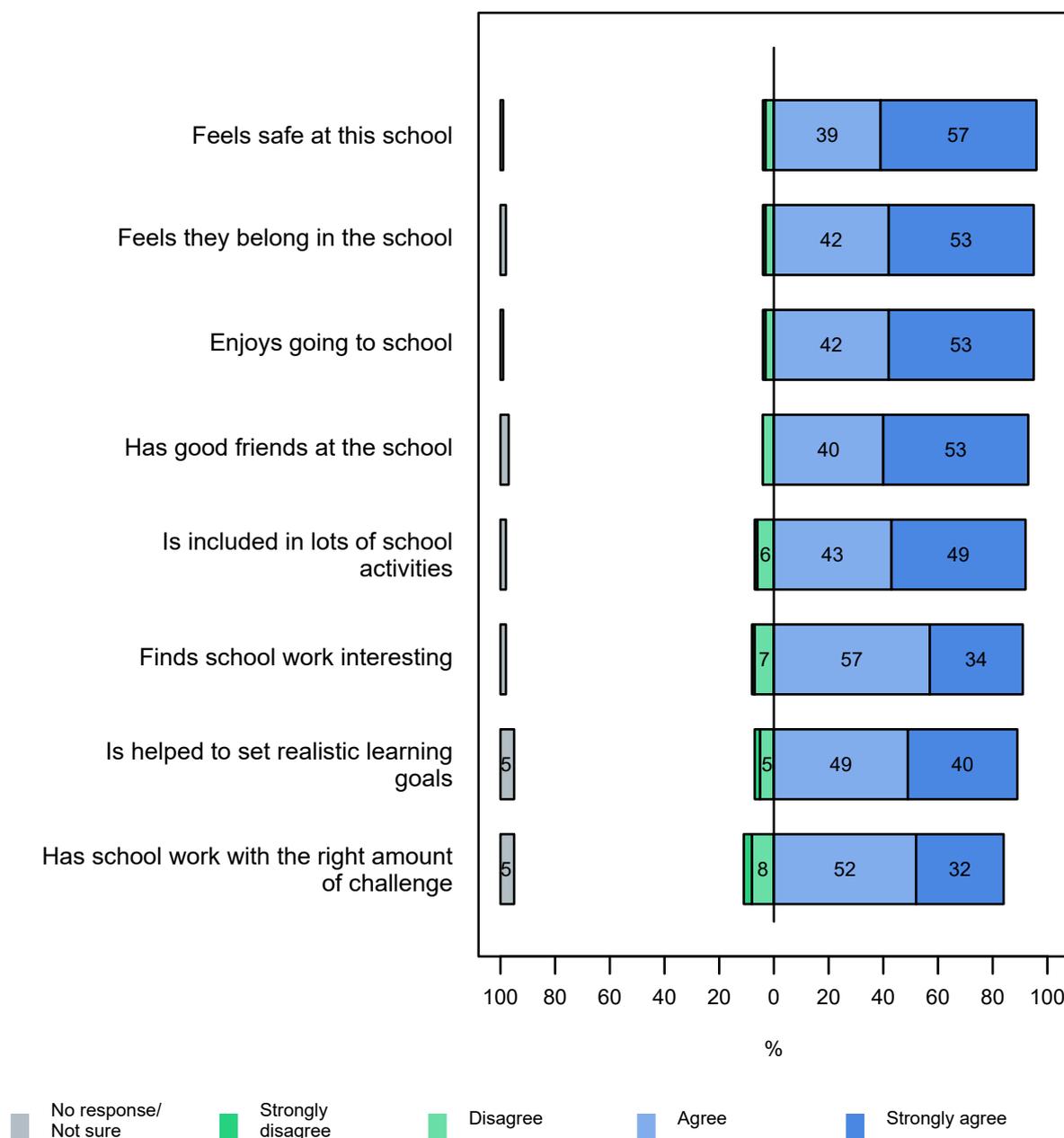
Families who live outside their preferred school's enrolment zone can include their child in that school's ballot for any spare places. Six percent said their child had been drawn from the ballot for their current school, the same as in 2016. Another 11% of parents and whānau said their child met the special character criteria for the school (e.g., it was a Catholic school and their family is Catholic). For those with a child at a decile 3–4 school, the figure was 21%.

School zoning (14 parents and whānau), transport (four parents and whānau), or the child not wanting to go to that school (five parents and whānau) were the main reasons a child did not attend the school that was the first choice for the parents and whānau ($n = 39$). A few parents and whānau mentioned their child's special needs, and others commented that having moved to or from a particular area, or having only one school in an area, meant their child was not at the school they would have chosen.

Most parents and whānau are positive about their child's school experience

Figure 38 shows that 90% or more of parents and whānau agreed that their child enjoys going to school, finds school work interesting, feels they belong at school, feels safe, is included in lots of activities, and has good friends at school. Over 80% also agreed that their child is helped to set realistic learning goals, and has school work with the right level of challenge.

FIGURE 39 Parent and whānau views of their child's school experience (n = 395)



Māori parents' and whānau responses to the items in Figure 39 did not vary significantly from those of non-Māori parents and whānau.

There were just a few associations with school decile:

- Fewer parents and whānau with a child at a decile 5–6 school agreed that their child finds school work interesting (20% disagreed, compared with 4% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 1–2 school, 6% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 3–4 school, 5% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 7–8 school, and 8% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 9–10 school).
- Parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school were less likely to strongly agree that their child has good friends at the school (38%, compared with 48%–59% of parents and whānau with children at other schools).

School activities cost too much for some parents and whānau

Eighteen percent of parents and whānau said their child had been unable to take part in at least one school activity because of the cost. Cost meant a child was unable to take part in using a digital device (6% of parents and whānau), do schoolwork at home that they need the internet for (3%), or take part in sport (3%), camp (3%), a cultural activity (3%), or a class trip (2%). This is a very similar picture to 2016.

Two of these items varied with school decile:

- 9% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school said their child had been unable to do school work at home that they need the internet for, compared with 3% of those with a child at a decile 3–4 or 7–8 school, and 1% at a decile 9–10 school. None with a child at a decile 5–6 school indicated their child had been unable to do this due to cost.
- 7% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school said their child had been unable to attend regular classes when they needed a teacher aide due to cost, compared with 2% of those with a child at decile 3–4 or 9–10 schools, and none with a child at a decile 5–8 school.

A higher proportion of Māori whānau indicated their child was unable to do the following school activities because they cost too much:

- school work at home that they needed the internet for (11%, compared with 2% of non-Māori parents and whānau)
- attending regular full-time classes when they needed a teacher aide (7%, compared with 1% of non-Māori parents and whānau).

Twelve percent of parents and whānau with a child who has a disability or needs learning support said their child had been unable to attend regular full-time classes when they needed a teacher aide, compared with less than 1% of other parents and whānau.

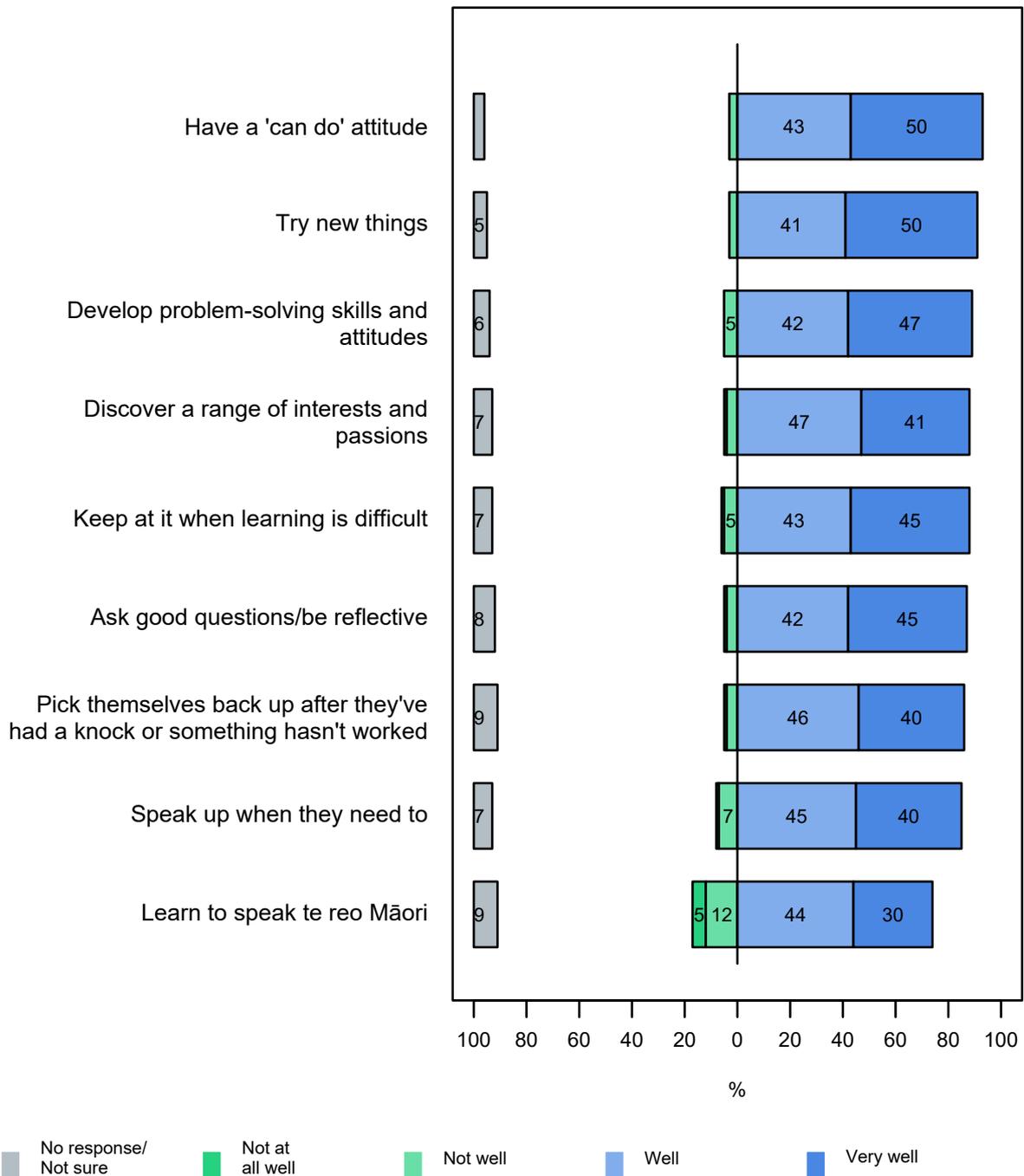
Most parents and whānau think their child's school helps them develop positive attitudes and skills

Two sets of items asked parents and whānau how well the school helped their child develop skills and attitudes. These are shown in Figures 40 and 41 below.

Many parents and whānau thought their child's school helped their child develop positive attitudes and skills that are needed to make the most of life, and to support learning. Over 80% of parents and whānau thought their child's school did these things 'well' or 'very well', with the only exception being learning to speak te reo Māori, which 74% of parents and whānau thought was done 'well' or 'very well' (see Figure 40). Compared with 2016, a higher proportion of parents and whānau selected 'very well' for all items.³⁴

³⁴ Because there were a higher proportion of parents and whānau with degree qualifications responding in 2019, we checked the patterns in the 2 years to see if this might account for increases, but there was no clear pattern indicating that this was the reason for the increase in parent satisfaction levels.

FIGURE 40 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helped their child develop attitudes and skills that support learning (n = 395)

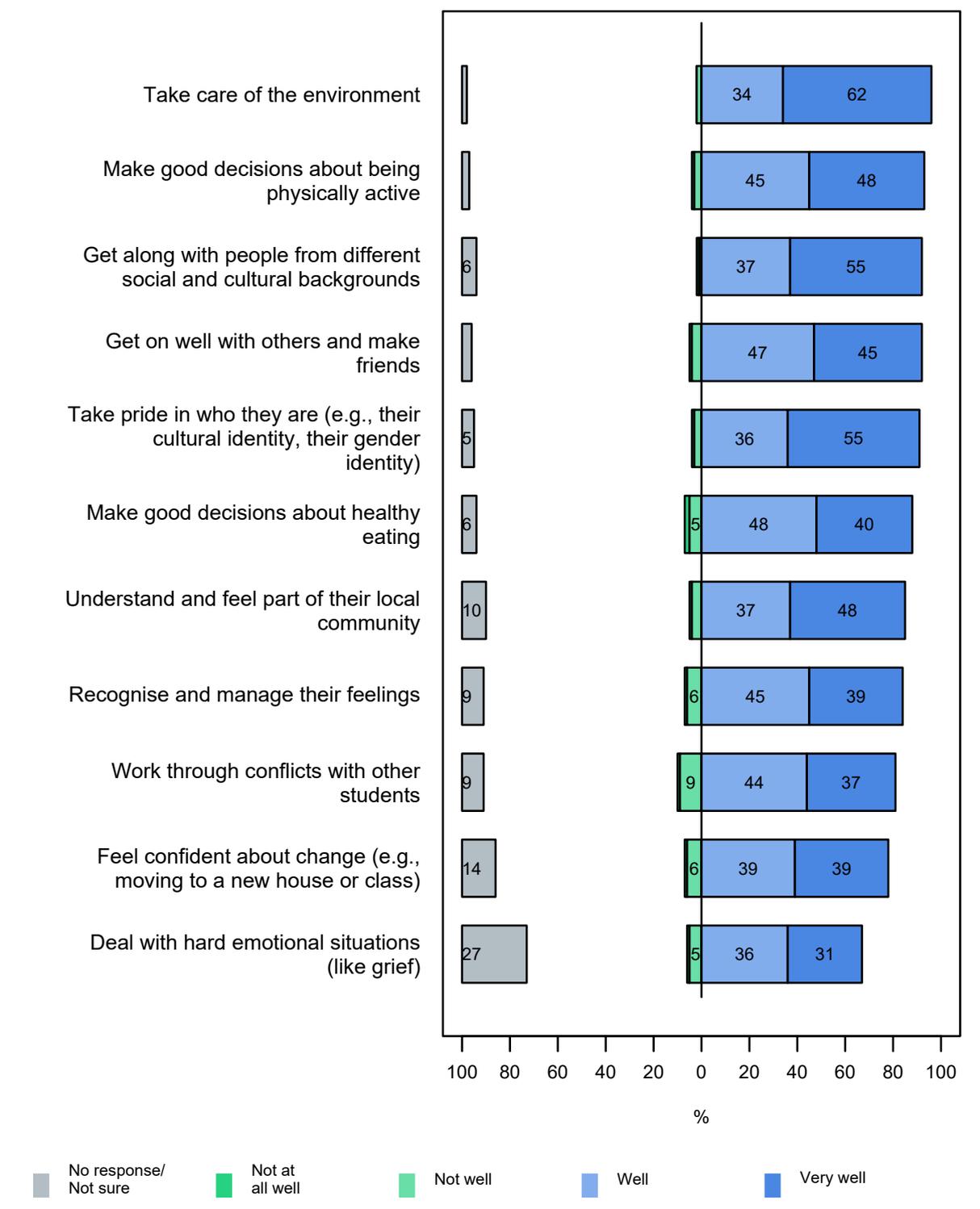


Māori parents' and whānau responses to the items in Figure 40 did not vary significantly from those of non-Māori parents and whānau, and there were no differences associated with school decile.

Figure 41 shows the responses to the second set of items about skills and attitudes, related more to wellbeing and social connections. Many parents and whānau considered the school helped their child develop these 'well' or 'very well', and again compared with 2016, a higher proportion of parents and whānau selected 'very well' for some items. The following items had an increase of 10 percentage points

or more: 'get along with people from different social and cultural backgrounds', 'take pride in who they are', and 'recognise and manage their feelings'. A new item, 'take care of the environment', topped the list, with 96% of parents and whānau saying the school did this 'well' or 'very well'.

FIGURE 41 Parent and whānau views of how well the school helped their child develop attitudes and skills that support wellbeing (n = 395)



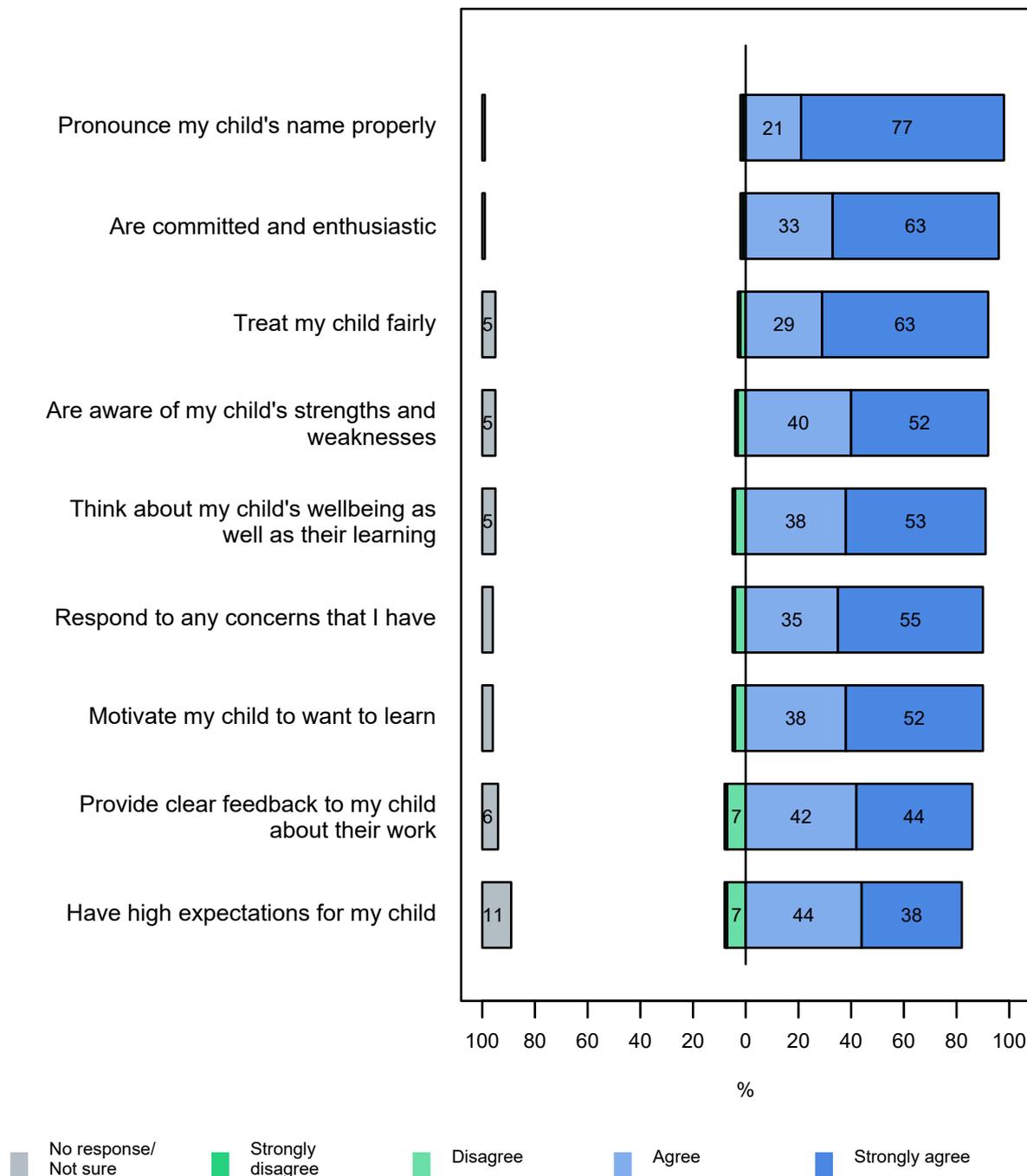
Māori parents' and whānau responses to the items in Figure 41 did not vary significantly from those of non-Māori parents, and there were no differences associated with school decile.

Most parents and whānau are positive about their child's teachers

Figure 42 shows the positive views that parents and whānau hold about their child's teachers. As they have been in previous national surveys, teachers are seen as committed and enthusiastic, aware of a child's strengths and weaknesses, and responsive to parent concerns. More parents and whānau in 2019 strongly agreed that their child teacher(s) are committed and enthusiastic: 63%, compared with 54% in 2016.

Two new items in 2019 asked parents how much they agreed that their child's teacher(s) pronounced their child's name correctly, and that their child was treated fairly. Nearly all (98%) of parents and whānau agreed that teachers pronounced their child's name correctly, and 92% agreed their child was treated fairly.

FIGURE 42 Parent and whānau views of their child's teachers (n = 395)

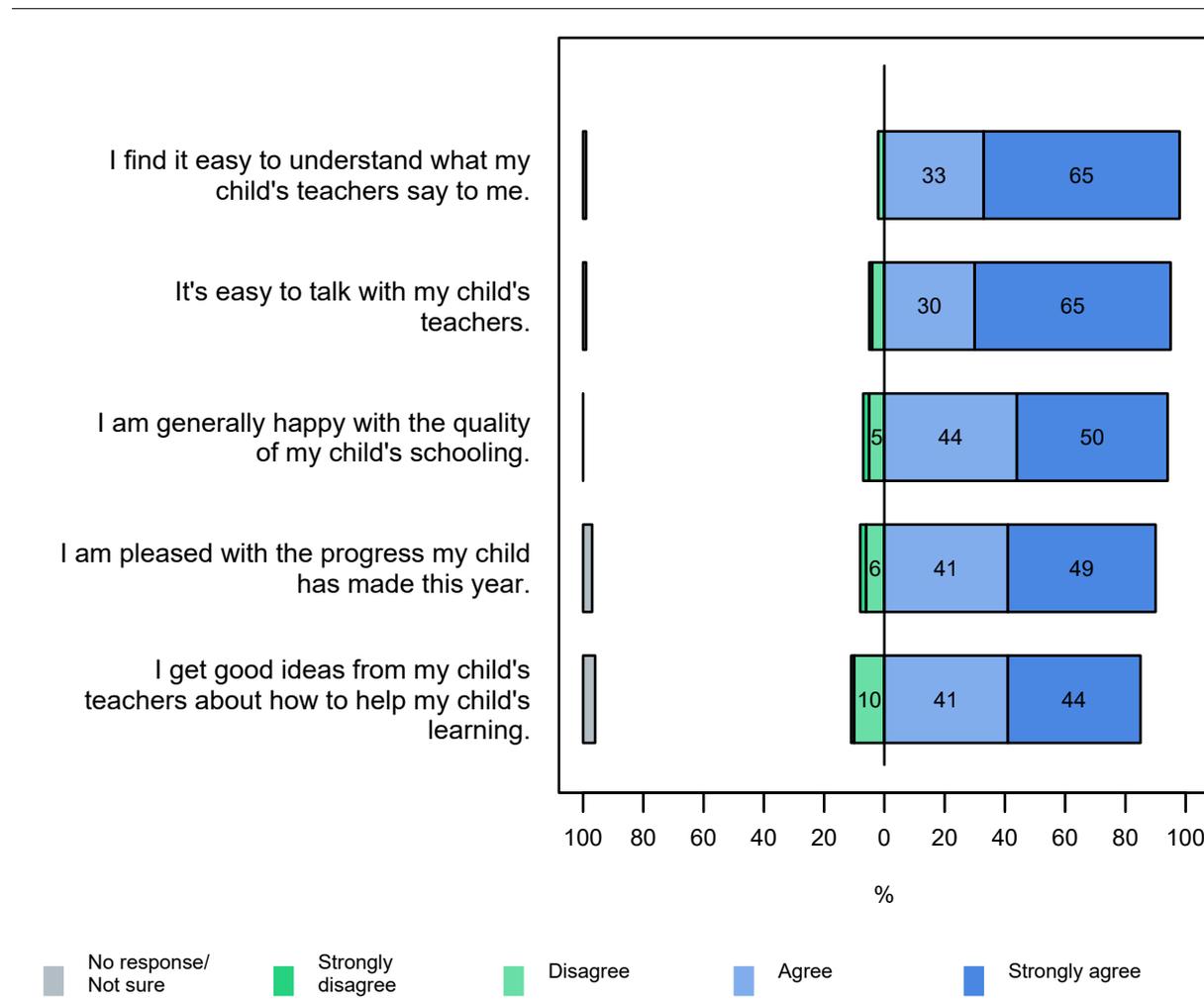


Māori parents' and whānau responses to the items in Figure 42 did not vary significantly from those of non-Māori parents and whānau. Parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–4 school were more likely to agree that their child's teacher had high expectations for their child (89% of parents with a child in a decile 1–2 school, and 93% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 3–4 school, compared with 75% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 7–8 school, and 77% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 9–10 school). Eleven percent of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 7–10 school disagreed that their child's teacher had high expectations, compared with 2% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–4 school.

Most parents and whānau are positive about their communication with teachers and their child's progress

Figure 43 shows parent and whānau responses to items about their relationships with their child's teacher and their views on their child's progress and learning. Nearly two-thirds of the parents and whānau strongly agreed they find it easy to understand what their child's teachers say to them, and to talk with their child's teachers. Half strongly agreed that they were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling.

FIGURE 43 Parents and whānau views on communication with their child's teachers and their child's progress (n = 395)



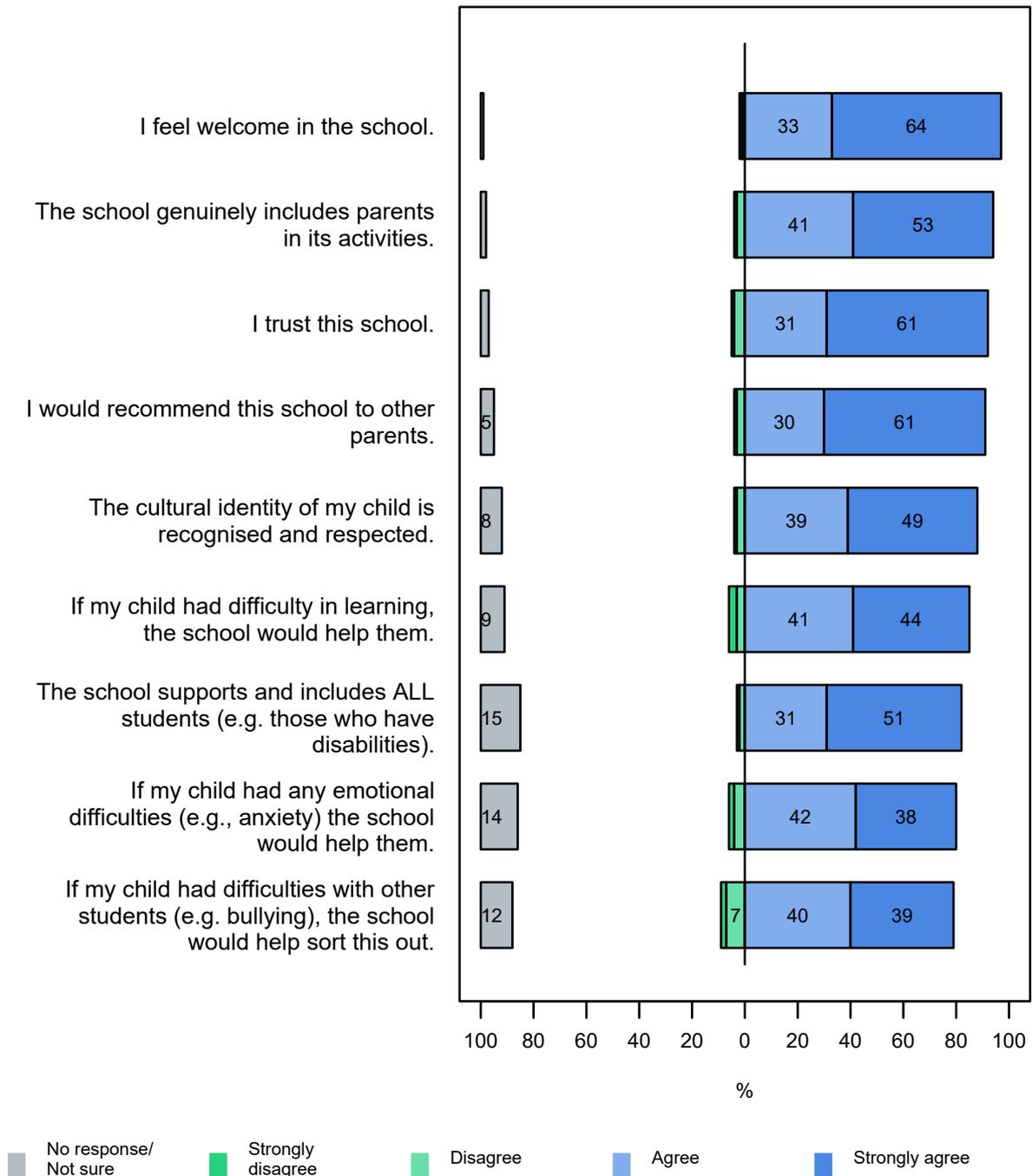
There were no differences by school decile. Māori parent and whānau responses differed from non-Māori parent and whānau responses for one item. Māori parents and whānau were more likely to strongly agree that they were pleased with the progress their child has made (67% of Māori parents and whānau, compared with 46% of non-Māori parents and whānau).

Figure 44 shows parent and whānau responses to items about their own relationship with the school and how they consider the school would respond if their child had learning or socioemotional difficulties. Nearly all (98%) of the parents and whānau agreed they feel welcome in the school, an increase from 2016. In 2016, 53% strongly agreed they feel welcome in the school, and this has increased to 64% in 2019. Over

60% also strongly agreed that they trust the school (a new item in 2019), and that they would recommend the school to other parents.

Eighty-nine percent of parents and whānau agreed or strongly agreed that their child's cultural identity is recognised and respected, up from 79% in 2016 and 67% in 2013. This increase is mostly at the 'strongly agree' level (increasing from 27% in 2013 to 36% in 2016 to 49% in 2019). Māori parents and whānau were more positive than non-Māori parents and whānau for this item: 95% of Māori whānau agreed (67% strongly agreed) that their child's cultural identity is recognised and respected.

FIGURE 44 Parent and whānau experiences of their child's school (n = 395)



There were no differences by school decile. Māori parents and whānau were more likely than non-Māori parents and whānau to strongly agree that if their child had emotional difficulties or experienced difficulties with other students, the school would help them (58% of Māori parents and whānau, compared with 34% of non-Māori parents and whānau in relation to emotional difficulties and 56% of Māori parents and whānau, compared with 37% of non-Māori parents and whānau in relation to difficulties with other students).

Parent and whānau comments on their child's school, teachers, and learning experiences are mostly positive

At the end of the survey, parents and whānau were invited to add a comment about their youngest child's schooling. Some of these comments are presented below.

Twenty-two percent of the parents and whānau ($n = 88$) wrote positive comments about their own or their child's experience of the school.

The teachers and staff are outstanding in the efforts they make toward caring for and educating the children. I believe they go above and beyond every day. They really make the school a central and trusted hub of the local community.

We have great confidence in this school for the education and support they provide our child. The staff, environment, curriculum and administration have been amazing in our time there.

We find this school absolutely wonderful and love the fact it feels like a community where everyone knows everyone and looks out for each other. It's so easy to communicate with any of the staff and our child's teacher is 100% committed and passionate.

Four percent of the parents and whānau ($n = 17$) made negative comments about their own or their child's experience of the school. A theme in these responses was staff turnover.

Instability and unreliability of teaching staff. High staff turnover for such a small school.

Both of my children have been affected by staff changes. Child 1 has had four teachers in 2 years, Child 2 has had two teachers this year ... This is very disruptive and demotivating.

We feel our child's classes are rather chaotic and would benefit from some structure and quiet during workshops. We find it difficult to get clear info on where our child sits compared to expectation and the school reporting system does not really help.

Our son was left to drift in his year 4. He went from a very motivated student to one that doesn't want to go to school. We discussed this with his teacher. She had no ways of thinking differently to re-engage our son.

Some parents and whānau (6%, $n = 23$) offered suggestions for improving their school, including communication with and reporting to parents, the use of composite classes, homework policy, and extra-curricular opportunities.

Having a Kapa Haka group. I think the whole school would benefit and enjoy doing Kapa Haka.

There needs to be channels for parents to have a voice at the school. Parents should have an opportunity to give honest feedback about teachers ... this has never been asked for.

It would be good to receive a regular newsletter from a teacher about what is happening in the class. What activities they are doing and what they are learning.

They could definitely utilise their Facebook page more often. I know more about other schools in our area than I know about this school.

More consultation/parent surveys—in the seven years of being involved with the school there has only been one parent survey evening and no actual surveys.

Some (5%, $n = 18$) offered suggestions for improving school or education more generally. These included comments about modern/innovative learning environments, use of digital technology, and Ministry of Education funding and resourcing, including for learning support.

I believe there is too much emphasis on new entrants having to read, sit for ages, please everyone etc. They need time to develop other skills [and can] cover this stuff when they are ready. Not just this school but all schools.

I shouldn't have to reapply for my child's high health needs when she has a lifelong condition that will only get worse. The school has been very supportive but this is a very time consuming exercise for myself and the school

Going forward more support needs to be in place for teachers to cope with children with complex behavioural issues.

The school and their leadership team are doing extremely well in the face of chronic underfunding from central government. Further, the school is let down by a lack of transparency in the mechanisms used to target special needs teachers to schools by central government.

The open plan classes are too noisy and distracting.

I think long screen hours at school will affect the motor skills of a child ... Traditional learning is good over the full-on device learning and it is good for mental and physical development of students.

Finally, 4% ($n = 16$) of the parents and whānau made a comment expressing concern that their child was not getting what they need. This included comments about learning support, and support for gifted and talented children.

It could be helpful to have more information around dyslexia. My eldest child has displayed some signs of this.

My child has dyspraxia. Not every teacher he has had recognises it or understands what it is.

My child has a hearing loss and could benefit from extra assistance in class that apparently we don't qualify for. More support for children with additional needs is acutely needed at our school.

I'm not sure our school is well enough equipped to meet the needs of academically gifted children

Parents and whānau receive better information about their child's progress in reading, writing, and maths, than in other curriculum areas

Parent and whānau ability to support their child's learning is related to the information they have about their child's time at school and their performance.

We asked parents and whānau two questions about the quality and clarity of information they got from the school. Figure 45 shows their views on the information about their child's progress across curriculum areas.³⁵

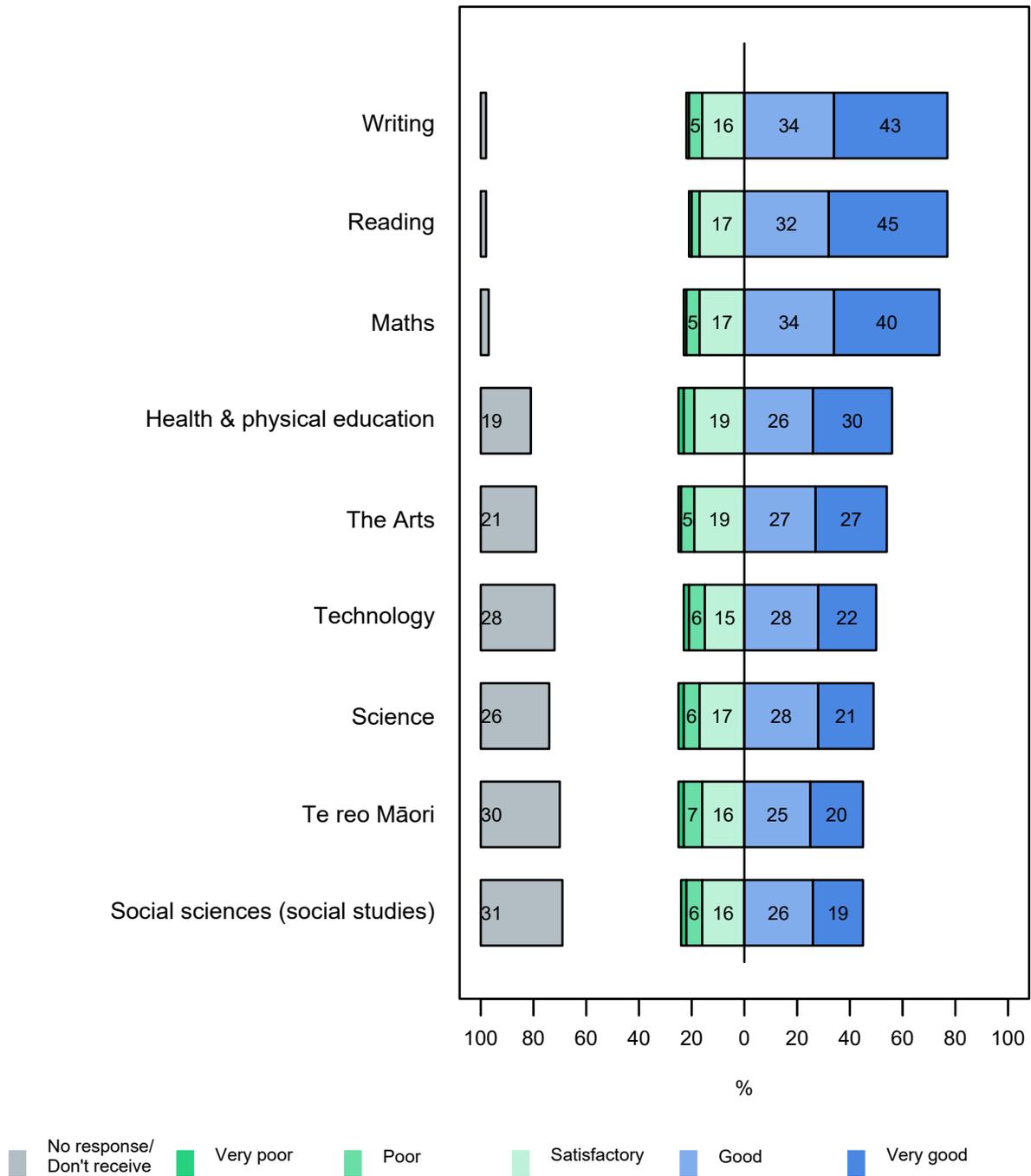
Figure 45 shows that parents and whānau rated the quality and clarity of information they got about their child's progress in writing, reading, and maths more highly than the information they got about progress in other curriculum areas.³⁶ A sizeable minority of parents and whānau said they did not receive information about their child's progress in science (24%), technology (26%), social studies (28%), health and PE (19%), te reo Māori (28%), and the arts (20%).

Parents and whānau with a child at a lower decile school were more likely to say that the information they got about their child's progress in te reo Māori was very good (36% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 1–2 school, decreasing to 11% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 9–10 school). Māori parents' and whānau responses did not vary significantly from those of non-Māori parents and whānau.

³⁵ We also included this figure in Section 7 Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting.

³⁶ These data are not comparable with 2013 and 2016 data, as the focus in the previous two rounds of the survey was on reporting in relation to National Standards.

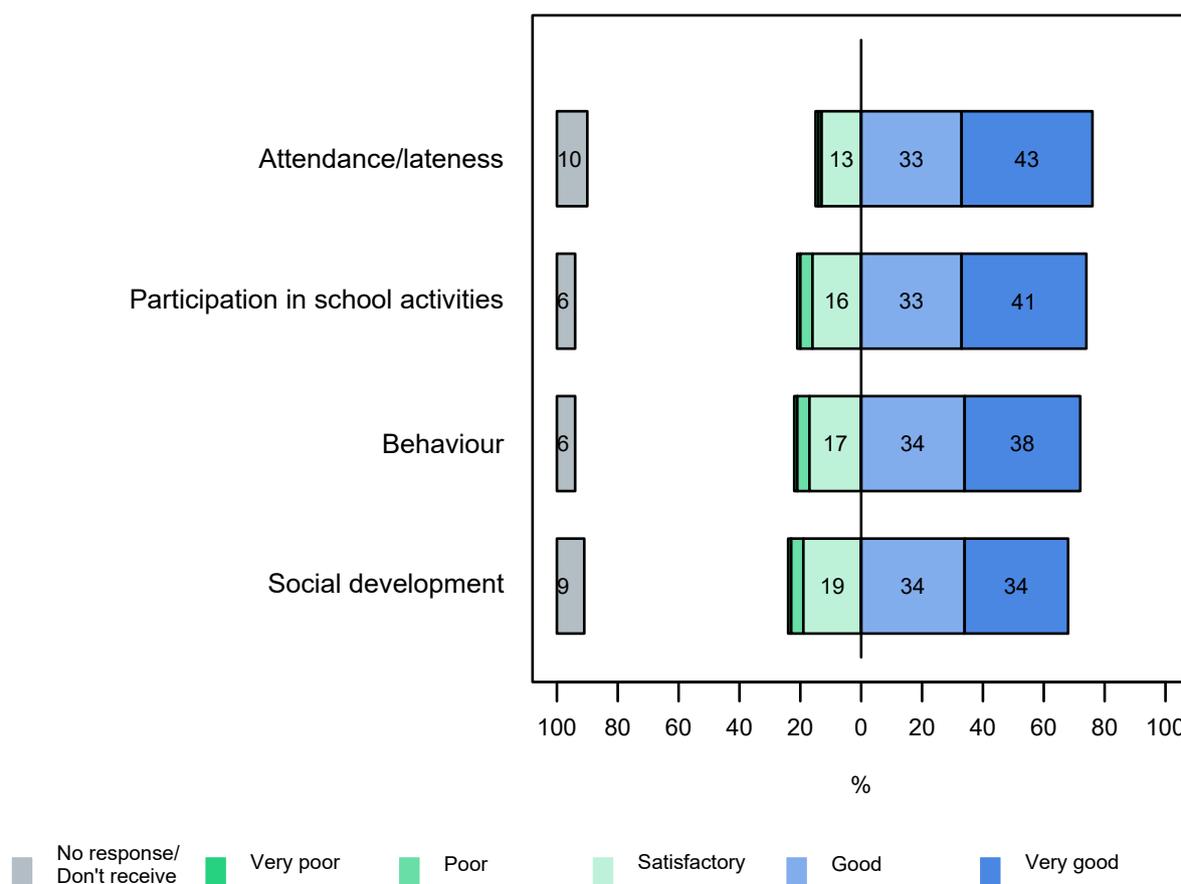
FIGURE 45 Parent and whānau views of the quality of information they get from their child's school about progress in curriculum areas (n = 395)



Many parents and whānau receive good information about their child's attendance, progress, and behaviour

Many parents and whānau thought the quality of information they received from school about their child's behaviour, social development, participation in school activities, and attendance/lateness was good or very good. Fewer than 5% of parents and whānau indicated any of the information shown in Figure 46 was of a poor or very poor quality. Between 4–8% said they did not receive this information.

FIGURE 46 Parent and whānau views of the quality of information they get from their child's school about their child's social development, behaviour, and participation (n = 395)



The only decile-related difference was that parents and whānau with a child at a lower decile school were more likely to say that the information they got about their child's behaviour was very good (66% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 1–2 school, decreasing to 29% of parents and whānau with a child in a decile 9–10 school).

Māori parent and whānau responses differed from non-Māori parent and whānau responses for one item. Māori parents and whānau were more likely to say that the information they received about their child's attendance/lateness was poor (6% compared with 1% of non-Māori parents and whānau). However, they were also more likely to say it was very good (51%, compared with 42% of non-Māori parents and whānau).

Over half of parents take part in school surveys, fundraising and school trips, and attend sports

In 2019, the proportion of parents and whānau who said they had been involved with their child's school by responding to a school survey had increased to 61%. The proportion of parents responding who were on the PTA, school council, or board of trustees (BOT) had also increased. Otherwise, there were only minor differences compared with 2016. Parental involvement does seem to have increased over the decade in relation to sports.

TABLE 7 School activities in which parents and whānau had participated during the year

School activity	2010 (n = 550) %	2013 (n = 684) %	2016 (n = 504) %	2019 (n = 395) %
Responded to school survey(s)	48	46	52	61
Attending sport	41	39	62	59
Fundraising	53	51	61	54
School trips	50	43	52	52
Attending school plays/choir/orchestra, etc.	*	*	45	47
Coaching/helping with sports	16	18	23	25
Classroom help	16	15	17	22
PTA/school council/BOT	13	12	13	22
Consultation	*	12	8	16
Attending kapa haka	*	*	10	15
Building repairs and maintenance	4	3	5	9
Canteen/school lunches	8	*	8	7
Coaching/helping with school plays/choir/orchestra, etc.	*	*	6	6
Coaching/helping with kapa haka	*	*	3	6
Helping in library	4	4	2	5
*Not asked				

Very few parents and whānau (<3%) indicated they had attended, coached, or helped with a Poly club or Pacific cultural group, or taught te reo Māori or tikanga Māori (not shown in Table 7). Māori parents and whānau were more likely than non-Māori parents and whānau to have:

- taught te reo Māori and/or tikanga Māori (13% compared with 0.3%)
- coached or helped with kapa haka (20% compared with 3%)
- attended kapa haka (36% compared with 12%)
- supervised around the grounds (15% compared with 4%).

Looking at parents' and whānau involvement in school activities, there were several differences related to school decile, all showing a higher proportion of involvement from parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school:

- 7% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school had taught te reo Māori and/or tikanga Māori (compared with 3% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 3–4 school, and 0–1% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 5–10 school)
- 16% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school had helped with kapa haka (compared with 5% or less for parents and whānau of a child at other decile schools)
- 7% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school had helped with Poly club or Pacific cultural groups (compared with 2% or less for parents and whānau of a child at other decile schools)
- 13% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school had helped in the school library (compared with 6% or less for parents and whānau of a child at other decile schools)
- 11% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school had attended Poly club or Pacific cultural groups (compared with 5% or less for parents and whānau of a child at other decile schools)
- 29% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school and 20% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 9–10 had attended kapa haka (compared with 8–12% for parents and whānau of a child at decile 3–8 schools)
- 16% of parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school had supervised around the grounds (compared with 6% or less for parents and whānau of a child at other decile schools).

Summary

Most parents and whānau are positive about their child's experience of school and teachers, and their own involvement in the school. More parents and whānau in 2019 than in 2016 felt welcome in their child's school, saw their child's teachers as committed and enthusiastic, and felt their child's cultural identity was recognised and respected. Parents and whānau with a child with a disability or needing learning support were less positive than other parents and whānau.

Many parents and whānau also thought that their child's school helped their child develop positive attitudes and skills that are needed to make the most of life, and to support learning

Cost had meant their child being unable to do at least one school activity for 18% of parents and whānau. Those with a child at a decile 1–2 school, and Māori parents and whānau were more likely to indicate their child had been unable to do school work at home that they need the internet for, or attend regular classes when they needed a teacher aide, because these activities cost too much. Parents and whānau with a child with a disability or needing learning support were also more likely to say their child had not been able to attend regular classes when they needed a teacher aide.

Nearly all of the parents and whānau agreed that teachers pronounced their child's name correctly, and that their child was treated fairly.

Māori parents and whānau responding were as positive about their child's learning and school experiences as non-Māori. They were more likely than non-Māori parents and whānau to strongly agree that they were pleased with the progress their child has made this year (67% of Māori parents and whānau, compared with 46% of non-Māori parents and whānau).

Around 60% of parents and whānau responding to the survey have been involved in their child's primary school in the past year by responding to a survey or attending sports events. Parents and whānau with a child at a decile 1–2 school responding were the most likely group of parents and whānau to participate in many of the activities.

Most parents and whānau said their child attended their first choice of school, and for many this was also the primary or intermediate school closest to them. In 2019, there was no association between school decile and whether a child attended their first choice of school.