

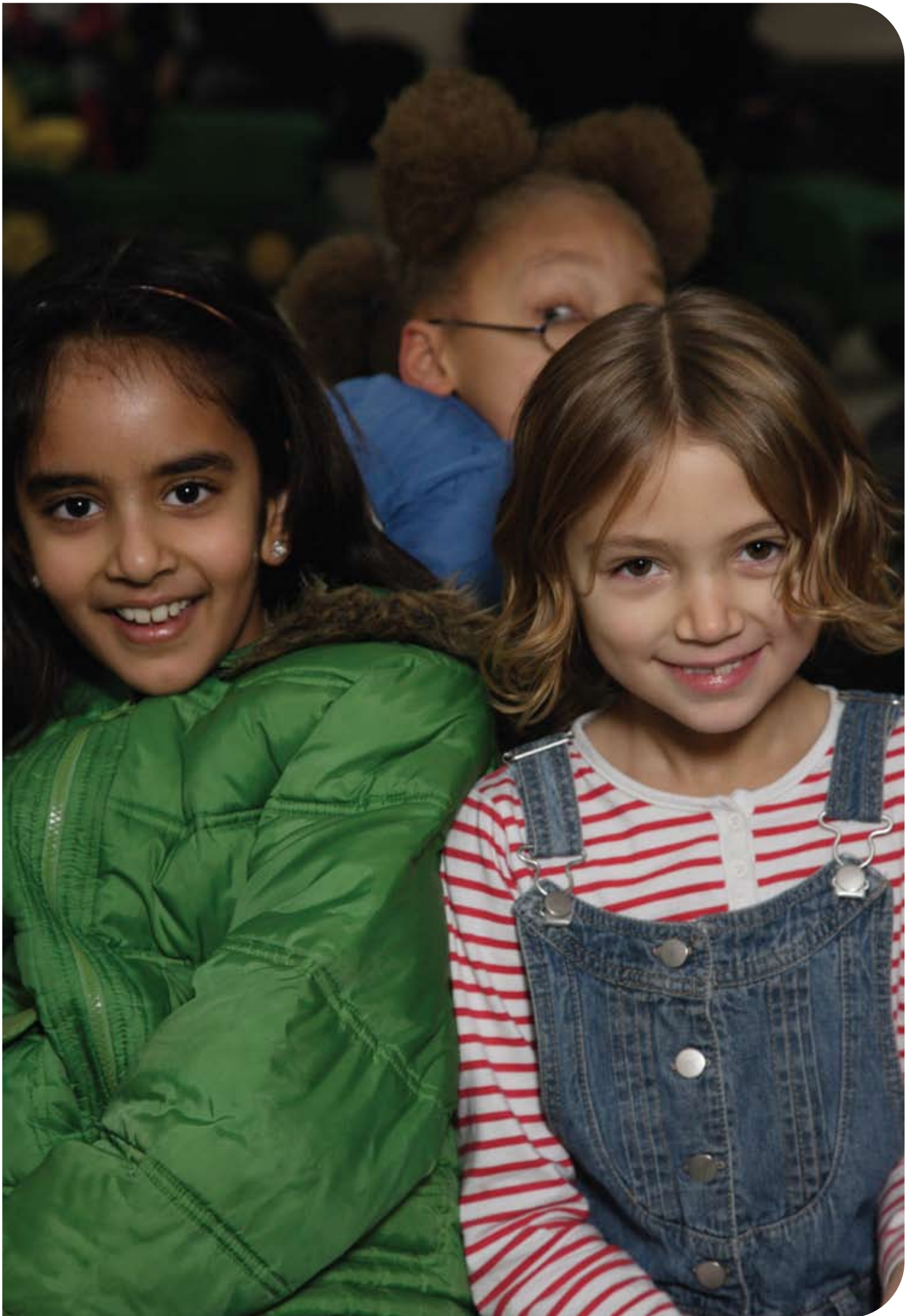
Younger children's views

A report of children's views by the
Children's Rights Director for England



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Introduction

Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England



As Children's Rights Director for England, the law gives me the duty to ask children and young people in care for their views about their rights, their welfare, and how they are looked after in England. The law also gives me the duty to ask children getting any sort of help from council social care services, as well as care leavers and children and young people living away from home in any type of boarding school, residential special school or further education college.

As well as asking children and young people for their views and publishing what they tell us, with my team I also give advice on children's and young people's views and on children's rights and welfare to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, and to the government. I have a duty to raise any issues I think are important about the rights and welfare of children or young people in care, getting children's social care support or living away from home. With my team, I do this both for individual young people and for whole groups of young people.

It is important to make sure that children of different ages are listened to equally, younger children as well as older ones. This report sets out the views of children aged under 12 on a range of different questions that they have told us are important to them in our other consultations. We invited children of this age to join us at Legoland, Windsor, for a children's conference. At this conference, we invited them to fill in a set of question cards for us, and to hand these in (in return for prizes) at a number of different 'bases' around the theme park, and to enjoy the attractions and rides around the theme park as they went.

Our reports of children's views are all written so that they can be read easily by everyone – including children, professionals and government ministers. You can find and download copies of all our children's views reports, on our children's website: www.rights4me.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Morgan'.



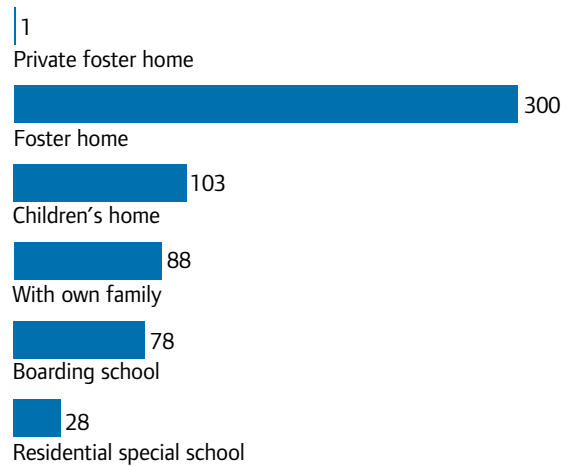
The children who answered the questions

Altogether, 611 children came and filled in one or more of our question cards. Out of these, 541 came to our conference at Legoland and filled in their question cards there, and another 70 who couldn't be there on the day filled in their cards and sent them to us by post.

Out of 548 children who told us how old they were, the youngest was five and the oldest was 12. The 'middle age' of all the children was 10. Out of the 533 children who told us whether they were boys or girls, 58% were boys and 42% were girls. A total of 588 children answered a question about their ethnic background. Out of these, 69% told us they were white, 11% that they were black, 9% that they were Asian, and another 9% that they were mixed race.

Sixty-six children (11% of all the children) told us they were disabled. Out of these, the most usual disabilities were autism (18 children), followed by learning difficulties (14 children), and then Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (11 children).

Figure 1: Where the children were living at the time of our conference.



Based on answers from 598 children.

As Figure 1 shows, exactly half the children were living in foster care, and about one in six were living in children's homes. One child was living in a private foster home. Nearly one in eight children were not being helped by social care services, but were boarders in boarding schools.

The most important things in life

We wanted to find out what younger children in care, getting social care support, or living in boarding schools thought were the most important things in their lives. We asked this on the first of our question cards. We did not make any suggestions to them, so the answers are what the children themselves came up with.

Here are the answers given by at least one in ten of the 522 children who answered this question.

| The most important things in life | % of the children giving this answer |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Family | 72% |
| Friends | 33% |
| Education | 19% |
| Being happy | 14% |
| Carers | 12% |
| Sport | 12% |
| Being taken care of | 11% |
| Leisure activities | 11% |
| Pets | 11% |

‘Friends and family. I feel they are always there for me and supporting me. Without them I would be sad all the time’

From these answers, **seven main sorts of things are most important to the lives of the younger children we asked. These are family, friends, education, feeling happy, being looked after, having pets, and enjoyable things to do.** Sport came through as the most important sort of spare time activity. It is important to note that family came top of the list of what is most important to the children we asked, because we know that over two thirds of them were not living with their own families at the time they were answering our questions.

Importantly, **there was no difference at all in the percentages of children in children’s homes and those in foster homes who said that their families were most important to them. Boarders in boarding schools were the most likely children to put their families on the list of the most important things to their lives.**

Examples of how children described the importance of their families and friends to them were: ‘I’d say my family is the most precious thing. I’d be devastated if anything bad happened to them’; ‘important thing in my life is to live with my family’; ‘friends and family. I feel they are always there for me and supporting me. Without them I would be sad all the time’.

Examples of what children wrote about the importance of their education were: ‘school, because school is my future’, ‘reading, writing, computer’.

A few of the things children wrote about feeling happy and being well looked after were: ‘being happy and loved’; ‘being safe and not being bullied’; ‘not being hurt’. Some of those who were in care told us how important a good placement was to them: ‘I am fostered, which means I’m safe’; ‘to stay in my placement and not be moved around’.

There were many different examples of what sports and leisure activities were important to different children: ‘going out to special places’; ‘going to the park’; ‘horse riding’; ‘listening to music’; ‘swimming pool’; ‘watching TV’.



Girls were much more likely than boys were to list having friends as a most important thing in their lives. Forty-three per cent of girls listed friends, compared with 25% of boys. **Boarders in boarding schools were much more likely than the other children to list their friends as one of the most important things in their lives. Children living in residential special schools were the least likely to put having friends on the list.**

There were some other big differences between what different groups of children told us were the most important things in their lives. **Children in foster homes were more likely than children in children's homes to put education on the list.** Children in care but living at home with their own families were the most likely to put sport on their list of most important things, and children in residential special schools were the least likely to list sport. Children in residential special schools were the most likely to put having pets on the list, while children in children's homes were the least likely to list having pets. Children in residential special schools were the most likely to put playing with toys and games on their lists. Disabled children were more likely than other children to put leisure activities, having days out and being safe on their lists of the most important things in their lives.

'School, because school is my future'



Younger children staying safe

On one of our question cards we asked what helps to keep younger children safe from harm. Again, we did not suggest any answers, and here are the answers that came from at least one in ten of the children who answered this question. This time, 444 children answered the question.

| What helps children stay safe ? | % of the children giving this answer |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Carers | 30% |
| Being with an adult | 23% |
| Knowing about road safety | 18% |
| Following rules and advice | 15% |
| Not talking to strangers | 10% |

These answers cover **three very different ways of keeping younger children safe**. First is **adults keeping children safe**, second is **children themselves knowing how to keep themselves safe from one of the top dangers to children – traffic on the roads**, and third is **children keeping themselves safe by following advice they are given and not putting themselves in danger by talking to strangers**.

Some examples from children of how adults can keep them safe were: 'having a safe family looking out for me'; 'parents giving boundaries and advice'; 'people caring for me'.

Knowing and following the basics of staying safe on the roads included: 'knowing how to cross the road'; 'being aware of traffic'; 'helmet for a bike'; 'putting my seat belt on'; and 'wearing bright colours at night'.

As well as following adult advice and not talking to strangers, some children wrote about how it is safer to stay with other people and not go around alone. 'Keeping in a group out together keeps me safe'; 'not wandering off'; 'stay with the group'; 'walk together'.

Girls were much more likely than boys to put knowing about road safety and not talking to strangers on the list of what keeps children safe. Children in children's homes were the most likely to put being with an adult on the list. Boarders in boarding schools were the most likely to list their friends as helping to keep them safe. Disabled children were more likely than other children to say that their carers kept them safe, but less likely than other children to say that knowing about road safety was something that kept them safe.

Keeping from being bullied

We know from many of our past consultations with children of all ages that bullying is a major risk – and a major worry – to many children. On our question cards we therefore asked these younger children what exactly they thought would help to stop them from being bullied. A total of 424 children answered this question, and the answers that came from at least one in ten of these are set out in the next table (as always without any suggestions from us).

| What helps stop children from being bullied ? | % of the children giving this answer |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| School staff | 50% |
| Telling someone | 42% |
| Carers | 18% |
| Ignoring bullies | 16% |
| Friends | 14% |

Adults, and especially staff at school, are important to keeping younger children from being bullied, both by helping to stop bullying happening and by being there and doing something about it when children tell them about being bullied. **Keeping safe from bullying, according to these children, needs a mixture of adult help, children themselves ignoring bullies, and being protected by having friends around you.**

There were no big differences between girls and boys in the things they listed as helping to stop children from being bullied. **Foster children were much more likely than children in children's homes to list school staff as helping. Boarders in boarding schools were more likely than others to say that ignoring bullies helped, but less likely than others to say that telling someone helped. Disabled children were more likely than other children to say that school staff helped stop bullying.**

Here are some examples of children's own advice on keeping safe from bullying: 'tell somebody, don't show the bully you are upset'; 'I once got bullied very badly and did not tell anyone – always tell an adult!'; 'let them understand you're not getting affected'; 'friends helping'; 'be nice to everyone and always tell the teacher'.

'Tell somebody, don't show the bully you are upset'

Keeping younger children safe on the internet

A very important place where children need to stay safe is when they are using the internet. We wanted to find out, again without making any suggestions of our own, what younger children do to keep themselves safe on the internet.

Altogether we heard from 364 children on this question. The table gives the answers that came from at least one in ten of these children.

| How do children keep safe on the internet ? | % of the children giving this answer |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Being supervised when using the internet | 27% |
| Only using safe sites | 23% |
| Not talking to strangers on social networking sites | 18% |
| Blocks and filters | 16% |
| Not giving personal information / photos | 14% |
| Not using the internet at all | 10% |

While these are very different answers, they do give a strong list of ways of keeping younger children safe on the internet. It is important to note that one in ten of the children answering our question kept safe from risks on the internet by not using the internet at all, and that adult supervision was the top way of keeping younger children safe when they did use the internet. A lot clearly still depends on the child him or herself keeping themselves safe, by keeping to safe sites, not talking to strangers, and not giving out personal information or photographs of themselves.

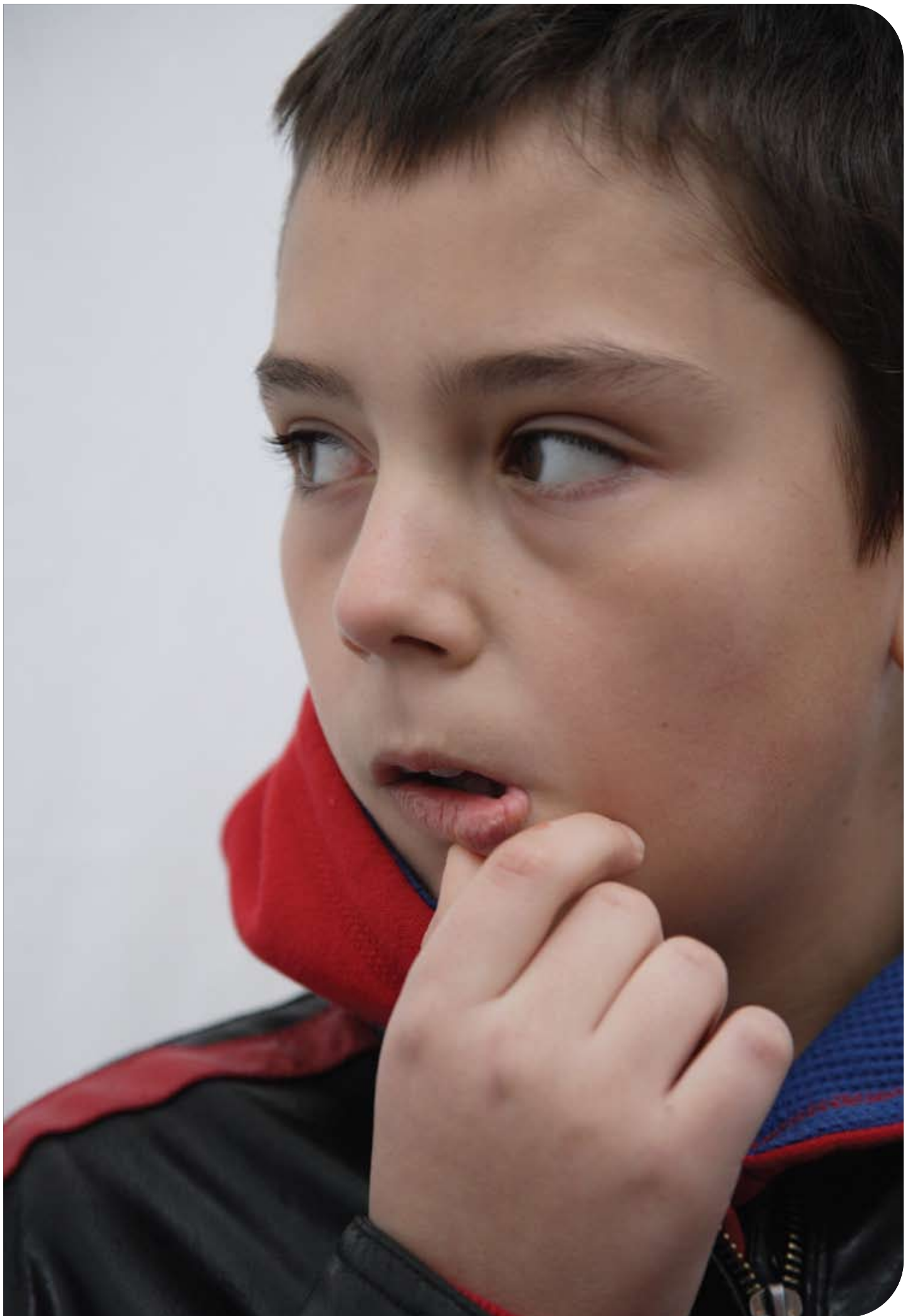
Some children were very clear about either not going on the internet at all: 'you don't' – or keeping clear of risky sites: 'don't look on rude sites'; 'I don't go on sites that I'm not allowed to'; 'I go on things that are suitable for me'. Others described how they could be supervised by adults when using the internet: 'get an adult to check it'; 'make sure an adult knows what you are going on'; 'be in same room as parents'.

Some children were clear that a child must be sensible, not take big risks and make good judgements for themselves in order to keep safe on the internet: 'don't go on stuff you don't need to'; 'not doing stupid things'; 'only talk to your friends and family on there'; 'no photos of yourself or details'.

Boys and girls gave very similar answers to this question. Disabled children gave much the same answers as other children did. **Boarders in boarding schools were much less likely than other children to say that they were being kept safe on the internet by being supervised by adults or by blocks or filters, but far more likely than others to say that they were kept safe by telling an adult if they came across something risky on the internet.**

Boarders were also far more likely than others to say they kept safe by never going on any networking sites. Children living in boarding schools and children living in residential special schools were both much more likely than other children to say they kept themselves safe by not giving out personal information or photographs of themselves to anyone on the internet.

Boarders in boarding schools were the only group of children where more than one in ten told us they thought that there was nothing that could keep children safe if they were on the internet.



Staying healthy

We used our question cards to ask children a number of key health questions. The first was how children keep themselves healthy. As with all the other questions we didn't give any suggested answers, and we had completed cards from 388 children for this question.

The table gives the top three answers, which were the only ones that came from at least one in ten of the children answering the question.

| How do children stay healthy ? | % of the children giving this answer |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Being active | 58% |
| Eating fruit and vegetables | 54% |
| Generally eating and drinking healthily | 51% |

Clearly, **these younger children see exercise and a good diet as the main ways to stay healthy:** 'Play and exercise'; 'don't stay inside all day and only eat when you're hungry and don't eat too many sweets'; 'don't eat junk food, eat fruit and veg, drink water'. Children gave many different examples of different sorts of exercise they took; from walking to school, to swimming, playing football, running, walking, trampoline and school PE. A few wrote about other ways of staying healthy, like washing themselves and brushing their teeth, about being checked regularly by doctors or nurses, or following treatments they needed for particular problems they had, 'look after my eczema with cream'.

Girls and boys gave similar responses to this question.

A higher proportion of disabled children than other children told us that they kept healthy by being active, but a lower proportion than others said they kept healthy by eating fruit and vegetables.

Children in residential special schools were the most likely to say they kept healthy by being active, and the least likely to say they kept healthy by generally eating and drinking healthily. Boarders in boarding schools were the opposite. They were the least likely to say they kept healthy by being active, but the most likely to say they kept healthy by generally eating and drinking healthily.

Best and worst things about doctors

In two more questions about health, we asked children to tell us what they thought were the best, and the worst, things about doctors. The next table gives the best things about doctors that came from at least one in ten of the 377 children who answered this question.

| The best things about doctors | % of the children giving this answer |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| They help you feel better | 70% |
| They are nice / kind | 14% |
| They check you / look after you | 12% |
| They give you health advice | 11% |

There are two main sorts of things that the children thought were best about doctors. The first was helping you to stay healthy – in different ways, by helping you feel better if you were ill, by checking your health, and by giving advice about your health: ‘Good at making me better’; ‘they fix you’; ‘they heal people’; ‘getting rid of bugs’.

The other best thing about doctors was when they were kind to the child: ‘They care about you’; ‘they’re nice, kind, gentle’. One child wrote, ‘doctors can keep secrets’. Boarders in boarding schools were more likely than those living in other places to say that being kind was one of the best things about their doctors.

There was no big difference between disabled children and other children in what they listed as the best things about doctors.

One child summed up how they thought about good doctors, ‘you come out better than when you go in’.

On the other side of things, the next table gives the worst things about doctors that came from at least one in ten of the 328 children who answered our question on the worst things about doctors.

| The worst things about doctors | % of the children giving this answer |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Needles | 33% |
| Nothing | 17% |
| Medication | 10% |

A third of the 328 children who answered the question told us that using needles was the worst thing about doctors. One in ten thought that the medication they gave was the worst thing about doctors. As some children put it: ‘they stick needles in you’; ‘yucky medicine’; ‘I don’t like needles’; ‘they always say something’s not going to hurt but in the end it always hurts’.

As many as one in six of the children who answered this question could find nothing bad to tell us about doctors. Only 3% of the children who answered our question asking about good things could find nothing good to tell us about doctors.

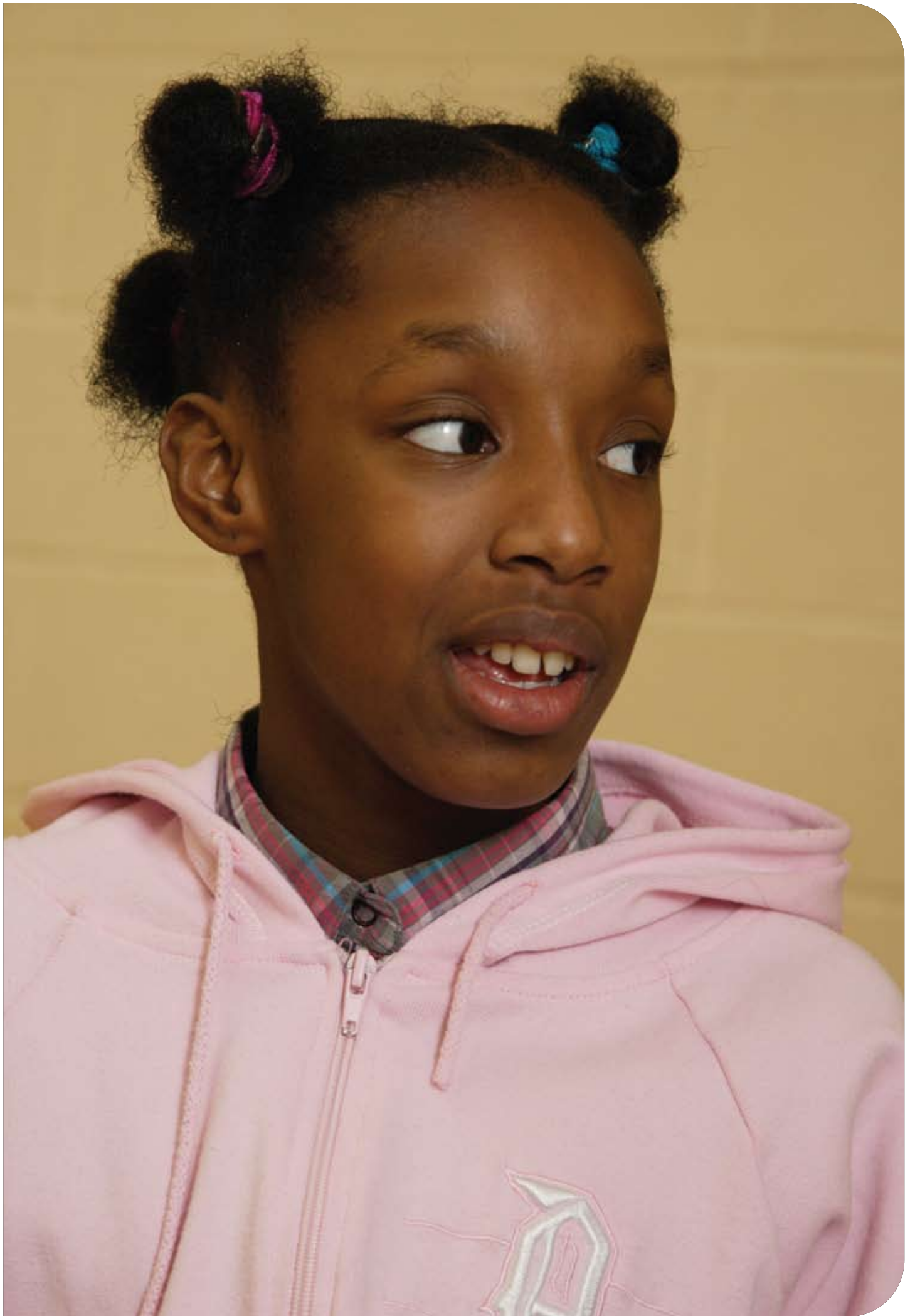


One answer just missed being in the top answers list, because it only came from 8% of the children who answered the question. This was that one of the worst things about doctors is the waiting you have to do when you visit them, 'waiting in the waiting room when you're in pain'.

Although it didn't make it to the top answers list, some children wrote to tell us that they found visiting doctors embarrassing in different ways: 'embarrassing questions'; 'they get to know embarrassing things about you'; 'they smell funny and they touch you'; 'when they pull your top up to do your heart it makes me uncomfortable'; 'if it's a man and you are having a girly problem it would be a bit awkward to tell him'.

Children living in residential special schools were more likely than children living in other places to say that the worst thing about doctors was when they used needles. **Boarders in boarding schools were much more likely than children living in other places to say that there was nothing bad about doctors.**

Again, there were no big differences between disabled children and other children in what they said were the worst things about doctors.



What is unfairness?

We know from our other consultations that fairness, and being treated fairly, are very important to children and young people. We asked a question on our cards to find out any ways the younger children thought they were being treated unfairly. Here are the answers from at least one in ten of the 308 children who answered this question.

| What children think is unfair to them | % of the children giving this answer |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Nothing | 31% |
| Restrictions on doing things | 15% |
| Bullying | 12% |
| Being treated differently from your equals | 10% |

The interesting thing to notice about this table is that the most usual answer is 'nothing'. **Almost a third of the children said 'nothing' when we asked them what they thought was unfair to them.** This is not surprising, because when we consulted children and young people about fairness, most said they are being treated fairly, and that the way children are being treated is getting more fair.

'Nothing is unfair, but some things are annoying'

The children who did tell us about things they thought were unfair came up with three very different top answers. **For these children, being stopped from doing things you thought you should be allowed to do was seen as unfair, along with bullying and being treated in a different way from your equals.** Being stopped from doing things you thought you should be allowed to do was not mainly to do with being stopped from doing some activity or from having your own way about something (though it was for some) – for many of these children, most of whom were living away from their families, it was often to do with being stopped from keeping in contact with your family: 'I cannot see my auntie and uncles'; 'I don't get to see my little brother'; 'I want more contact with my Mum'; 'I can't see my sisters and brothers without my mum and I don't want to see my mum as she scares me'.

Children living in children's homes were much less likely than other children to say that there was nothing that was unfair to them. Girls were more likely than boys to say that being treated differently from their equals was unfair. Boarders in boarding schools were also much more likely than children living in other places to say that being treated differently from their equals was unfair. Children living with support with their own families were more likely than children living in other places to say that being stopped from doing things, and being bullied, were unfair.

Here are some examples of how children told us they can be treated unfairly: 'bullying because of my family'; 'giving your child at school £5 for passing a maths test and giving your other child nothing for passing a history test'; 'want deaf and hearing to be equal'; 'people aren't treated like we are because they are more free and don't have as many rules by social services'.

One child summed up what many others said when they wrote, 'favouritism is unfair to me'. Another summed up what others had said by writing, 'nothing is unfair, but some things are annoying'.



What helps younger children to behave well?

Many adults looking after or teaching young children make decisions about what to do to help them behave well. We asked the children to use one of our question cards to tell us what they thought helps children their age to behave well. As with all the other questions on the cards, we did not suggest any answers to them. The next table shows all the answers that came from at least one in ten of the 325 children who answered this question.

| What helps children behave well ? | % of the children giving this answer |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Rewards | 31% |
| Being disciplined if you don't behave | 15% |
| Listening to what you are told | 11% |

Three clear but different things came out as helping children to behave well. These were two things that adults can do – to give rewards for good behaviour and discipline for bad behaviour – and one thing that children themselves can do – to listen and take notice of what they are told. Twice as many children told us that rewards help them behave well than told us that being disciplined helps them to do this.

Boarders in boarding schools were the least likely to tell us that rewards helped children to behave well, and children in residential special schools were the least likely to tell us that being disciplined for bad behaviour helped children to behave well. They were also the least likely to say that listening to what they are told helps to make children behave well. Top of the list of things that children in residential special schools told us helped was being given good support with problems. **Children in children's homes were more likely than those living in other places to say that having enough space helped children to behave well.** Disabled children were slightly less likely than other children to say that rewards helped.

Examples of how rewards and punishments can help were: 'I get nice things if I behave well'; 'I think like a reward chart because if I don't behave I won't get my treat'; 'get a punishment and after you get a punishment you will learn'. One summed it up by writing, 'sanctions and rewards'.

Some children wrote about how adults should listen and help children to behave well: 'the adults listen to me'; 'with love and understanding'; 'being spoken to and not shouted at'; 'when I am naughty I get told off and behave coz mum and dad explain why what I've done is naughty so I understand and don't do it again'.

One way of helping that some children wrote about, although not often enough to make the list of top answers, was taking some time out of the situation to calm down. Children wrote very different examples of this: 'if I am sent to my bedroom for five minutes I calm down'; 'take myself to the parlour and calm down'; 'when I am angry I shake a bottle of glitter and the glitter is my emotions'.

Helping people with a disability

One of the responsibilities that children have told us they have in some of our past consultations is to help other people, especially people younger than themselves or people who are disabled in some way. We asked children in this consultation how they had helped someone with a disability. We had answers from 292 children, and here are the answers that each came from at least one in ten of them.

| How children have helped someone with a disability | % of the children giving this answer |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Being kind | 30% |
| Have not helped someone with a disability | 25% |
| Being their friend | 16% |

A quarter of the children who answered the question told us they had never in fact helped someone who had a disability. Those who had, told us about being generally kind to them, and making friends with a disabled child. Examples were: ‘being nice to a girl in class when people pick on her because of her disability’; ‘helped my friend to read’; ‘play with them so they don’t feel left out’; ‘I once had a best friend who was mentally disabled but I made sure nobody teased her or that she was not alone’; ‘help my friend who has Downs’ when we play together and I have a friend who is deaf and am learning sign language’.

There were some big differences in what different groups of children told us. Children living in residential special schools were the least likely to say they had helped someone with a disability by simply being kind to them. Boarders in boarding schools and children living in residential special schools were less likely than the other children who answered this question to tell us that they had never helped someone with a disability. **Boarders were more likely than the other children to have helped by supporting a charity, and children in residential special schools were more likely than others to have helped by helping a disabled child with their school work.** Disabled children answering this question were less likely than other children to say they had never helped someone else with a disability.

Some of the children were young carers, who had a disabled adult in their family who they helped to support and care for: ‘help my granddad who had a stroke’; ‘push my nanny in her wheelchair’; ‘I hold dad’s hand to help him walk with his bad knee’.





Somewhere to be alone

When we have talked with children, especially children living in places like schools or children's homes, they have often told us that it is important to be able to go somewhere to get away from other children when you want to be alone for a while. So we asked children to tell us where they usually go to be alone when they want to be. We had answers from 421 children. Here are the answers that came from at least one in ten of these children.

| Where children go to be on their own | % of the children giving this answer |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| My bedroom | 70% |
| Another room that is quiet | 18% |
| The garden | 17% |
| Out (for example walk, bike ride, to friend's house) | 15% |

Most children told us that they used their bedroom as somewhere to go to be alone, but others told us about other quiet or special places in the building or outside, sometimes in the garden, and sometimes away from where they lived altogether.

Examples of places children told us they go to, apart from their bedrooms, were: 'go into the garden and in my special tent'; 'I go to my special place, a favourite place'; 'my secret hideout'; 'my treehouse'; 'under a tree'; 'to the park down the road'. These **places to go were usually somewhere that is quiet, and often secret.**

Girls were much more likely than boys to go to their bedrooms when they wanted to be alone. Children in children's homes and foster homes were equally likely to go to their bedrooms. Children living in boarding schools and those living in residential special schools were less likely than children living in other places to go to their bedrooms to be alone. Boarders in boarding schools were less likely than those living in other places to go into the garden or grounds to be alone, and more likely than those living elsewhere to go to a quiet room somewhere other than their bedrooms.

'I go to my special place, a favourite place'



Respecting younger children's property

Our next question was to find out how adults help younger children to keep their property safe and make sure that children respect each other's property. Three hundred and seventy-three children answered this question. The next table sets out their top answers. As always, we have listed every answer that came from at least one in ten of the children.

| How do adults make sure children's property is respected ? | % of the children giving this answer |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| By putting it somewhere safe | 34% |
| By not letting others touch your property | 25% |
| By teaching children to respect others' property | 23% |
| By strict rules / punishments | 16% |
| By not allowing children into someone else's room without permission | 12% |

Children told us that **adults help keep their property safe by a mixture of keeping it in a safe place and telling children to respect each other's property, not to take things without permission, and often by having rules like staying out of each other's rooms.** 'Telling them not to touch or they will be in trouble'; 'they tell them not to touch my things without asking me and they tell them to be careful'; 'we learn to ask before we touch people's stuff'. One child said that adults, 'make sure that I respect other people's things as well as mine'. One child told us though that adults don't always succeed with this, 'they try their best, but it doesn't always work'.

Girls were much more likely than boys to tell us that strict rules and punishments made sure people's property was respected. Children living in residential special schools were the most likely to say that adults kept children's property safe by putting it in a safe place for them, and also to say that adults kept it safe by not allowing children to touch each other's property. Children in children's homes and in residential special schools were less likely than children living in other places to say that strict rules and punishments were used to keep children's property safe, and more likely than children living elsewhere to say that adults kept property safe by locking doors.

'Make sure that I respect other people's things as well as mine'

Best and worst things about school

School is a very big part of children’s lives, and we wanted to get an up-to-date picture of what children aged under 12 thought were the best and worst things about school. The answers are all the children’s own, as usual without any suggestions from us, and here are the answers that came from at least one in ten of the 387 children who told us what they thought were the best things about school.

| The best things about school | % of the children giving this answer |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Learning / lessons | 53% |
| Friends | 44% |
| Break times | 20% |
| Teachers | 14% |
| Having fun | 12% |
| Sports | 11% |

Two things stood out ahead of everything else as the best things about school – learning and having friends. Learning came top of the list, with over half the children telling us this was one of the best things about school for them, followed by friends. Nothing else was listed even half as often as these. Children wrote: ‘learning new things each day’; ‘learning for life’; ‘having lots of friends to play with me’; ‘my friends and education and liking my teachers’.

There were some big differences between different groups of children in how they answered this question. **Girls were much more likely than boys to say that having friends was one of the best things about school.** Fifty-two per cent of girls said this, compared with 39% of boys. **Foster children were much more likely than children in children’s homes to say that having friends was a best thing about school. Children living with support at home with their families were more likely than others to say that having friends was a best thing, and children living in either boarding schools or residential special schools were less likely than children living in other places to say that having friends was one of the best things about school.**

Disabled children were also less likely than other children to tell us that having friends was one of the best things about school. **Children in children’s homes were much more likely than foster children to say that learning was one of the best things about school. Boarders in boarding schools were less likely than children living in other places to say that learning was one of the best things about school for them.**

As always, we also asked children to tell us what they thought were the worst things too. We had answers about the worst things about school from 381 children, and the next table lists the answers that came from at least one in ten of these.

| The worst things about school | % of the children giving this answer |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Some of the lessons | 23% |
| Bullying | 18% |
| Nothing | 13% |



None of the worst things about school was listed as often as the top best things, and 13% of the children who answered this question told us there was nothing they could say that was bad about school: 'I don't think there is anything nasty about school.' **The top two worst things about school were some of the lessons, and bullying.** Some examples of what children wrote about some of the lessons were: 'hard subjects'; 'lessons are sometimes boring'; 'literacy I don't like'.

As well as bullying, we heard that falling out with friends can be a bad thing about school. **Just as making friends is a good thing at school, losing friends is one of the worst things there.** 'Falling out with best mates'; 'not having friends'; 'friends being cruel to me'; 'sometimes life is hard because we fall out and make up again'. We also heard that for some children, school food is one of the worst things about school: 'the school food isn't very nice, but apart from that everything is amazing'.

Boys were much more likely than girls to say that some of the lessons were one of the worst things about school. Twenty-seven per cent of the boys said this, compared with 16% of the girls. **Children in children's homes were much more likely than foster children to say that some of the lessons were a worst thing about school.** Boarders in boarding schools were the most likely, and children in residential special schools were the least likely, to tell us that bullying was one of the worst things about school for them.

'The school food isn't very nice, but apart from that, everything is amazing'

Keeping in touch with a family you don't live with

Most of the children we consult are living away from their own families, either in care, or in one of the many types of boarding or residential school. For our last question, we asked children to tell us the ways they kept in touch with members of their family while they were not living with them. Our last table gives the answers that came from at least one in ten of the 384 children who answered this question.

| How children keep in touch with family while living away from home | % of the children giving this answer |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| By telephone | 63% |
| By contact visits | 38% |
| By email | 22% |
| Visiting | 18% |
| By letter | 14% |

From their answers, **the telephone is by far the most important way for children living away from home to keep in touch with their families.** For children in care, contact visits are a very usual way of keeping in touch. Emails are more usual than letters.

Not many of the children told us they used either mobile phone texting to keep in touch, or that they used any of the many different sorts of internet social networking sites that there are. **Only 4% of the 384 children used text, and only 3% used social networking sites.**

Children living in children's homes were much more likely than foster children to keep in touch with their families by telephone, and less likely to have contact visits. The children who were most likely to keep in touch by phone were those living in residential special schools, followed by boarders in boarding schools. Boarders were more likely than children living in other places to keep in touch by email and by letter. Children living with support at home with their parents were more likely to use social networking sites, mobile phone text, and 'Skype' to keep in touch with other members of their families than children living away from home were.

'Sometimes life is hard because we fall out and make up again'

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