The Lunchtime Listen:

Helping Schools Improve Lunchtimes Through Pupil Voice.

June Stevenson
MAY 2025

Your paragraph text

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Key Statistics

School lunches are a key area for improvement: **only half of pupils** report school lunches as **'tasty'.**

11%
of schools give pupils **fewer than 30 minutes** for their lunchtime.

30 min

Football reigns!
But pupils enjoy a variety of activities.

7% of pupils
experience **social isolation** during lunchtimes, reporting no friends to be with, or 'only sometimes'.

Over a quarter
of pupils say they don't have **enough time** to eat.

Pupils value the chance to **socialise.**

88%
of pupils enjoyed their last lunchtime

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

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INTRODUCTION

Lunchtimes are important for so many different reasons. Pupils need to eat, and to eat well, particularly those who rely on free school meals. They can allow time for getting outside in fresh air, and for running around or playing sport, benefitting both physical and mental health. There may be various activities and clubs that pupils enjoy doing. Lunchtimes are an important time for being with friends – and can provide a precious space to do this without mobile phones dominating social interactions.

Then there are all the ways in which successful lunchtimes can impact the school. Crucially for staff, what happens at lunchtime can impact the rest of the afternoon, for good or ill. On a typical day, **60% of primary school teachers tell us they end up using lesson time to resolve playground issues.**

Lunchtimes are often difficult for schools. There are all sorts of challenges around finding sufficient time, space, supervision and resources. **55% of teachers report behaviour in their schools to be at its worst during lunchtimes** (the next closest response is for transitions between lessons, at 27%), and this is in a context where student behaviour has remained the top cause of stress or worry to teachers for the past three years.

The Lunchtime Listen represents our attempt to help explore issues around lunchtimes in schools, canvassing and examining views from teachers, leaders and pupils.

1. WHAT DID WE AIM TO DISCOVER?

Lunchtimes touch on so many important issues, and whilst we've already been asking teachers and school leaders lots of questions about the subject via Teacher Tapp, we were also keen to hear from pupils.

The Lunchtime Listen project aimed to give an insight into **pupil perspectives** on their lunchtimes at school – whether they enjoy them, what they think about the food, time, space and activities on offer, and what they feel would make lunchtimes better.

We created a new set of questions on our School Surveys platform, and invited schools to take part in this Lunchtime Listen during March 2025. We hoped that this listening exercise would allow pupils to make a valuable contribution to this important topic.

> **43 schools from across the country took part. We had 2,814 surveys completed by pupils in primary schools and 8,907 surveys completed by pupils in secondary schools.**

The aim of the report is to share what we discovered, and thereby open up discussion on what schools, trusts and others in education might do to improve lunchtimes.

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2. WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

Most children enjoy lunchtimes

Overall, 88% of pupils gave a positive review of their last lunchtime, saying that they had enjoyed it 'a lot' or 'it was OK'.

Whilst this headline figure was the same for both primary and secondary schools, the breakdown of enthusiasm was notably different: 42% of primary school pupils enjoyed it 'a lot', compared to a more muted 32% in secondaries.

In general, pupils enjoy their lunchtimes

	Yes, a lot	It was OK	Not very much	No, not at all
Primary (N=1,595)	42%	45%	9%	4%
Secondary (N=1,644)	32%	56%	7%	5%

Question asked: "Did you enjoy your last lunchtime?" and answered by 3,239 students

- ■ Yes, a lot
- ■ It was OK
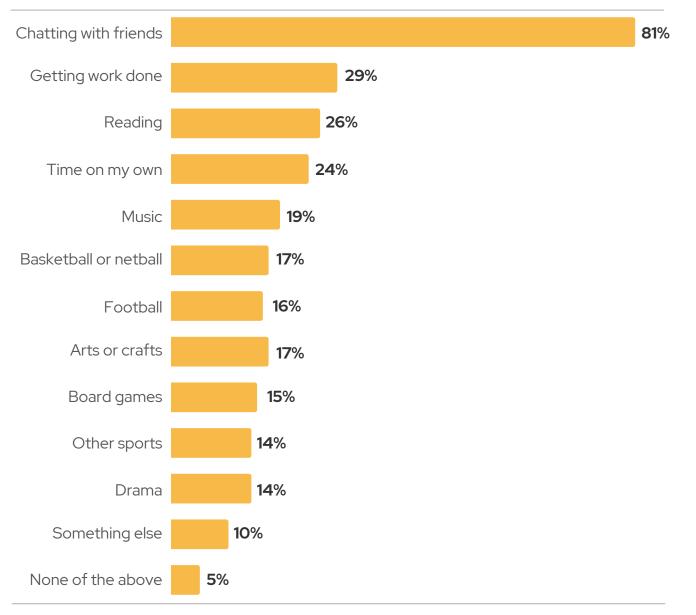- ■ Not very much
- ■ No, not at all

Enthusiasm also tracked with age in primary schools - the youngest year groups had the highest proportion saying 'a lot' with Y5/6 more likely to say 'it was ok'. In secondaries this wasn't such a clear theme, with no pattern of difference between years groups from Y7-13.

Pupils value the chance to socialise

From the open response questions about preferred activities and wishes for lunchtimes, it is clear that **most pupils place a great value on the chance lunchtimes afford for socialising.** Given the opportunity to select up to three preferred lunchtime activities, 'chatting with friends' was a clear winner:

Students overwhelmingly prefer to chat with their friends during school lunchtime

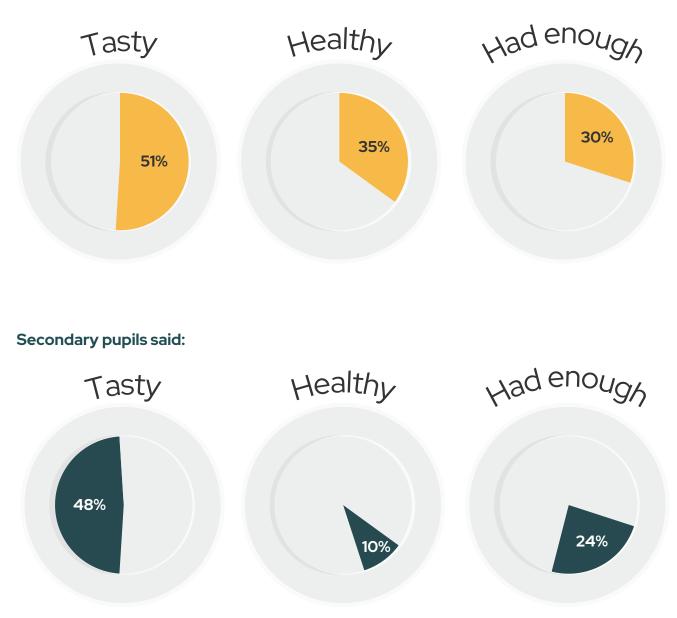| Activity	Percentage
Chatting with friends	81%
Getting work done	29%
Reading	26%
Time on my own	24%
Music	19%
Basketball or netball	17%
Football	16%
Arts or crafts	17%
Board games	15%
Other sports	14%
Drama	14%
Something else	10%
None of the above	5%

Question asked: "Activities I enjoy most during my free time at school are..." and answered by 139 students

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School lunches are a key area for improvement

Whilst overall enjoyment levels were quite high, it did not seem to be the food that was driving this positivity. Of those who had tried the school food (83% of primary respondents and 79% of secondary respondents), there was not much enthusiasm for either quality or quantity.

Primary pupils said:

Tasty

51%

Healthy

35%

Had enough

30%

Secondary pupils said:

Tasty

48%

Healthy

10%

Had enough

24%

Across both primary and secondary schools, **pupils' top wish for improving their lunchtimes was for 'better food'** (30% of secondary school pupils and 25% of primary school pupils). This in itself opens up lots of further questions. A next step here for many schools could be a further survey to look into improving the food, and potentially to look at surveying parents on this topic too.

47% of pupils also expressed a desire for quieter spaces to eat lunch. It was the top improvement wish for 12% of pupils. Of common problems in the lunchhall, the other stand out issue was a lack of seats (cited by 57% of secondary pupils).

The teacher view

- **41%** of teachers report that there are pupils in their class regularly too hungry to learn because they have not had enough food. **This rises to 68%** for those teaching in schools in the top quartile for numbers of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

- Teachers have also told us about seeing **rising numbers** of children who are not eligible for FSM but are not affording school meals.

- **Over a fifth of teachers** say that their school's lunches are not good enough for them to give to a child they care about.

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Over a quarter of pupils say they don't have enough time to eat

Over a quarter of school pupils report that they don't usually have enough time to eat each lunch.

Only a third of pupils said that they 'always' have enough time to eat lunch, rising to 70% if we include those who 'usually' do.

There is a **noticeable difference between phases:** whereas 41% of primary children say 'always' (and 71% including 'usually'), this drops to 33% in secondary (and 71% including usually). 9% of secondary pupils said they 'rarely' or 'never' have enough time to eat lunch (this is 7% in primary)

Not all pupils have enough time to eat their lunch

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or never
Primary (N=1,595)	41%	30%	22%	7%
Secondary (N=1,644)	33%	38%	20%	9%

Question asked: "I have enough time to eat lunch" and answered by 1,647 students

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely or never

3. HOW LONG SHOULD LUNCHTIMES BE?

We have already seen how many pupils report struggling to have time to eat their lunch. But how long is a typical school lunchtime, and how long should it be? Some of our findings confirm school leaders' expectations. **Others may surprise them.**

We invite readers to guess the answers to the following questions before turning the page to see what the results really are.

A. How long is a typical lunchtime in a primary school?

When asked, 'How long is lunchtime in your school?', which time range was reported as the most common by teachers in primary schools?

- 30 minutes or fewer
- 31-44 minutes
- 45-59 minutes
- An hour or more

B. How many secondary schools have fewer than 30 minutes?

Asked the same question, 'How long is lunchtime in your school?', what proportion of secondary school teachers reported a lunchtime shorter than 30 minutes?

- 2%
- 5%
- 8%
- 14%

C. Would secondary school pupils prefer a longer lunchtime?

We presented secondary school pupils with an imaginary trade-off. When asked, 'Would you choose a longer lunchtime, even if this meant a later finish time?', what was the most popular response?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes probably
- Neutral
- No, probably not
- No, definitely not

D. What is the ideal lunchtime length according to teachers?

Asked to imagine setting up their own school, how long would teachers make the lunch break?

- 30 minutes or fewer
- 31-44 minutes
- 45-59 minutes
- An hour or more

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Time conundrums: the answers

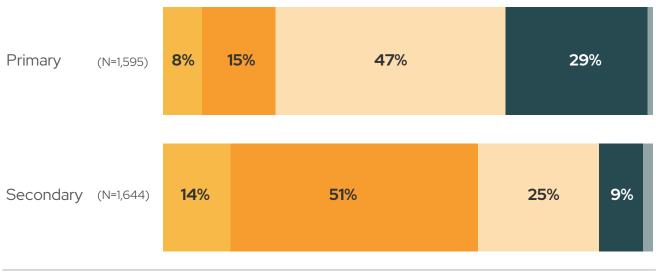## A. How long is a typical lunchtime in a primary school?

The most common length for lunchtimes in primary schools is 45-59 minutes (47%). 30% of primaries have an hour or more. But nearly a quarter have under 45 minutes, with 8% having 30 minutes or fewer.

B. How many schools have short lunchtimes?

Lunchtime lengths vary considerably by phase. **14% of secondary schools have a lunchtime shorter than 30 minutes.** The equivalent proportion in primary schools is 8%.

Only 11% of secondary school teachers report that their school has a lunchtime of an hour or longer, and the most common length is 31-44 minutes.

Furthermore, **pupils in the least affluent secondary schools are twice as likely to have a short lunchtime** (under 30 minutes) as those in the top quartile.

Secondary schools typically have shorter lunches than primaries

Primary (N=1,595)	8%	15%	47%	29%
Secondary (N=1,644)	14%	51%	25%	9%

Question asked: "How long is your lunch break? (If you run a split lunch, then just count one session.)" and answered by 9,797 teachers on 31/03/2025 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)
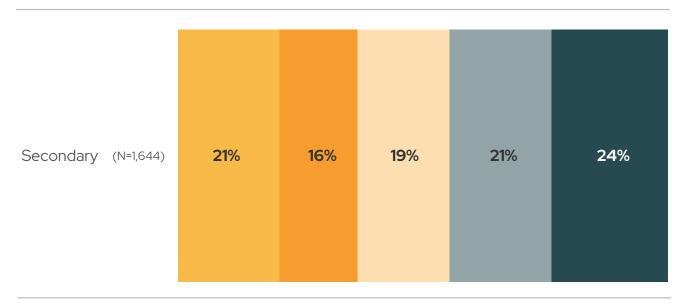
- Less than 30 minutes
- 30-44 minutes
- 45 minutes-59 minutes
- 1 hour-1 hour 14 minutes
- 1 hour 15 minutes or longer

C. Would secondary school pupils prefer a longer lunchtime?

Secondary school pupils **were divided about the idea** of a possible trade-off of longer lunchtimes for a later finish time. 16% of the pupils in the survey reported that they already had a full lunch hour. Of those who didn't, the idea of a longer lunch completely split opinions.

37% said they would like one, even if it meant a later finish time, with 19% neutral. But 45% did not want to make this sort of change (of these 24% 'definitely not', versus 21% 'probably not')

Secondary students have mixed feelings about a longer lunch time (if it means finishing later)

Secondary (N=1,644)	21%	16%	19%	21%	24%

Question asked: "I would prefer to have a full lunch hour, even if it meant we finished the school day later." and answered by 527 students

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, probably
- Neutral
- No, probably not
- No, definitely not

D. What is the ideal lunchtime length according to teachers?

Amongst teachers, **the most popular ideal length** for lunchtimes was 45-59minutes.

For choice, over three quarters of teachers would set a lunchtime longer than 45 minutes. We also presented teachers with the possible trade-off of a full lunch hour, even if it meant a later end of the school day: a quarter would take this, but more than half would not. Although divided on the question, classroom teachers were more than twice as likely as senior leaders to be in favour of the idea.
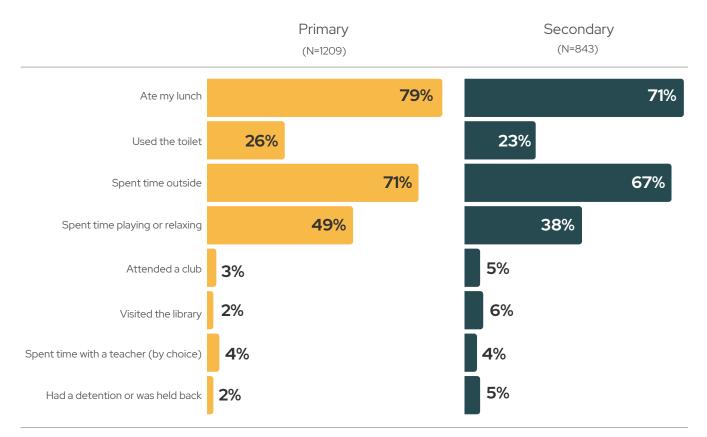
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4. WHAT ACTUALLY GOES ON AT LUNCHTIME?

The issue of whether lunchtimes are long enough (or even too long), really taps into all the bigger questions about what lunchtimes are for, what pupils value doing, and how they are organised. When asked how they spent their last lunchtime, the most popular answer for both phases was 'spent time playing or relaxing'. But what does this involve?

Overall, 43% reported that they spent time playing or relaxing, with 12% reporting another positive activity (attending a club, visiting the library or spending time with a teacher by choice – with an equal split of 4% for each of these). There were small differences by phase.

	Primary (N=1209)	Secondary (N=843)
Ate my lunch	79%	71%
Used the toilet	26%	23%
Spent time outside	71%	67%
Spent time playing or relaxing	49%	38%
Attended a club	3%	5%
Visited the library	2%	6%
Spent time with a teacher (by choice)	4%	4%
Had a detention or was held back	2%	5%

Question asked: "In your last lunchtime, what did you do?" and answered by 2,052 students

Almost a fifth of pupils in primary schools reported that they didn't have time to do more than simply eat lunch and use the toilet, falling slightly to 16% of secondary school pupils. This seems potentially at odds with the previous finding when we asked them about time to eat lunch, and even higher numbers reported insufficient time to eat. It may suggest that there are quite a lot of pupils who are rushing (and not even finishing?) their lunch, in order to prioritise having a chance to go and do something else during lunchtime.
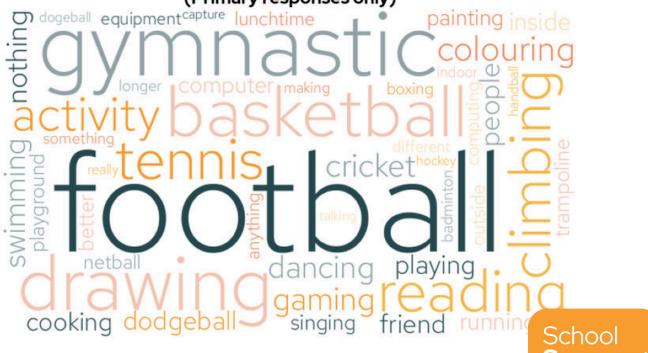
Football reigns – but pupils enjoy a variety of activities

When offered the chance to request a new lunchtime activity or club, around 80% of respondents had a suggestion to make. Football was by far the most popular request, mentioned in over 25% of total suggestions. Other popular sports included basketball, volleyball and badminton. Some more niche or creative ideas appeared sporadically, covering a huge range of ideas including music, reading, drama, or cultural exchange clubs.
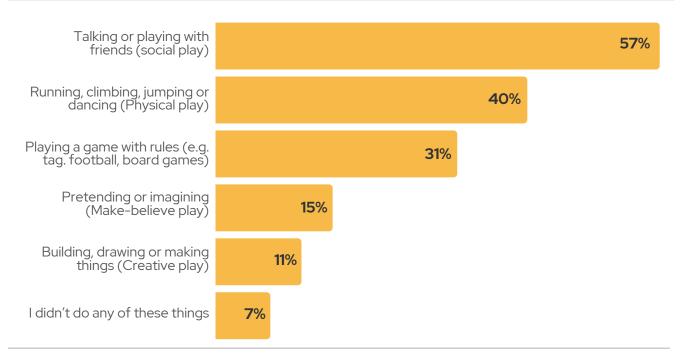
If my school offered one new lunchtime club or activity, I would love it to be… (Secondary responses only)

really drawing climbing swimming somewhere something
volleyball hockey nothing
sleeping summer lunchtime indoor rounder
gymnastic longer lesson homework people netball
friend reading basketball cooking
cricket inside different making related
dodgeball tennis badminton
revision activity outside crochet
football friday riding gaming
anything playing allowed already boxing computer

If my school offered one new lunchtime club or activity, I would love it to be… (Primary responses only)

dogeball equipment capture lunchtime painting inside
nothing gymnastic colouring
longer computer making boxing indoor people handball
swimming activity something different climbing
playground tennis computing
really cricket hockey trampoline
better football badminton
netball anything outside
drawing dancing playing reading
cooking dodgeball gaming singing friend running

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Primary school children reported great variety in the types of play that they are doing, and the different games this can involve:

Primary pupils report a wide variety of types of play:

Type of play	Percentage
Talking or playing with friends (social play)	57%
Running, climbing, jumping or dancing (Physical play)	40%
Playing a game with rules (e.g. tag. football, board games)	31%
Pretending or imagining (Make-believe play)	15%
Building, drawing or making things (Creative play)	11%
I didn't do any of these things	7%

Question asked: "In your last lunchtime, what sort of playing did you do?" and answered by 1,315 students

We asked primary pupils to tell us their favourite game to play at the moment. The responses indicated a diverse range of games and activities with a clear preference for social interaction and active play. Football was overwhelmingly mentioned as a favourite, with other popular sports including basketball, rugby, tennis and netball. Games like tag and hide and seek were also commonly cited.

Another strong theme was for creative and make-believe games, with many pupils enjoying creating their own games with friends based around ideas of **'families'** or '**superheroes'.** Classic playground games were mentioned by quite a number of respondents, notably including **'Duck, duck, goose' and 'Simon says…'.**

A significant number of pupils talked about a preference for chatting with friends over playing structured games. Sometimes these comments also referenced quieter activities such as drawing or walking.

> "I like walking and thinking of the situations I am facing at the moment"
>
> **– Year 4**

> "I just like to walk and talk with my friends"
>
> **– Year 5**

My favourite game to play at the moment is...
(Primary responses only)

believe monster people kitchen freeze
called roblox chatting gymnastic making
family dancing moment dodgeball sometimes
freind basketball mostly skipping playing zombie
minecraft infection sister imaginary hammock basket
capture friend talking friend
handball either running monkey really
pretend netball colouring building something
racing climbing talking favourite
climber around fortnite building hopscotch
cricket bulldog football different drawing
nothing equipment infinity playground favourite moment running around
tennis rainbow walking dragon animal

High proportions of pupils reported knowing some common playground games.

There were a few differences for a couple of games (e.g. Grandmothers' Footsteps and What's the Time Mr Wolf were better known in the schools with fewest FSM pupils) but as a whole there were similarly high proportions of pupils knowing most games in all the participating primary schools.

The teacher view

- Whilst **open socialising and relaxing time seems to be valued highly by pupils,** it may come up against a teacher perception that it allows too much time for disputes to arise.

- 42% of teachers report that pupils **do not have enough activities to keep them engaged.** This is more of a problem in secondary schools (48%), and further exacerbated in less affluent areas (45% lowest FSM quartile, compared with 37% top quartile). Teachers in fee-paying schools are more than twice as likely to say that there are enough activities for their pupils.

- 87% of teachers report being worried about the **negative impact of digital devices** on pupils' friendships and social skills (39% 'very worried')

- Almost half of teachers feel that there **isn't enough supervision** by adults during lunchtimes at their school (49% primary, 43% secondary)

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Only two thirds of pupils get outside

Although most primary school teachers say that all pupils go outside at lunchtime (unless staff decide the weather means it's 'wet play'), **only 70% of primary pupils reported that they actually spent time outside in their last lunchtime,** perhaps because they were amongst the 27% who don't usually have sufficient time to eat, the 3% at a club or the 3% held back by a teacher.

There tends to be greater choice about going outside in secondary schools, where a third of secondary pupils reported that they didn't spend time outside at lunchtime. Again, this could be for a variety of reasons, with an even greater number struggling to have time to eat (40%), 5% being held back for longer than five minutes by a teacher, 5% attending a club and 6% visiting the library.

The teacher view

- A fifth of primary school teachers and a quarter of secondary school teachers report that their school has **insufficient outside space** for pupils to use at lunchtimes.

- **These figures are worse when comparing most and least affluent schools**, with a 4% drop in perception of sufficient space for the highest quartile of FSM schools.

- **There may be an issue of space and gender to explore**: 84% of teachers report seeing boys playing football at lunchtime all or most days, versus 33% reporting the same for girls. Whilst this figure is pretty similar across phases for boys, with girls there is a big drop-off from primary to secondary, where only 15% of teachers report seeing girls playing football, down from half in primaries.
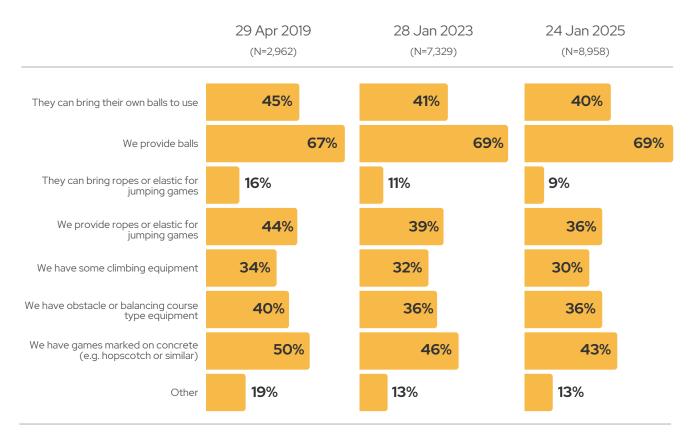
It's not about clubs; so what are they doing?

Pupils report many interests and ideas for how to play and relax, including a wide range of different games and activities that they enjoy. **But only 3% of primary school children reported attending a lunchtime club, rising to 5% for secondary pupils**. Although most schools report offering a club, it appears that they only involve small numbers of pupils.

Pupils value their free time and have masses of ideas for things that they want to do. If they aren't in structured clubs, do they have the time, space and equipment to facilitate their own self-directed play or activity?

After 'better food', the next most popular wish was for more equipment to use at lunchtimes, chosen by a fifth of pupils.

The teacher view

- 87% of primary school teachers believe that the number of children playing playground games like hopscotch or skipping has decreased, with 37% believing it has 'decreased significantly'.

- **Availability of lunchtime clubs for pupils correlates strongly with affluence**: 84% of teachers in schools in the most affluent quartiles (as measured by FSM eligibility) say there are clubs available, falling steadily to 58% saying yes in the lowest quartile.

Primary teachers report a decline in playground equipment

	29 Apr 2019 (N=2,962)	28 Jan 2023 (N=7,329)	24 Jan 2025 (N=8,958)
They can bring their own balls to use	45%	41%	40%
We provide balls	67%	69%	69%
They can bring ropes or elastic for jumping games	16%	11%	9%
We provide ropes or elastic for jumping games	44%	39%	36%
We have some climbing equipment	34%	32%	30%
We have obstacle or balancing course type equipment	40%	36%	36%
We have games marked on concrete (e.g. hopscotch or similar)	50%	46%	43%
Other	19%	13%	13%

Question asked: "What equipment can students use during break/lunch times on the playground or field?" and answered by a varying number of teachers, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)
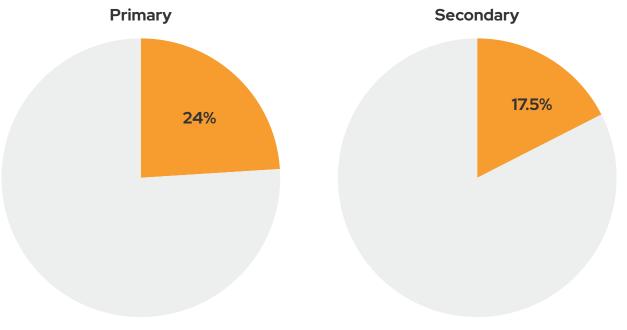
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Nearly a quarter of pupils only exercise at school

We asked pupils where they had done exercise or physical play during the past week, giving them options of the school playground and PE lessons, alongside wider options such as the park, their garden or other activities out of school.

24% of primary school pupils reported that they do their only physical playing or exercise for the week at school, either on the playground or doing PE.

For **secondary school pupils it was a slightly lower proportion**: 17.5% reported that they did their only physical activity or exercise at school in the past week.

Primary	Secondary
24%	17.5%
(N= 389)	(N= 200)

Does letting pupils take charge help?

There's a mixed picture when it comes to pupil involvement in helping design, organise and even run lunchtimes in their schools.

A third of primary schools teachers report that their pupils help design lunchtimes through their school council, which falls to 23% for secondaries. Over half of teachers in secondary schools report that their pupils have no responsibilities for lunchtimes, whereas over four fifths of primary schools report giving at least some of their pupils involvement of some sort (for example, suggesting ideas for equipment or helping run clubs). Over two thirds of primary schools teachers report that their school runs a play mentoring scheme, whilst peer mediation schemes are reported by 11% of primary and 7% of secondary school teachers.

We were interested to explore whether schools where pupils have lunchtime responsibilities correlate with better reported outcomes for lunchtimes, for example by looking at fewer incidents occurring:

Primary

Students have lunchtime responsibilities
(N=1,377)

| 28% | 34% | 32% |

Students do not have lunchtime responsibilities
(N=273)

| 27% | 39% | 27% | 6% |

Secondary

Students have lunchtime responsibilities
(N=1,463)

| 11% | 53% | 27% | 8% |

Students do not have lunchtime responsibilities
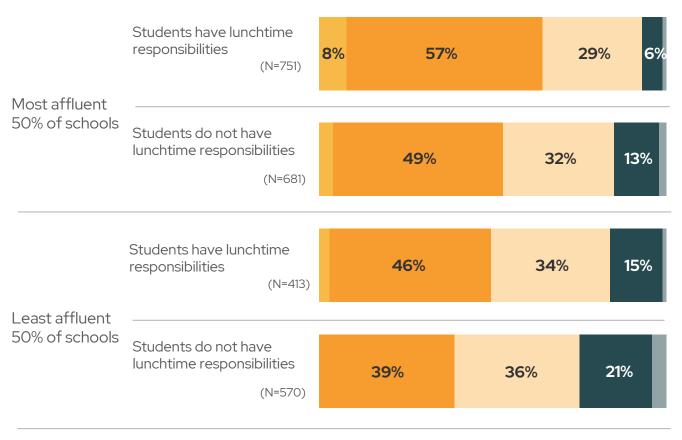(N=1,423)

| 45% | 33% | 15% |

Question asked: "Is non-lesson time (breaktimes, lunchtimes and transitions) at your school generally free from incidents? (across) vs "Do students have any lunchtime responsibilities in your school? (down)" and answered by 4,528 teachers on 23/04/2025 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Always ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely ■ Never

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The teacher view

There doesn't seem to be a correlation at primary phase, **but there is a noticeable difference amongst secondaries:** those with pupil lunchtime responsibilities have less than half the number reporting that lunchtimes are rarely or never incident-free compared with those whose pupils don't have lunchtime responsibilities. And this isn't necessarily just a reflection of greater affluence correlating with fewer incidents, as the pattern can also be seen when taking the FSM profile of the schools into account:

Most affluent 50% of schools

Students have lunchtime responsibilities (N=751)
Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
8%	57%	29%	6%

Students do not have lunchtime responsibilities (N=681)
Often	Sometimes	Rarely
49%	32%	13%

Least affluent 50% of schools

Students have lunchtime responsibilities (N=413)
Often	Sometimes	Rarely
46%	34%	15%

Students do not have lunchtime responsibilities (N=570)
Often	Sometimes	Rarely
39%	36%	21%

Question asked: "Is non-lesson time (breaktimes, lunchtimes and transitions) at your school generally free from incidents? (across) vs "Do students have any lunchtime responsibilities in your school? (down)" and answered by 2.411 teachers on 23/04/2025 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Always   ■ Often   ■ Sometimes   ■ Rarely   ■ Never

It would be useful to do more research around the different types of pupil responsibilities and possible positive impact they have on lunchtimes, as has been reported to us anecdotally and can be read about in our blog on the Lunchtimes webinar that we ran in April 2025.

5. OTHER THINGS WE FOUND OUT

Toilets

- Only a third of pupils report that the toilets at school are OK all or most of the time. There is some variation by phase: 39% of primary pupils report satisfactory toilets versus 25% of secondary pupils. 18% of primary pupils say they are not OK at all, with 25% of secondary pupils saying this.

- Dissatisfaction in primary schools tends to correlate with age, with the KS1 pupils more likely to be positive about the toilets, and Year 6 being the most negative. The opposite appears to be true amongst secondary aged pupils: KS3 are unhappier with the toilets than KS4, who in turn are not as satisfied as KS5.

The teacher view

Numbers of teachers reporting that pupils have access to satisfactory toilets has been falling: in 2019, 61% of teachers agreed that toilets for pupils were in good working order, which had fallen to 50% in January 2025.

Behaviour

- Only just over half (52%) of pupils agreed that pupils at their school behaved well all or most of the time at lunchtime. This result was very similar across both primaries and secondaries.

Safety

- 79% of pupils report feeling safe all or most of the time at lunch time. There was no significant difference between the phases overall.

- However, looking more closely at the results by year group perhaps pointed to a 'wobbly middle': there is a slight difference between year groups in primary – those year groups least likely to report feeling safe are Y3 and Y4. This may be because of the prevalence of separating KS1 children into their own playground, and/or providing more supervision for them. Possibly LKS2 pupils struggle with transitioning to sharing a bigger or less supervised KS2 space.

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Socialising and inclusion

- Overall, 87% of pupils reported that they had friends to be with most or all of the time during their last lunchtime. But, this varies considerably between phases. Amongst primary pupils, the number reporting that they had friends to be with was 83%, whilst amongst secondaries it was 92%, which is a large difference. It could be that pupils are more willing to admit to social isolation at a younger age, and/or that they are more likely to have support in socialising, with greater adult supervision ratios and more initiatives such as 'buddy benches'. There didn't seem to be much variation within the primary phase, but at secondary, sixth formers were slightly more likely to report being alone than other year groups.

- 7% of all pupils reported having friends to play with only 'some of the time', with 5% of pupils saying 'not really' or 'no', a number approaching half a million if extrapolated across the country.

- 7% of primary school pupils reported that they didn't engage with any types of playing or socialising at lunchtimes.

6. WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO ABOUT THEIR LUNCHTIMES?

Lunchtimes involve an incredibly complex mixture of things going on.

Schools that took part in the research will have received their own benchmarked report, showing them what their pupils thought and how those views compared with the national data. These reports will help pinpoint which areas to focus on, prompting reflection on questions such as:

- Do you know which year group is the least positive about lunchtimes and why?
- Can you review your meals provision? Would it make sense to do a follow up survey focused on food?
- What role does your School Council play in driving activities for lunchtimes?
- Can pupils gain valuable experience and skills in taking on lunchtime responsibilities, for example running activities or becoming Peer Mediators?
- Are your toilets fit for purpose? Are you making them safely available at the right times of day?

Many times schools simply won't have the resources to fulfil pupil wishlists, but there is still a huge value to running surveys with pupils, parents and staff alike. Hearing their views and giving honest feedback can be powerful in building a sense of a community and belonging.

We usually suggest that school leaders share a "You Said, We Did" report with their respondents, highlighting actions that they are taking or further research that they intend to do.

More ideas for improving lunchtimes, including some of those mentioned in this report, can be found on our blog: www.schoolsurveys.com/articles

Our recent webinar highlighted some schools that have reported making big improvements in how they run their lunchtimes, together with some of the organisations that have supported them on those journeys.

The survey questions are available on School Surveys for more schools to explore this issue with their pupils. Benchmarked reports allow schools to compare their pupils' answers with those from similarly profiled schools.

School Surveys
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CONCLUSION

What have we learnt overall?

- Pupils value their lunchtimes and have lots to say about what activities they enjoy. Football features prominently, but is far from the only popular activity. Clubs are not a huge feature for many, but time to socialise and activities matter a lot. For a fifth of pupils, school provides their only place for physical play or exercise.

- School food seems to be poorly received, by pupils and teachers alike. Time is a problem for many, although how to solve this is not straightforward.

- In most schools, there are not the resources for offering structured activities involving all or most pupils. Teachers in fee-paying schools are more than twice as likely to report that pupils have enough activities to keep them engaged.

- Some schools are doing much more than others to involve pupils in planning and running lunchtimes. There is evidence of correlation with better lunchtimes in secondary schools; more research is needed to explore this relationship.

What next?

We are interested in continuing to explore many of these issues, both via Teacher Tapp and with our schools using School Surveys. Schools can run surveys with their staff, parents and pupils using our expert questions and templates, such as the Lunchtime Listen and our newly created Belonging & Community survey, or by creating their own.

Thanks for reading!

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