Norfolk Flourish Survey 2024 – Sample description and methodology

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Norfolk Overview – 2024 data

Pupils

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Just over **half** the sample is formed from pupils in Year 7 to Year 10

Only pupils from schools that chose to take part are in the sample

Pupils' responses are anonymous

More sensitive questions, e.g. on alcohol and drugs, are only asked of older pupils

Only the location of schools rather than pupils' homes are known

Schools

28 primary schools and **17** secondary schools/ colleges took part

3 sampled schools are independent (private) schools

On average almost **4 in 10** pupils at participating schools completed the survey

Pupils at schools with the Ofsted rating Requires Improvement are under-represented in the sample

No secondary schools/ colleges with the Ofsted rating Requires Improvement are in the sample

1 in 8 Norfolk state secondary pupils are in schools rated as Requires Improvement

Almost **6 in 10** Year 12/13 pupils in the sample come from a single college

Geography

No secondary schools/colleges in the Borough of Great Yarmouth are in the sample

Around **1 in 10** state secondary pupils in Norfolk are educated in the Borough of Great Yarmouth

No state-funded secondary schools in Norwich covering Year 7 to Year 11 pupils took part

King's Lynn and West Norfolk is over-represented among secondary/college pupils

Norwich is over-represented among primary pupils

Breckland is under-represented among primary pupils

A break-out of results by district is therefore not possible

Pupil characteristics

The age distribution of the sample is very different to the population of Norfolk pupils

Hence comparisons between years and with SHEU data from other parts of the country are based on individual year groups

The stated characteristics of sampled pupils rely on self-identification by pupils themselves, potentially explaining some of the difference to official statistics

Pupils receiving free school meals are probably under-represented in the sample

The sample appears to over-represent female pupils relative to males

Almost **9 in 10** sampled pupils identify as White

The ethnic make-up of the sample is broadly in line with the population of Norfolk pupils

Infographic text description

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Introduction

This report is designed to accompany and provide context for the results presented in the other topic reports based on the Flourish Survey. It describes the characteristics of the pupils within the sample as well as information about the schools which took part in the survey. Where comparison data is available, data on the population of school pupils in Norfolk is used to assess the representativeness of the 2024 sample.

The Flourish Survey was conducted by the School Health Education Unit (SHEU) which has run similar surveys in other parts of the country for many years. While SHEU has found that results from its surveys are generally broadly consistent with those from other data sources, it is important to note that the dataset is not a truly random sample. Instead, schools self-select to take part in the survey. As such, while the analysis presented in the topic reports results from a large Norfolk sample and offers unique insights into the lives of Norfolk pupils, the results may differ from a survey that had a truly random sample of Norfolk pupils.

In the main topic reports the data is reported unweighted. Weighting is complicated in the present situation as the sample includes no observations for secondary pupils from the Borough of Great Yarmouth and the sample also includes independent schools for which pupil numbers are not provided in the available Norfolk population data.

As well as comparing 2024 Flourish Survey sample and the population of Norfolk pupils, the current report also compares the Flourish Survey samples in 2015, 2017 and 2024 to provide context for changes over time presented in the main topic reports. When looking over time, changes in the Flourish Survey sample could reflect two types of change: (i) changes in the underlying population of Norfolk pupils, and/or (ii) changes in the types of pupil picked up by the sample.

The numbers and percentages for the Flourish Survey presented in this report relate solely to the main survey. A Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) version of the survey was also undertaken and is analysed separately. While the SEND version of the survey was conducted in specialist schools, many pupils self-identifying as having SEND responded to the survey delivered in mainstream schools.

Data collection

As is standard, the survey was anonymous to ensure that pupils felt able to be honest in their responses. While this means it is not possible to contact pupils revealing issues of concern, the survey questionnaire did contain multiple phone numbers and web addresses of organisations that pupils could contact to obtain topic specific support.

Each school that took part in the survey receives a report based on the responses of its pupils. Schools are encouraged to survey as many children as possible, but ultimately it is left to schools to select which of their pupils take part in the survey. Some pupils completed a paper-based version of the survey while others completed an online version of the survey. Schools were asked to provide time for pupils to complete the survey in a dedicated lesson.

Questions and year groups

Two different, but related, questionnaires were used; one aimed at primary pupils and one aimed at secondary pupils. The questionnaire for secondary pupils was more detailed than the questionnaire for primary pupils, particularly around alcohol, drugs, smoking/vaping and sexual health.

Most Year 7 pupils were asked to respond to the questionnaire for primary pupils rather than the questionnaire for secondary pupils due to the more sensitive nature of some of the questions in the questionnaire for secondary pupils. As such, the secondary year groups for which the data aims to be representative are Year 8 to Year 13 (pupils aged 12-18).[1] Furthermore, in the questionnaire for primary pupils some questions were only shown to Year 6 (and Year 7), such as those relating to alcohol and cigarettes. In the questionnaire for secondary pupils, the most sensitive questions on sexual experiences were only asked to Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 14-18).

The survey contained a range of follow-on questions for pupils who indicated that they had consumed alcohol, taken illegal drugs, had smoked/vaped and/or had been in a relationship. As such, the survey questionnaire was significantly longer for pupils who engage in these activities. As is standard for surveys, not all pupils responded to all questions. Experience when cleaning the data suggests that questions towards the end

[1] When breaking out the data by year group the oldest category is ‘Year 12/13’ as the questionnaire combined year groups for Year 12 upwards.

of the survey may have greater levels of non-response than questions earlier in the survey.

In the main topic reports all percentages and numbers are based on all the data available for specific survey questions. As such, the number of responses on which percentages and numbers are calculated varies within and across topics. However, this approach means that we maximise the data available when reporting result. For key variables in the current report we also quote the percentage of observations for which no data is available or the respondent states that they do not wish to provide an answer.

Once the survey data had been received from SHEU it was necessary to standardise the data across the 2015, 2017 and 2024 questionnaires, as well as sometimes between the questionnaire for primary pupils and the questionnaire for secondary pupils. This involved making judgements about when the wording of questions and response options across questionnaires were sufficiently similar that they could be combined in a standard format. Where the wording was considered insufficiently similar, the data was not combined and comparison between years/year groups is not undertaken.

Participating schools

In 2024 the Flourish Survey sampled 9,347 pupils in Norfolk from 28 primary schools and 17 secondary schools/further education colleges.[2] The sample represents around 12.3% of Norfolk pupils in state-funded schools in eligible year groups (Year 4 to Year 13, equivalent to pupils aged 8-18).[3] Since schools chose whether or not to take part in the survey, the sample is representative of the subset of pupils who are educated within schools with management that might consider undertaking a pupil health survey worthwhile. The 2024 Flourish Survey sample includes data from independent schools.

In terms of the proportion of pupils in sampled schools that took part in the survey, the average (mean) proportion was 38.4%. Data on a school's total number of pupils was unavailable for four schools, but among the 39 remaining schools in the sample, the lowest proportion of pupils in a participating school that completed the survey was 1.8%, while the highest was 80.0%. Five schools had less than 15% of their pupils take part in the survey, while another five schools had at least 70% of their pupils take part in the survey.

The 2017 Norfolk sample consists of 11,417 pupils from 53 schools/colleges (30 covering primary year groups and 26 covering secondary year groups), while the 2015 sample is smaller consisting of 3,155 pupils from 24 schools/colleges (15 covering primary year groups and 10 covering secondary year groups).[4]

Making Comparisons

In the charts in this report, the black lines extending from the end of bars are (95%) confidence intervals. If the sample were representative of the underlying population, they would indicate the range within which we would we expect the true percentage to lie. The smaller the confidence interval the greater the certainty we would have about the true length of the bar/percentage.

However, the main aim of this report is to describe and compare the characteristics of the sample rather than to estimate the characteristics of the Norfolk population. Thus the interpretation of the confidence intervals is a bit different. The characteristics of the

[2] Two independent schools teach primary and secondary pupils so there are 43 schools in total.
[3] An appendix is included mapping school year groups to the age of pupils.
[4] Again, some schools appear to serve pupils of both primary and secondary age.

sample are known for certain and we assume the same is true of the population data[5], thus any difference between the sample distribution and the population distribution of data is real. The task is more to assess whether the difference is sufficiently large that it could materially impact the value of variables we are interested in. In this case confidence intervals allow us to assess whether the differences between the sample and population are potentially due to the standard randomness of sampling or not. Where a population figure lies outside a confidence interval it indicates that the difference is unlikely to be due simply to the randomness of sampling, it is larger than this.

When comparing the samples between 2015, 2017 and 2024 we again know for certain that the samples have different characteristics, but confidence intervals again provide one way to assess the size of the difference. If the confidence intervals from two samples of data do not overlap, we know that they are unlikely to be randomly drawn from a common block of data with the same characteristics.

Type of Institution

The breakdown of school types in the 2024 Flourish Survey sample is: 22 academies, 16 local authority-maintained schools, 1 college, 1 free school and 3 independent schools. In terms of the proportion of pupils in the sample accounted for by each type of school, 66.0% were educated in academies, 16.6% in local authority- maintained schools and 0.9% in the one free school, while independent schools accounted for 10.0% of the sample and the one college accounted for 6.6%.

A challenge when comparing the characteristics of schools in the sample with population data for Norfolk is that the population data provides pupil numbers for only one of the colleges providing post-16 education and none of the independent schools. Also, the available Norfolk population data for primary schools involves pupil numbers covering all year groups whereas primary data in the Flourish Survey sample only covers Year 4 to Year 6 (pupils aged 8-11).

However, we can compare the number of schools of each type between the sample and the Norfolk population data. This shows that independent schools and further education colleges are over-represented in the sample; in terms of the number of institutions, independent schools form 7.0% of the sample compared to 3.9% of the population of mainstream educational institutions in Norfolk.

[5] By population data we mean data that does not involve sampling uncertainty e.g. school census data.

A potential concern of any over-sampling of independent schools is that their pupils might be more likely to come from more affluent backgrounds, potentially skewing the socio-economic distribution of the sample. However, even if this concern were correct, it may have a relatively small impact on results given that only 10.0% of pupils in the sample are from independent schools.

Ofsted Ratings

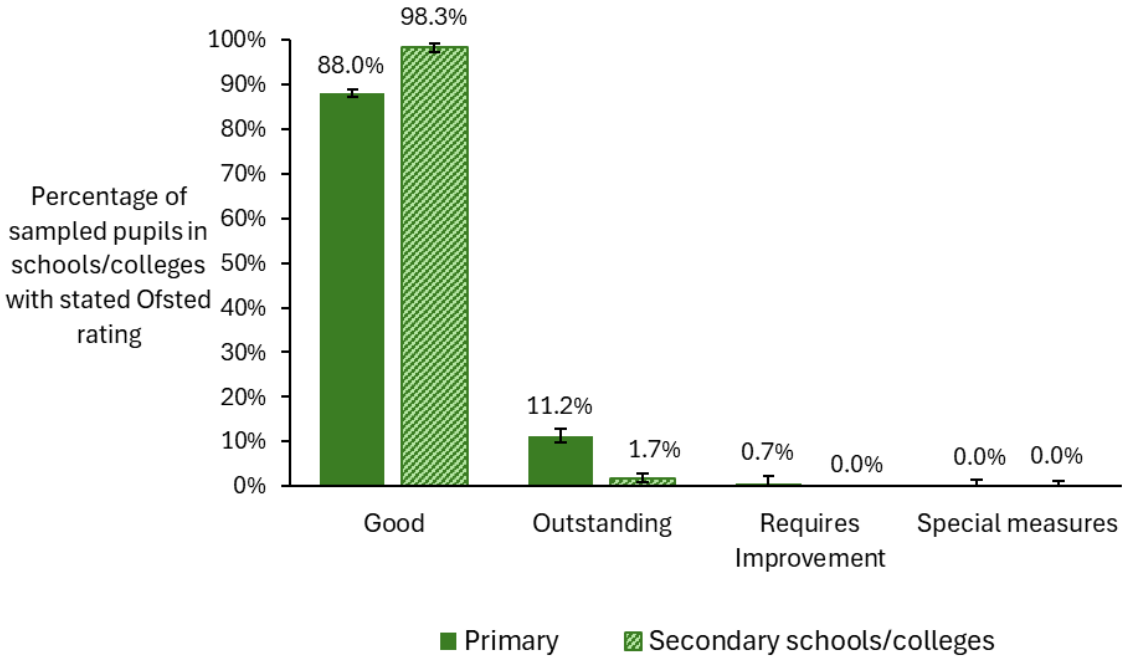
Another way to classify schools is to consider their Ofsted rating. This is potentially significant given our presumption that better managed schools are more likely to take part in the Flourish Survey. However, in both the sample and the Norfolk population data some schools do not have an Ofsted rating; in particular, independent schools do not have Ofsted ratings listed. As a result, the denominators for all percentages in this sub-section are based solely on institutions with Ofsted ratings.

In the sample, 34 institutions are rated as Good, 4 are rated as Outstanding and 1 is rated as a Requires Improvement. The school rated as Requiring Improvement is a primary school and one of schools rated as Outstanding is a secondary school.

The proportion of state funded institutions rated as Outstanding is broadly similar between the Flourish Survey sample and the Norfolk population data (10.3% vs 10.6%). However, there is a noticeable difference in the proportion of institutions rated as Requires Improvement between the Flourish Survey sample and the full Norfolk data. In the Flourish Survey sample, only 4.0% of state-funded primary schools and no state-funded secondary schools/colleges are rated as Requiring Improvement, whereas the Norfolk population data shows 11.1% of primary schools and 12.0% of secondary schools/colleges are rated as Requires Improvement. Additionally, across Norfolk two primary schools are in Special Measures. Correspondingly, the proportion of institutions rated as Good is higher in the Flourish Survey sample than in the population of Norfolk educational institutions (87.2% vs 77.9%).

Turning to the percentage of pupils in schools with different Ofsted ratings, Figure 1 shows how the sample is almost entirely comprised of pupils in schools rated Good. Specifically, 98.3% of sampled secondary school/college pupils are in institutions rated Good. The sample appears to under-represent secondary/college pupils both in insitutions rated Outstanding and those rated Requires Improvement when compared to the Norfolk pupil population, whereas the sample appears to only under-represent primary pupils in schools rated Requires Improvement and in Special measures.

Figure 1: Percentage of sampled pupils in educational institutions with different Ofsted ratings by institution type - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, excludes independent schools)



In the sample only 0.7% of primary pupils and no secondary/college pupils are in institutions rated as Requires Improvement, whereas in the Norfolk population data 9.9% of primary pupils in state funded schools are in schools rated Requires Improvement and 12.5% of secondary/college pupils are in institutions with this rating. In terms of the percentage of pupils in institutions rated Outstanding, the proportion for primary pupils in the sample is broadly in line with the Norfolk population figure (11.2% vs 12.7%), however, only 1.7% of secondary/college pupils in the sample are in institutions rated Outstanding compared to 13.8% in the Norfolk population data.

The limited proportion of sampled pupils in schools rated as Requires Improvement would be of particular concern for the representativeness of the sample if schools given this rating disproportionately draw pupils from less affluent backgrounds.

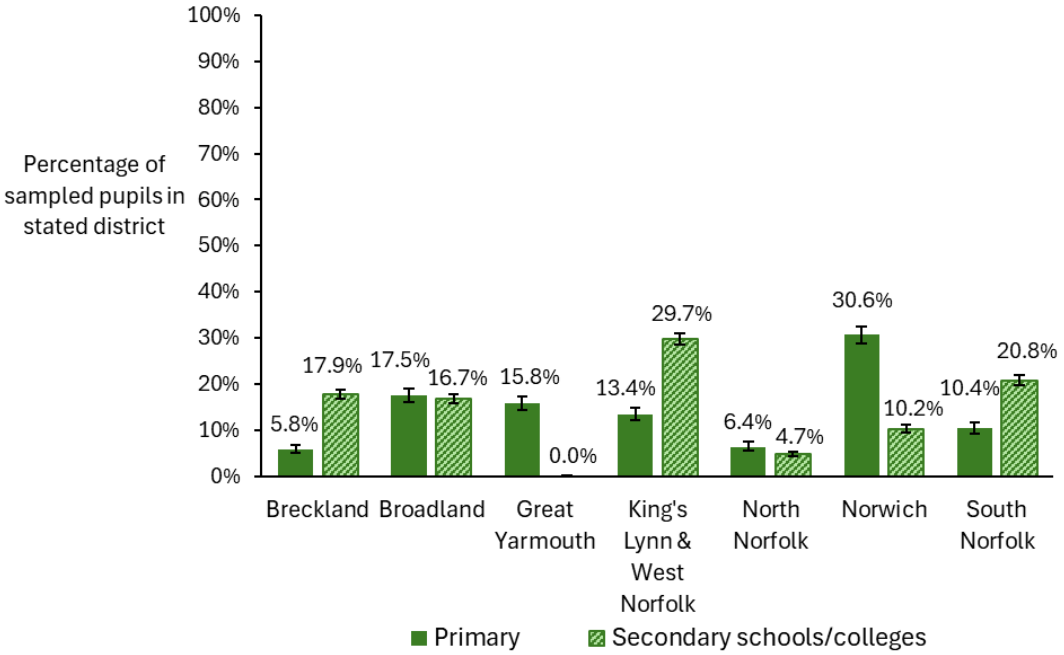
Geographic distribution

When assessing the geographic distribution of pupils in the Flourish Survey sample it is important to remember that we only know the location of schools, we do not know the district in which individual pupils live. Nevertheless, the uneven distribution of sampled schools/colleges across districts means that it is not possible to provide reliable results at individual district level. There are two particularly notable issues: (i) no data for pupils in Year 7 and above from schools in the Borough of Greater Yarmouth, and (ii) the only data for pupils in Year 7 to Year 11 in Norwich is from an independent school where just under 90% of pupils identified as female.

Overall, when including independent schools, breakdown of pupils across districts in the 2024 sample is: 16.9% in Breckland, 15.3% in Broadland, 4.1% in Great Yarmouth, 22.5% in King's Lynn and West Norfolk, 6.1% in North Norfolk, 19.2% in Norwich and 16.0% in South Norfolk.

As in the previous subsection, due to the limitations of the available population data, we compare data for state-funded schools between the Flourish Survey sample and the Norfolk population data. Comparing Figure 2 with the available population data, there is over-sampling of secondary/college pupils from King's Lynn and West Norfolk together with over-sampling of primary pupils from Norwich. In the Flourish Survey sample, 29.7% of secondary/college pupils are educated at schools in King's Lynn and West Norfolk compared to 16.6% in the Norfolk population data, while 30.6% of primary pupils in the sample are educated in Norwich compared to 15.8% in the Norfolk population data.

Figure 2: Percentage of sampled pupils in each district split by school type - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, excludes independent schools)



As previously noted, the Flourish Survey sample contains no secondary/college pupils educated in Great Yarmouth whereas the population data indicates that 10.1% of Norfolk secondary/college pupils are educated in Great Yarmouth. Another, particularly large difference, is the under-sampling of primary pupils from Breckland. In the Flourish Survey sample 5.8% of primary pupils are educated in schools in Breckland compared to 14.8% of primary pupils in the Norfolk population data.

Sample concentration

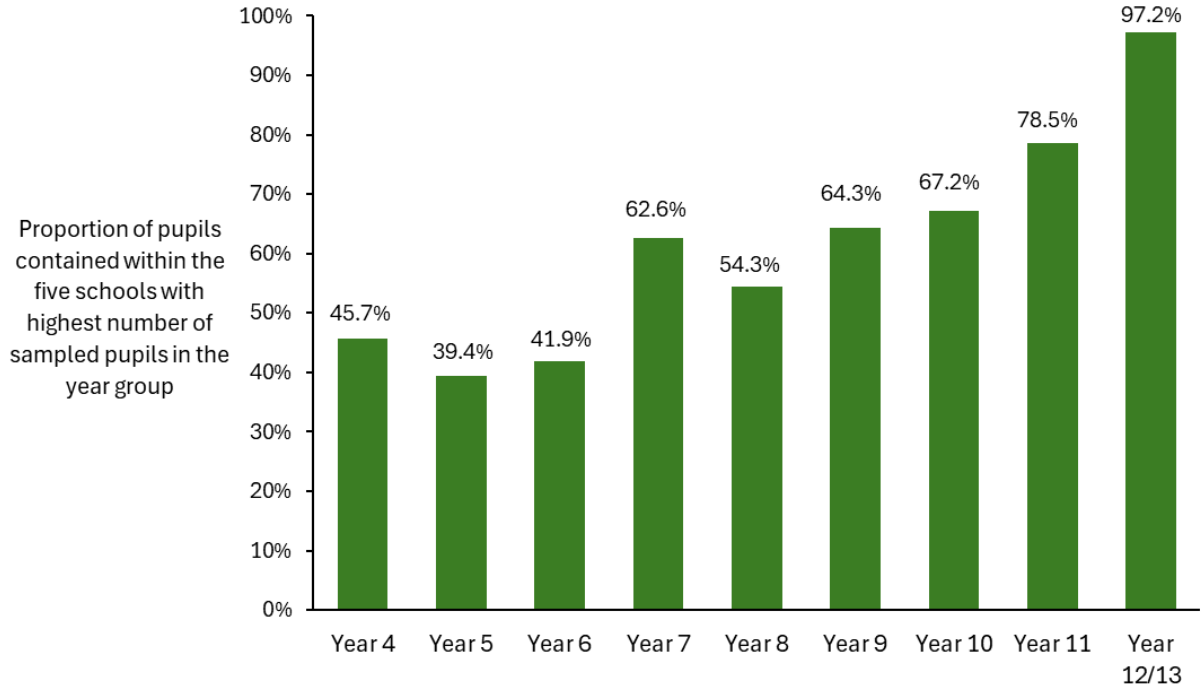
Since a pupil's inclusion in the sample depends on their school choosing to take part in the Flourish Survey and different schools likely have catchment areas that draw on pupils with different characteristics, it seems reasonable to assess how dependent the Flourish Survey sample is on particular schools. The greater the number of different schools in the sample hopefully the more likely a wider distribution of pupil characteristics is achieved in the sample. Equally, if part of the sample comes from only a small number of schools it does not automatically mean that the sample is unrepresentative.

A basic indicator to assess this is to look at the percentage of pupils which come from the five schools contributing the largest numbers of pupils to the sample. This indicator suggests that the sample in 2015 was noticeably more concentrated than the samples in 2017 and 2024. Looking across all year groups, the top 5 schools in 2015 accounted for 69.3% of the sample compared to 32.8% in 2017 and 37.1% in 2024. Indeed, in 2015 a single school accounted for 20.4% of the sample.

Equally, some schools contributed a particularly low number of pupils to the sample. In each of 2015 and 2017 there were 6 schools that each contributed fewer than 20 pupils to the sample. In 2024 only 2 schools contributed fewer than 20 pupils each to the sample.

Figure 3 shows a general trend that in older year groups a greater proportion of the sample comes from a small proportion of schools. To some extent this is to be expected as there are fewer secondary schools/colleges than primary schools in Norfolk. However, the Year 12/13 sample is particularly dependent on a small number of schools. In 2024 the sample of Year 12/13 pupils was based on 6 schools/colleges with 58.5% of these pupils coming from a single school/college. In contrast, 23 schools contributed pupils to the samples in Year 4 and Year 6.

Figure 3: Percentage of the sample from the five schools contributing the most pupils to the sample by year group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 12/13 separately)[6]



[6] For clarity, the top five schools are identified separately for each individual year group.

Age and gender

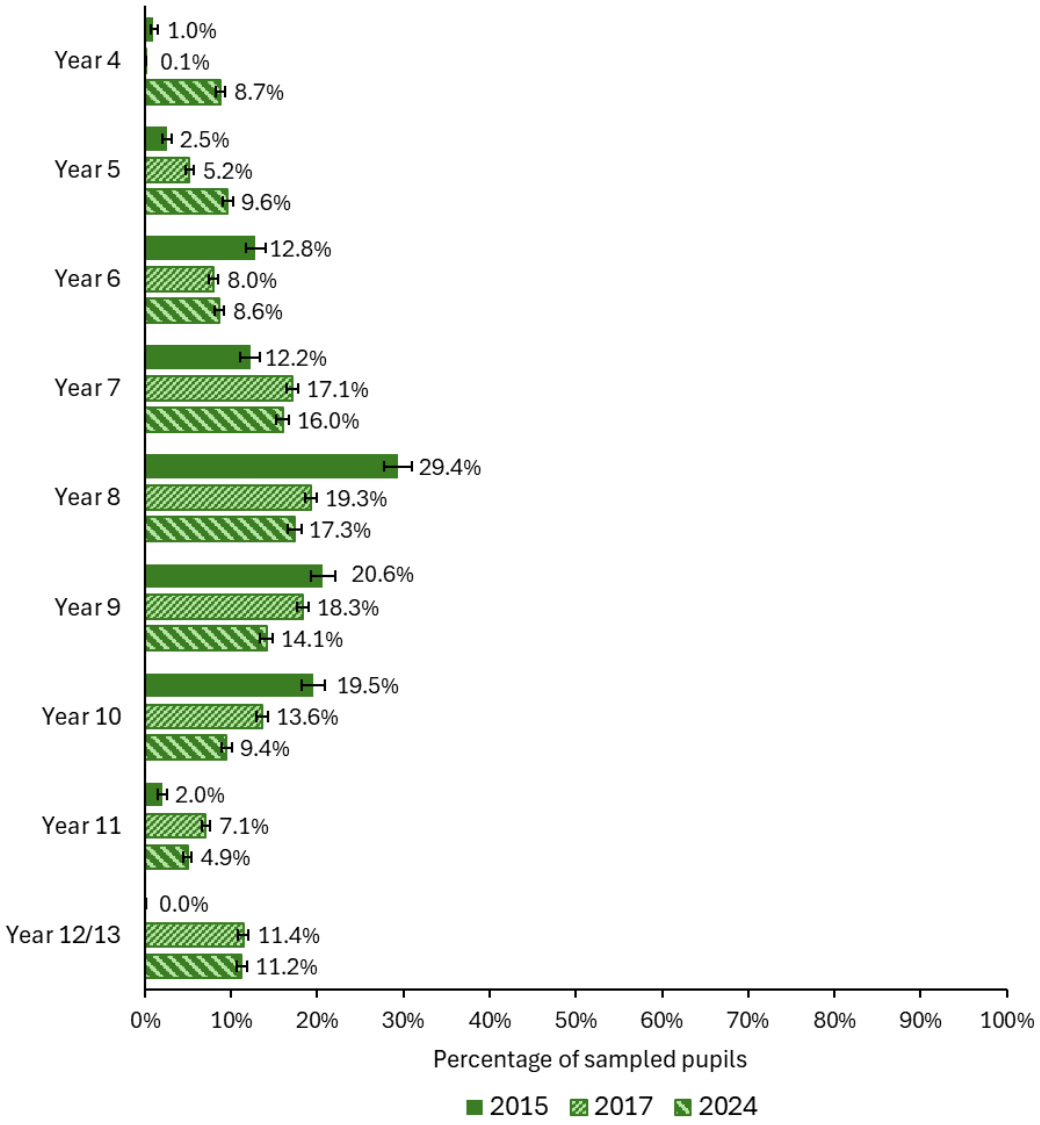
Distribution across year groups

The 2015 sample has the narrowest distribution of data across year groups with no observations in Year 12/13 and fewer than 100 observations in each of Year 4 and Year 5. Additionally, in 2017 only 12 sampled pupils were from Year 4. The small number of observations for Year 4 and Year 5 in 2015 and 2017 means that we only report statistics for these year groups in other topic reports when the data relates to 2024.

The concentration of the 2015 sample in year groups in the early part of secondary school is highlighted by 29.4% of the sample being Year 8 pupils, compared to 17.3% in the 2024 sample.

Figure 4 shows that there are noticeable differences in the distribution of the sample across year groups between 2015, 2017 and 2024. The 2024 sample has the most even distribution of data across the different year groups.

Figure 4: Percentage of sampled pupils in each year group - 2015, 2017 and 2024 (Year 4 to Year 12/13 separately)



Nevertheless, the distribution of the 2024 sample across year groups also differs from the distribution of pupils across the year groups in the 2023-24 school census data.[7] As one would expect, the population of Norfolk school pupils in the school census data is relatively evenly distributed across Year 4 to Year 11, unlike the concentration in Year 7 to Year 9 shown in Figure 4. As a percentage of all pupils across Year 4 to Year 13 combined, the proportion of pupils in the 2023-24 school census in each year group between Year 4 and Year 11 is in a narrow range between 11.1% and 12.0%. In contrast, Figure 4 shows that in the 2024 Flourish Survey sample 8.7% of pupils are in Year 4, 17.3% are in Year 8 and 4.9% are in Year 11.

Due to these noticeable differences in the age distribution of pupils between the Flourish Survey samples and the population data, in topic reports we perform comparisons across years and between the Norfolk sample and national data by considering individual year groups. As such, we effectively control for any differences in the age compositions of the samples.

Where the data allows it, we generally compare the 2015, 2017 and 2024 Norfolk samples, together with the 2022 SHEU comparator data from other parts of the country, by looking separately at data for Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13. These year groups are used as Year 8 and Year 10 are year groups for which SHEU comparator data is often available, while for many variables Year 6 is the youngest year group with data and Year 12/13 is the oldest group. The year groups on which analysis is based are clearly indicated in the figure captions and text in each topic report.

[7] See Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK In this topic report the reported school census statistics are based on data from state-funded primary schools, secondary schools and further education colleges. Pupils at state-funded alternative provision and specialist schools are not included as they are covered by the separate SEND version of the Flourish Survey. The school census statistics in the summary Flourish Survey report may differ from those in this report due to former including these alternative provision and specialist schools. Separately, the school census data for 2023-24 generally does not include data from independent schools unlike the Flourish Survey sample. The school census data we utilise refers to headcounts.

Age distribution

It is also possible to break out the data by pupil age rather than school year group. In 2024 36 pupils did not state their age in the Flourish Survey sample. As with the breakdown by school year group, the range of pupil ages in the Flourish Survey sample increases between 2015 and 2024. In terms of age categories containing at least 100 observations, the 2015 sample covers ages 10-15, while the 2017 sample covers ages 9-18 and in the 2024 sample ages 8-18 are covered.[8] However, in all three samples most of the data is accounted for by pupils aged 12 to 14; in 2015 these three ages account for 72.9% of the data falling to 65.9% in 2017 and 45.6% in 2024.

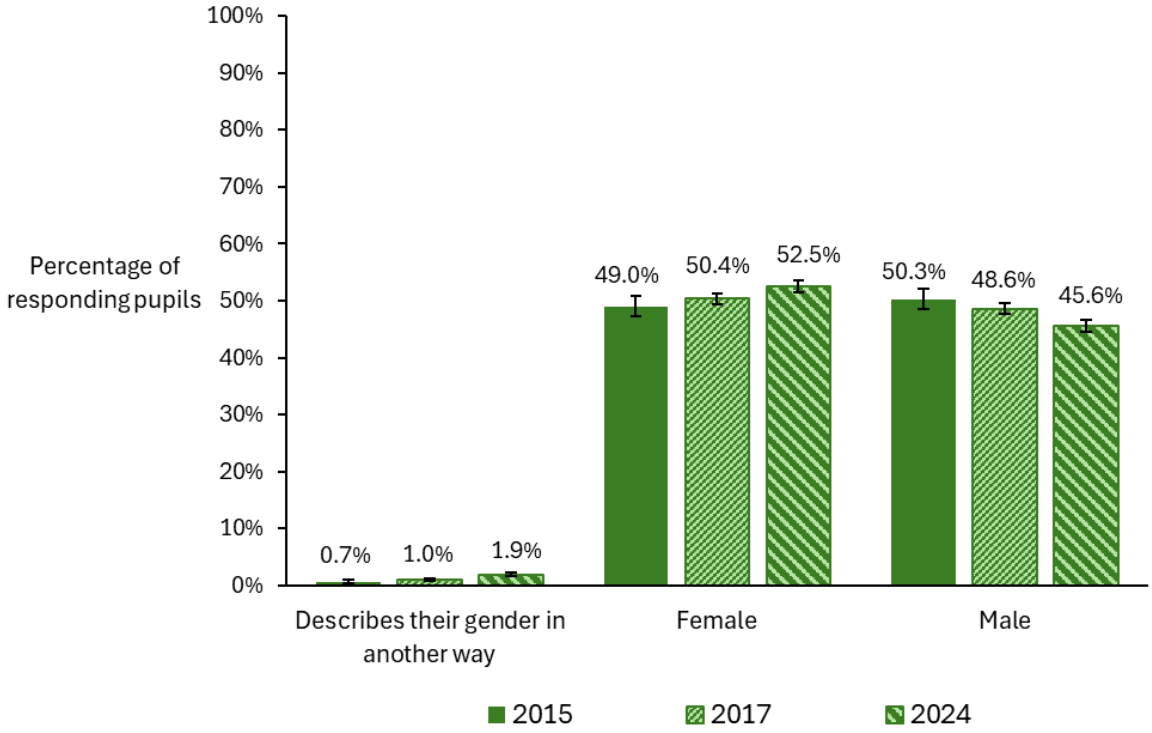
Unsurprisingly, given that the 2015 sample contained no Year 12/13 pupils, it also contains no pupils aged 18 and fewer than 10 aged 17. In contrast, both the 2017 and 2024 Flourish Survey samples contain over 450 pupils aged 17 and over 200 pupils aged 18.

[8] The highest age category in the questionnaire for secondary pupils is 18+ rather than 18 so, at least in theory, there could be older individuals in this age category.

Gender breakdown

In 2024 337 pupils did not answer the question on gender and a further 129 pupils answered ‘I prefer not to say’. This means that in 2024 3.6% of sampled pupils did not identify their gender.[9] In Figure 5 the percentages use a denominator that excludes these pupils who failed to provide any answer or who did not want to state their gender. To reflect this Figure 5 refers to the percentage of ‘responding pupils’ rather than the percentage of ‘sampled pupils’.[10]

Figure 5: Percentage of responding pupils by gender - 2015, 2017 and 2024 (data from all available year groups combined)



A direct comparison of the Flourish Survey’s gender data to school census data for 2023-24 is complicated by the school census only identifying pupils’ sex rather than

[9] For clarity, these 466 observations are dropped in topic reports in sections that consider ‘variations by group’ and a comparison is made between pupils who identify as Male, Female or who Describe their gender in another way. However, these 466 observations will be included in all charts and percentages that do not reference gender as long as the individual concerned provides a response to the question generating the chart or percentage. An equivalent approach to missing data applies to each of the other indicators used in the variation by group sections of topic reports.

[10] In the other topic reports, the denominator for percentages always excludes pupils who did not provide an answer or stated that they did not want to state an answer. In the other topic reports the terms sampled pupils and responding pupils are used interchangeably.

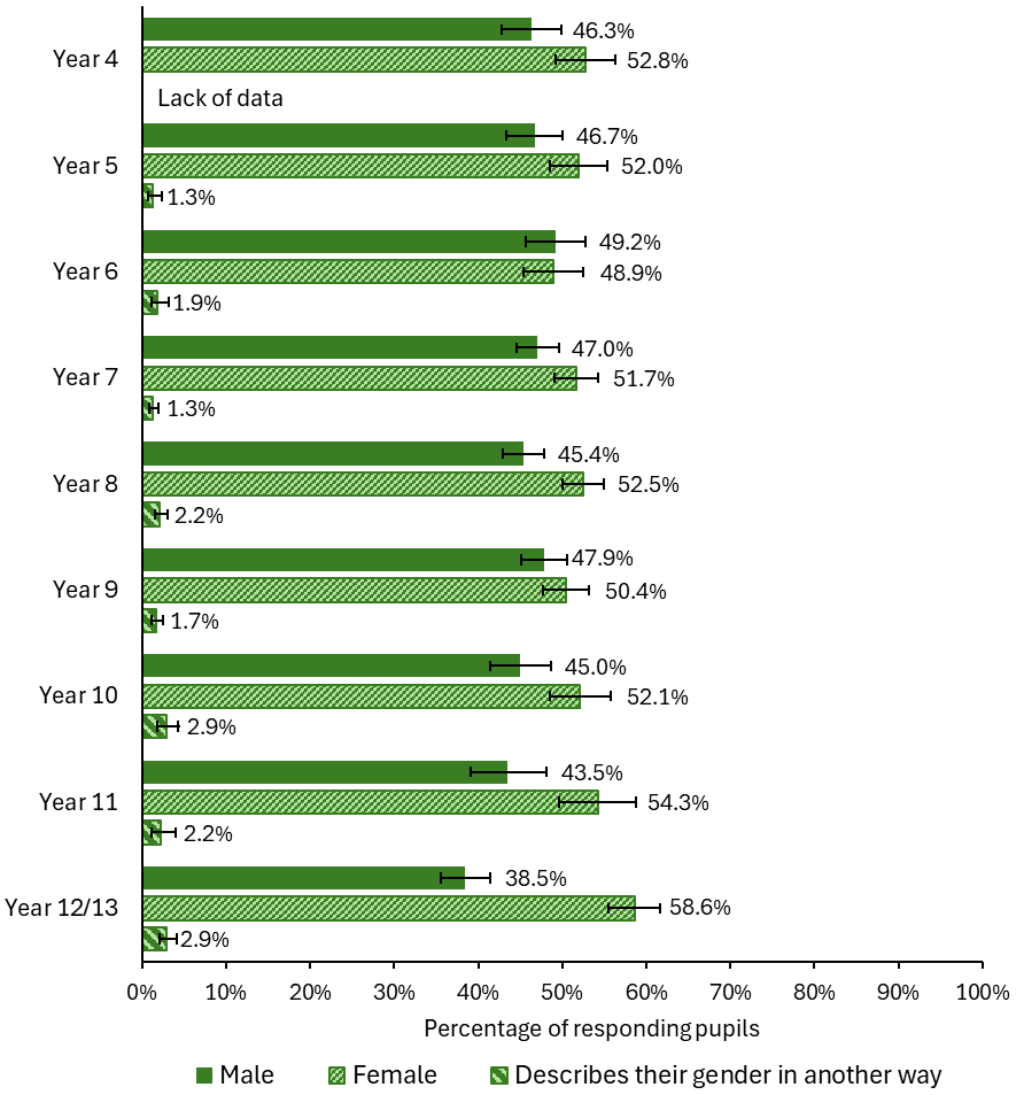
their gender identity. As such, the school census only identifies two categories ‘male’ and ‘female’. Nevertheless, it appears that the Flourish Survey data over-represents female pupils and under-represents male pupils by a small margin. The 2023-24 school census reports that 49.7% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils were female and 50.3% were male compared to 52.5% and 45.6% respectively for pupils identifying as female and male in Figure 5.

Figure 5 also shows that within the Flourish Survey sample the proportion of female respondents has increased relative to male respondents over time. Between 2015 and 2024 the proportion of Flourish Survey respondents that identify as female increases from 49.0% to 53.5%, while the proportion of respondents that identify as male fell from 50.3% to 45.6%. Part of this change is related to the proportion of respondents who describe their gender in another way increasing from 0.7% to 1.9% between 2015 and 2024. While again noting the distinction between sex and gender identity, the school census data does not show a similar change in the sex balance of Norfolk pupils over time; in 2016-17 49.3% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils were female and 50.7% were male, figures very similar to those in 2023-24.

In the 2024 sample 168 pupils stated that they describe their gender in another way compared to only 20 pupils in 2015. Nevertheless, the small number of observations in this group in the 2024 sample means that when results in other topic reports are broken out by gender the confidence intervals for those who describe their gender in another way are particularly large. This means that differences in results between these pupils and those identifying as male or identifying as female are generally not statistically significant even when the size of the differences are large.

Another feature of the gender breakdown, shown in Figure 6, is that in older year groups the gender skew towards female pupils becomes more pronounced. In Figure 6 the year group with the most even gender balance is Year 6 where 49.2% of respondents identify as male and 48.9% of respondents identify as female. In contrast, in Year 12/13 58.6% of respondents identify as female compared to only 38.5% who identify as male. The school census data for 2023-24 does not show an equivalent trend with age: in Year 13 49.0% of pupils were male and 51.0% were female.

Figure 6: Gender breakdown of responding pupils by year group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 12/13 separately)[11]



[11] 'Lack of data' indicates that there were fewer than 10 observations of Year 4 pupils who describe their gender in another way. We do not report the relevant percentage to ensure anonymity and robustness.

Additional groups of interest

This section provides information about the composition of the 2015, 2017 and 2024 samples by reporting a number of other ‘demographic’ variables. This can help inform the interpretation of comparisons over time and with the 2022 SHEU comparator data from other parts of the country or national averages.

Alongside gender, in the main topic reports key variables of interest are broken out by a number of other pupil characteristics namely: their ethnicity, whether they identify as having a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND), whether they identify as a young carer, whether their responses indicate low mental wellbeing and whether they identify as receiving free school meals. In the Flourish Survey data all of these indicators are based on pupils self-reporting their status; a pupil’s self-reported status may differ from the status recorded on official systems.

While the Flourish Survey asks a number of questions that may identify children from households facing economic challenges, the free school meal indicator is the only one that can be easily compared with other statistical sources. For example, the postcode of pupils’ homes is not recorded in the Flourish Survey dataset and so we cannot identify pupils that come from areas of economic deprivation.

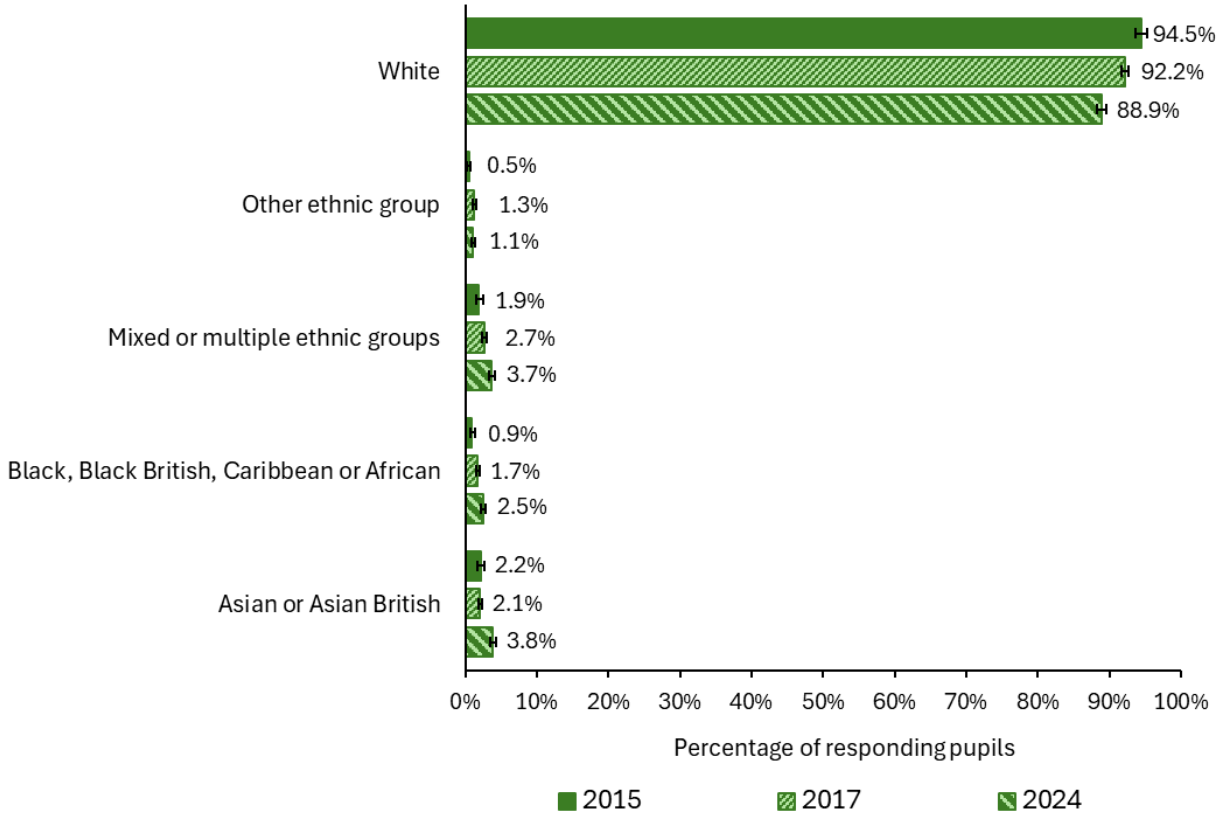
Also, it is worth remembering that if the sample contains a disproportionate number of individuals from a particular subgroup, e.g. disproportionately more males than females, this does not automatically invalidate making comparisons between males and females. The key requirement for such a comparison to be legitimate is not the number in each group, but that the pool of males in the Flourish Survey sample is representative of males in the Norfolk population and the pool of females in the Flourish Survey sample is representative of females in the school population.

Ethnicity

In the 2024 sample 73 pupils did not answer the question on ethnicity and 368 pupils indicated that they did not want to state their ethnicity. As a result, for 4.7% of sampled pupils their ethnicity is not known. This represents an increase on the 3.4% of sampled pupils in 2017 for whom their ethnicity is not known and the 1.6% of sampled pupils in 2015

Figure 7 shows that the sample has become slightly more ethnically diverse over time with the percentage of responding pupils identifying as white[12] falling from 94.5% in 2015 to 92.2% in 2017 and 88.9% in 2024. Between 2015 and 2024 the proportion of responding pupils identifying as Other ethnic group or Black, Black British, Caribbean or African has more than doubled. The proportionate increase between 2017 and 2024 is also large for those identifying as Asian or Asian British, with the proportion of pupils identifying as these ethnicities increasing from 2.1% to 3.8%.

Figure 7: Percentage of responding pupils by ethnicity - 2015, 2017 and 2024 (data from all available year groups combined)



The 2024 Flourish Survey sample contained 342 pupils who identified as Asian or Asian British, 223 pupils who identified as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, 326 pupils who identified as Mixed or multiple ethnicities and 95 pupils who identified as an Other ethnic group.[13] These numbers are low enough that when results in the other topic reports are broken out by ethnicity the confidence intervals around these groups'

[12] White includes those who identify as Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Roma.
[13] To be clear, these numbers relate to the number of pupils in the sample of particular ethnicities, the number of pupils in Norfolk as a whole identifying as these ethnicities will be considerably higher as the sample only represents around 12% of pupils in Norfolk. This is true of all statements referring to the number of pupils in the sample who have a particular characteristic

estimates are relatively large thus reducing the proportion of differences that are statistically significant.

In 2024 the school census data indicates 89.6% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils were White, a proportion that lies outside the confidence interval for the proportion of White pupils in the 2024 Flourish Survey sample, although, the magnitude of the difference is small. The same can be said for those identifying as Asian or Asian British and Mixed or multiple ethnic groups. As with the Flourish Survey sample, the school census data shows that the population of pupils in Norfolk has become slightly more ethnically diverse over time. In 2016-17 the school census reports that 93.7% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils were White.

SEND

928 pupils in the 2024 sample do not have data for the SEND identifier variable, representing 9.9% of the sample. Among responding pupils, 24.4% (2,058 pupils) in 2024 identified as having SEND, a substantial rise from 11.5% in 2015 and 12.8% in 2017.

This increase in the proportion of pupils self-identifying as SEND corresponds to a substantial change in question structure between 2017 and 2024. In 2017, the question was simply ‘Do you have a disability, a special educational need or a learning difficulty?’. In contrast, in 2024, pupils were asked ‘Do you have a disability?’ and then had to indicate which of six different issues they experienced. Pupils were asked whether they had: a difficulty with the way they see or hear; a difficulty with the way they move; neuro diversity (e.g. Autism, Aspergers, ADHD); a mental health difficulty; a long-term illness; or another type of disability. The 2024 SEND indicator identified a pupil as having SEND whenever they indicated they had at least one of these difficulties with the exception of a long-term illness. Long-term illness is not included within the 2024 SEND indicator as long-term illnesses were covered by a separate question in 2015 and 2017 and it was thought that some long-term illnesses may not result in a special educational need or disability.

As a comparison to the Flourish Survey sample, census data indicates that in 2023-24 18.3% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in mainstream schools were receiving SEN support or subject to an EHC plan.[14] As such, a greater proportion of responding pupils self-identify as having SEND in the Flourish Survey sample than are recorded as receiving

[14] SEND figures were obtained from: Special educational needs in England: January 2024 - GOV.UK

support in the Norfolk population of pupils. However, it is difficult to interpret whether this difference reflects an unrepresentative feature of the Flourish Survey sample or simply results from differences in the definition of the indicators. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the increase in the proportion of pupils identifying as having SEND in the Flourish Survey sample between 2017 and 2024 is not matched in the population, a finding consistent with the change in wording of the relevant question in the Flourish Survey questionnaire having some impact. In the school census data the proportion of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in mainstream schools receiving SEN support or subject to an EHC plan rose by only 3.4 percentage points between 2016-17 and 2023-24 compared to a rise of 11.6 percentage points for the Flourish Survey indicator.[15]

Also, in the population data, the proportion of pupils receiving SEN support or with an EHC plan declines as pupils become older. For example, in Year 6 22.1% of Norfolk pupils receive SEN support or have an EHC plan, falling to 16.4% in Year 11 and 5.8% in Year 13. However, in the 2024 Flourish Survey sample, while there are fluctuations in proportion of each year group identifying as having SEND there is no consistent downward trend as age increases. For example, in the 2024 Flourish Survey sample in Year 12/13 29.5% of responding pupils identify as having SEND.

Free School Meals

A key point with the free school meals indicator is that in 2024 the relevant question was not shown to pupils in Year 4 and Year 5. When the dataset is restricted to Year 6 to Year 13 pupils, free school meal status is not available for 12.6% of sampled pupils (961 pupils).

This proportion of missing data is noticeably higher than in 2015 and 2017 when free school meal status is not available for 6.1% and 8.4% of sampled pupils respectively. A potential factor in this increase in missing data between 2017 and 2024 is that the 2024 question was noticeably different to the question asked in 2015 and 2017. In 2017 the question simply asked ‘Do you have free school meals?’, whereas the 2024 question was ‘In the last 6 years, have you ever had free school meals?’. The 2024 question had six response options (instead of three) including one allowing pupils who currently receive free school meals to be identified.

Among pupils responding to the free school meal question in 2024, 17.5% of Year 6 to Year 13 pupils in the Flourish Survey sample reported that they currently receive free

[15] In the 2016-17 school census data 14.9% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in mainstream schools are recorded as receiving SEN support or subject to an EHC plan.

school meals. This is a noticeable increase on the 10.5% reporting current receipt of free school meals in 2017 and 11.5% in 2015. In the 2023-24 school census data 23.0% of Year 6 to Year 13 pupils are known to eligible for free school meals, a figure that lies outside the confidence interval for the 17.5% of pupils identifying as receiving free school meals in the Flourish Survey sample by a noticeable margin. However, it is unclear how much of this discrepancy is due to the distinction between being eligible for free school meals and actually claiming them.

In terms of how the gap between the Flourish Survey and school census data varies by year group, it is noticeably smaller in Year 6 (24.8% vs 27.7%) and the reported rate of free school meal receipt in the Flourish Survey sample in Year 12/13 is actually noticeably higher than in the school census data (15.6% for Year 12/13 vs 8.5% in Year 13).

Also, the large increase in the proportion of pupils in the Flourish Survey sample reporting receipt of free school meals between 2017 and 2024 appears to be mirrored by a substantial increase in the proportion of Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals in the school census data between 2016-17 and 2023-24. In 2016-17 the school census data indicates that only 11.6% of Year 6 to Year 13 pupils were known to be eligible for free school meals compared to 23.0% in 2023-24. This increase is linked to changes in the eligibility criteria for free school meals which means that once a pupil receives free school meals in one year they are now more likely to receive free school meals in subsequent years.

Young carers

Unlike in 2015 and 2017, the 2024 Flourish Survey asked Year 4 to Year 6 pupils (in addition to older pupils) about whether they were they were young carers. In 2024 107 pupils did not answer the young carer question, 249 pupils did not want to state their carer status and 794 pupils were not sure whether they were carers or not. The latter number is equivalent to 8.5% of the sample not being sure about whether they are a carer or not, a proportion higher than the 6.7% of sampled pupils who report that they are definitely a young carer. As such, 12.3% of sampled pupils are not included in the young carer variable used to break out results in the other topic reports.

Focusing on pupils who provided a clear yes or no response, 6.7% of responding pupils identified as being a young carer in 2024 compared to 4.8% in both 2015 and 2017.[16]

[16] The 2015 and 2017 figures only relate to Year 7 to Year 13 pupils.

The 2024 question emphasised that a young carer is someone who looks after someone at home who has difficulty looking after themselves, a statement missing from the 2015 and 2017 questions.[17]

As a comparison, the 2023-24 school census records 2.1% of Year 4 to Year 13 pupils as being known to be young carers.[18] While, on the face of it, the school census indicates a lower proportion of pupils are young carers than are reported in the Flourish Survey sample, it is important to remember that the census data refers to young carers that schools have been informed about whereas the Flourish Survey sample includes young carers that may be unknown to schools. As such, the Flourish Survey sample may be more representative of the true population of young carers than the above figures suggest.

Low mental wellbeing

The variable used to identify low mental wellbeing is an indicator based on the aggregate score from a range of questions which academics have developed and verified as assessing mental wellbeing. No population data for Norfolk is available for this indicator so this sub-section primarily provides a detailed description of the indicator's methodology.

In 2024 the low mental wellbeing indicator cannot be calculated for 15.4% of sampled pupils (1,438 pupils). This proportion is in line with the 17.2% for whom the indicator could not be calculated in 2017, but above the 12.5% figure in 2015. The relatively high proportion of pupils for which the mental wellbeing indicator is not available results from pupils needing to answer at least 14 specific questions to enable the score on which the mental wellbeing indicator is based to be generated.

In 2024 39.9% of responding pupils with sufficient data are identified as having low mental wellbeing. This is a noticeable increase on the proportions of pupils identified in 2015 and 2017, respectively 30.9% and 30.7%.

While we use a single indicator for low mental wellbeing, the questionnaire for primary pupils and the questionnaire for secondary pupils contained different questions to

[17] In the 2024 Flourish Survey questionnaire, a paragraph description was also provided to clarify what activities might constitute caring.
[18] The school census data on young carers does not extend back to 2016-17 so we cannot compare changes over time in the Flourish Survey data to equivalent changes in data for the population of Norfolk pupils for this variable.

assess pupils' mental wellbeing. Those shown the questionnaire for secondary pupils saw statements allowing the generation of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)[19], while those shown the questionnaire for primary pupils saw statements leading to the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (Stirling Scale).[20] For both scales, pupils were asked to assess the frequency with which they experienced particular things, e.g. 'I've been thinking clearly', and scores were assigned to these responses.

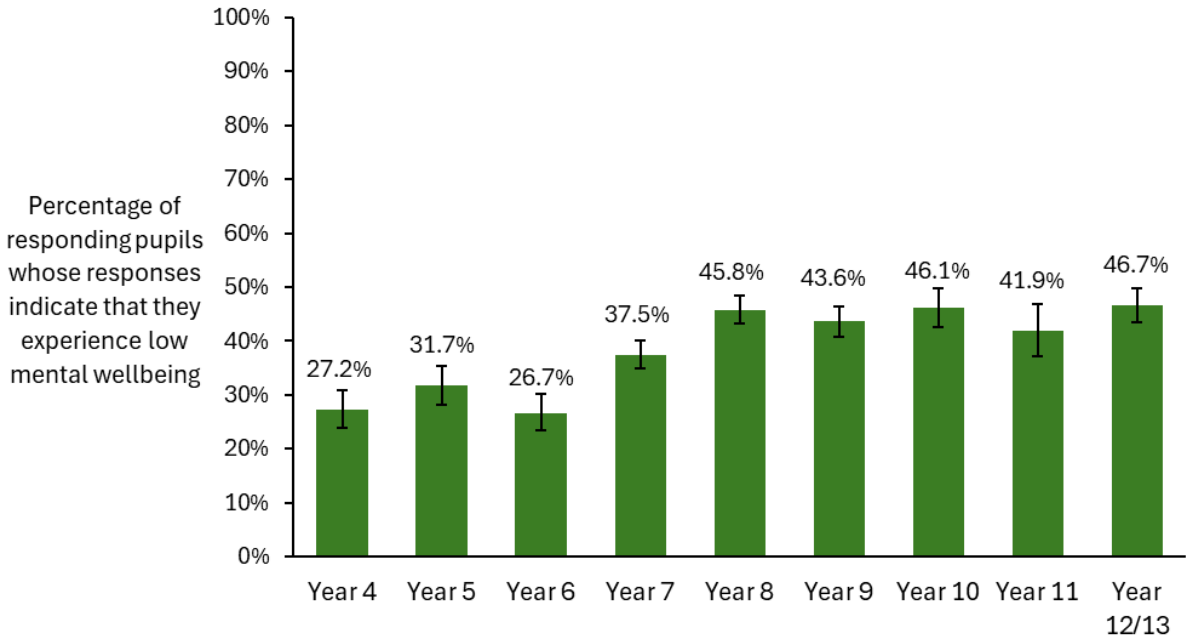
WEMWBS is formed from 14 statements with pupils being asked to assess the frequency of each statement in the two weeks prior to the survey according to a 5-point scale running from 'None of the time' to 'All of the time'.[21] Combining pupils' responses to these statement leads to a scale with a minimum score of 14 and a maximum score of 70 where a higher score indicates higher mental wellbeing. Low mental wellbeing on this scale is defined as a score of 42 or below. Academics set this value as it is one standard deviation below the mean WEMWBS score.

The Stirling Scale is formed from 15 statements with pupils being asked to assess them based on their experience of the last couple of weeks according to a 5-point scale running from 'Never' to 'All of the time'.[22] Combining pupils' responses to these statement leads to a scale with a minimum score of 12 and a maximum score of 60 where a higher score indicates higher mental wellbeing. To identify low mental wellbeing with the Stirling Scale we have followed the same approach as the academics did with WEMWBS: low mental wellbeing is defined by scores one standard deviation below the mean score.

[19] See Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
[20] Hence, the majority of Year 7 pupils were assessed according to the Stirling Scale.
[21] The fourteen statements are: (i) I've been feeling optimistic about the future, (ii) I've been feeling useful, (iii) I've been feeling relaxed, (iv) I've been feeling interested in other people, (v) I've had energy to spare, (vi) I've been dealing with problems well, (vii) I've been thinking clearly, (viii) I've been feeling good about myself, (ix) I've been feeling close to other people, (x) I've been feeling confident, (xi) I've been able to make up my own mind about things, (xii) I've been feeling loved, (xiii) I've been interested in new things, and (xiv) I've been feeling cheerful.
[22] The fifteen statements are: (i) I think good things will happen in my life, (ii) I have always told the truth, (iii) I've been able to make choices easily, (iv) I can find lots of fun things to do, (v) I feel that I am good at some things, (vi) I think lots of people care about me, (vii) I like everyone I have met, (viii) I think there are many things I can be proud of, (ix) I've been feeling calm, (x) I've been in a good mood, (xi) I enjoy what each new day brings, (xii) I've been getting on well with people, (xiii) I always share my sweets, (xiv) I've been cheerful about things, and (xv) I've been feeling relaxed.

Figure 8 shows a pattern between the proportion of pupils identified as having low mental wellbeing and year group consistent with WEMWBS identifying a greater proportion of pupils as having low mental wellbeing than the Stirling Scale. In Figure 8 the proportion of pupils in Year 8 and above (WEMWBS pupils) identified as having low mental wellbeing is consistently above that of pupils in Year 4 to 6 (Stirling Scale), while Year 7 (where some pupils saw WEMWBS statements and some pupils saw Stirling Scale statements) is in between these two levels. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the differences shown in Figure 8 between younger and older pupils result from them having different life experiences, i.e. the differences in their wellbeing are real rather than being due to different wellbeing indicators being used.

Figure 8: Percentage of responding pupils identified as having low mental wellbeing by year group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 12/13 data separately)



Other Characteristics

Help answering the questionnaire

One question asked in the Flourish Survey is whether or not pupils received help when answering the questionnaire. Specifically, the question is 'Is someone helping you fill in this questionnaire?'. One might be concerned that for pupils receiving help, their anonymity is reduced in a way which could affect their responses. Specifically, in such situations pupils may be less likely to provide 'negative' responses e.g. admitting to risky behaviours.

In 2024, 1.5% of sampled pupils do not answer this question on help or stated that they did not want to provide a response (39 and 104 pupils respectively). Among responding pupils, 4.5% (412 pupils) stated that they had received help when answering the survey and a further 3.3% indicated that they were not sure as to whether they had received help when answering the survey. The 4.5% figure in 2024 is noticeably higher than in 2017 when 2.0% of responding pupils stated that they had received help.

One might be concerned that pupils who identify as having SEND might be a group that disproportionately receive help, however, in 2024 the difference in the proportion of SEND and non-SEND pupils reporting that they received help was small (4.9% vs 4.1%). However, a noticeably higher proportion of pupils that identify as having SEND reported being 'not sure' about whether they had received help than pupils who did not identify as having SEND (4.7% vs 2.4%).

Looked after children

The Flourish Survey asks pupils to indicate which adults they live with. The number of pupils reporting that they live with a residential social worker or care staff is too low to report, i.e. in each of 2015, 2017 and 2024 there were than fewer than 10 pupils in this situation. The number of pupils in the sample who report that they live with foster parents in somewhat higher: 34 pupils in 2024, 60 pupils in 2017 and 13 pupils in 2015. Combining the figures for pupils reporting living with foster parents and those living with residential social workers/care staff, 0.4% of responding pupils might be considered looked after children in 2024 compared to 0.6% in 2017 and 0.5% in 2015. For

comparison, the Children Commissioner's Family Review in 2021 states that 0.7% of children in England are "looked after by the state".

Appendix: Mapping year groups to age

Generally, the topic reports based on the Flourish Survey break data out by school year group rather than age for two reasons: (i) key events in pupils' lives are determined by school year group, e.g. the switch from primary to secondary school and GCSE exams, and (ii) SHEU reports comparator data from other parts of the country for selected year groups.

For readers who are unfamiliar with school year groups Table 1 provides a mapping to the age of pupils. Year 6 marks the end of primary school, while Year 7 marks the start of secondary school. GCSE exams are taken in Year 11 with pupils moving to sixth form or further education providers for Year 12/13. As discussed in the first section of the report, the questions pupils see in the Flourish Survey vary to some extent by the year group they are in.

Table 1: Age of pupils in school year groups included in the Flourish Survey

School year group	Age of pupils
Year 4	8-9
Year 5	9-10
Year 6	10-11
Year 7	11-12
Year 8	12-13
Year 9	13-14
Year 10	14-15
Year 11	15-16
Year 12/13	16-18

The Flourish Survey questionnaire does not enable pupils in Year 12 and Year 13 to be separated. Also, in rare circumstances individual pupils of a particular age may be in a different year group if they have been moved up or down a year.