

Cheshire East High Needs Funding Pilot Phase 2b - Results and Analysis



July 2022



1. Executive Summary

- The vast majority of results and ratings given by both parents/carers and schools were positive or neutral, with ratings for negative impact or concerns being rare.
- The majority of both parents/carers (60%) and pilot schools (100%) were either positive or neutral about the proposed change at the start of the pilot, although 40% of parent/carers did have some concerns at this stage. There was a positive trend in how both parents/carers and schools felt after the pilot.
- During the pilot, parents/carers and schools both confirmed that the support provided in school remained the same for the majority of involved children/young people, though some changes were noted by both schools and parents/carers. Where parents noted a change in quality of support, these were all listed as improvements.
- Parents/carers in pilot schools were positive about the support their child received prior to the pilot, and ratings for this stayed the same after the pilot.
- When asked to rate 6 different overall impact measures, all pilot schools reported observing either a slight positive impact or no impact in all measures bar 1 (with 1 of the 9 schools giving a slight negative impact for 1 measure).
- The majority of parents viewed their relationship with their school positively before the pilot. All relationships between schools and parents/carers either further improved or stayed the same during the pilot (with no negative impact reported by either schools or parents/carers). Overall, relationships improved further following the pilot according to parents/carers' perspectives.

2. Background

2.1. Pilot school and pupil numbers

This pilot is intended to test and provide information on the feasibility and impact of moving from expressing total provision on Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans in hours to expressing it as a band with an associated financial amount.

9 schools took part in this pilot, including:

7 Primary Schools

- Alsager Highfields Community Primary School
- Beechwood Primary School
- Black Firs Primary School
- Chelford CE Primary School
- Elworth Hall Primary School
- Hollinhey Primary School
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Middlewich

2 Secondary Schools

- Alsager School
- Ruskin Community High School

Involved schools undertook the pilot with a total of **60** children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. Pilot schools were provided with information on an appropriate pilot band and associated financial amount for each child/young person under the model being piloted, and were asked to model what support may look for each pupil if this new allocation system was in place.

2.2. The voice of parents / carers

All parent/carers of the children and young people involved in the pilot were:

- informed about the pilot, including its purpose, aims and timescales, through a detailed letter and invitations to attend dedicated information sessions at their child's school
- invited to provide feedback on the pilot.

A total of **16** completed parent feedback forms on the pilot were submitted, and 1 further parent sent feedback in an email [Note that 1 pilot school had a pair of siblings in the pilot, and the same parent completed 2 feedback forms – 1 for each child].

It is worth noting that, when returning their evidence, many of the pilot schools commented that parent carers had not felt the need to submit feedback as the piloted model had not changed much regarding the provision for their child or the way in which the school was already working with them and their child. This is, in itself, important evidence for the pilot.

2.3. Case studies and the voice of young people

All pilot schools were asked to complete at least 1 case study form for 1 pilot pupil (or a group of pupils in the case of shared innovative work) in their school. Pilot schools provided a total of **18** case studies to support the pilot.

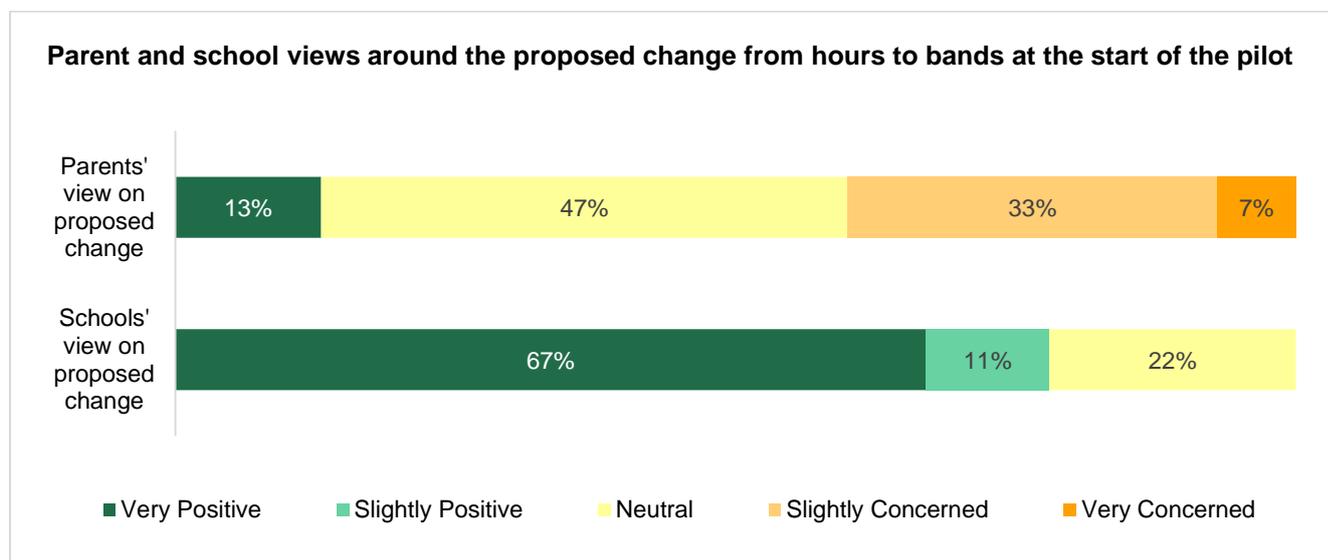
All pilot schools were also asked to collect views from involved pupils on their support using any creative method appropriate to the child/young person.

The voices of **8** young people were provided by schools as part of their pilot impact evidence.

3. Parent/carers and pilot school views about the piloted change

3.1. Views before the pilot began

Parents/carers and pilot schools were asked how they felt about the proposed change from hours to bands at the start of the pilot.



[Note that that 1 parent didn't answer this question, so summarised results are from 15 parents/carers].

The **majority** of both parents / carers (60%) and pilot schools (100%) were either **positive or neutral** about the proposed change at the start of the pilot.

Indeed, **no pilot schools at all felt concerned** about the proposed change at this point.

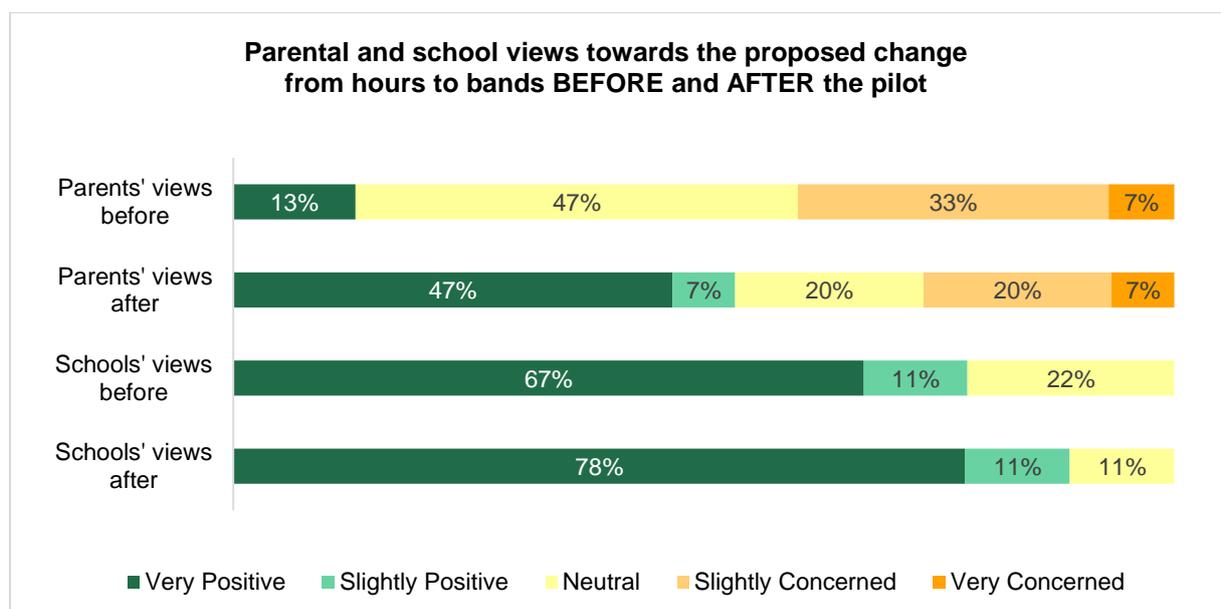
It is worth noting however that there was some hesitation about the change amongst parents/carers prior to the pilot, with 40% of those that responded saying they were either slightly or very concerned about the proposed change at this point.

When asked why they had a chosen a particular view level, comments from parents/carers and schools showed the following themes:

Key themes - parents / carers	Key themes - schools
<p>Positive/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in support welcomed Belief that as support was always in place and needs met, this would not change 	<p>Positive/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In line with approach already being adopted Reassuring to have documents to support approach already in place Will provide more flexibility to design support around individual needs, and also within groups and across school Moving towards an approach being proposed in the Green Paper Unsure whether change would impact our school or whether we could show impact
<p>Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current support could change Not knowing potential impact of change (e.g. whether change would affect thresholds for assessment or support, and then outcomes) Initially unsure how funding would be allocated Banding offers a less personalised approach Concern around if a child is banded incorrectly and ease of change Concern about how banding systems would be regulated 	<p>Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The banding figures being piloted may provide less funding overall

3.2. Views after the pilot

Parents/carers and pilot schools were again asked how they felt about the proposed change from hours to bands at the end of the pilot.



[Note that that 1 parent didn't answer this question, so summarised results are from 15 parents/carers].

The response from both parents/carers and pilot schools showed a positive progression when compared to their collated views at the start of the pilot.

Parents' ratings from before to after:

- Very positive from 13% to 47%
- Slightly positive from 0% to 7%
- Neutral from 47% to 20%
- Slightly concerned from 33% to 20%
- Very concerned remained at 7%

Schools' ratings from before to after:

- Very positive from 67% to 78%
- Slightly positive remained at 11%
- Neutral from 22% to 11%

For individual parents/carers and schools, all views either stayed the same or changed positively after the pilot (in comparison to before the pilot), with the exception of one parent/carer (who changed from neutral to slightly concerned).

When asked why they had chosen a particular view level at the end of the pilot, comments from parents/carers and schools showed the following themes:

Key themes – parents / carers	Key themes - schools
<p>Positive/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern only for child needs being met and not the funding logistics • Confident that child will get required support • The approach to offering support made sense • Changes have had a positive impact on child (more social and independent) • Nothing has changed 	<p>Positive/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with approach already being adopted; reassuring • Fits with how the school wants to move forward in managing SEND • Better fit for schools who know their children well • Allows more flexibility in designing support around meeting individual needs and use of groups where appropriate
<p>Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full impact of the changes that moving to a banding system would bring cannot be fully measured by short term paper-based pilot • Concerns as child needs adult with them to fulfil section F provision – feel this allows the LA and school to distribute funding elsewhere • Concerned about changing levels in funding if moving between local authority areas 	<p>Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned approach may be used to reduce funding at a later date

This was before the start of this year. I was concerned X wasn't receiving his hours and that he wasn't getting the support he was supposed to be. I thought 'hours' meant 'hours'. Why would you tell parents it is 'hours' if it doesn't mean that?

Parent / carer that rated as 'slightly concerned' at start of pilot

"If they stop calling money 'hours' then it will stop parents thinking it means hours. The way it's been explained to me makes more sense now."

Same parent / carer rating as 'very positive' after pilot

4. Support for individual children/young people

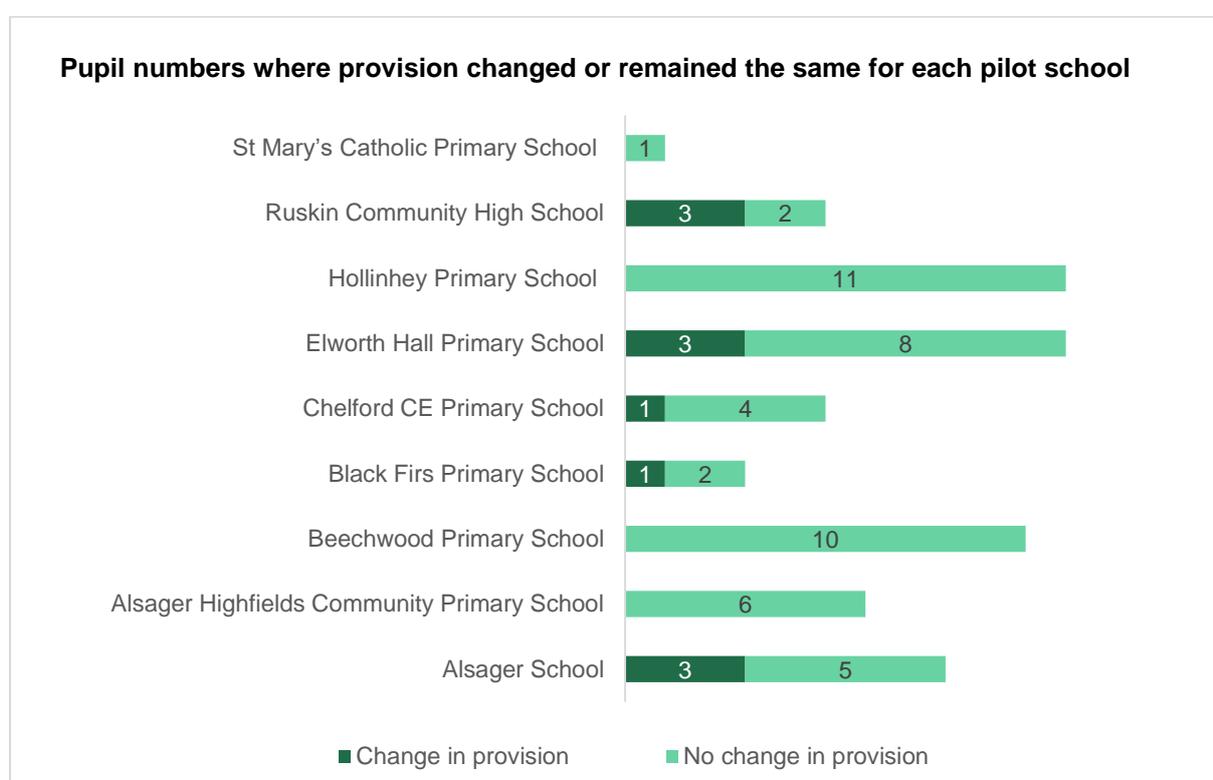
4.1. Information submitted by schools

The collated results show that, during the pilot, the support provided in school **remained the same** for the majority of involved children/young people.

Pilot schools were asked to state whether there had been any change to support for each individual involved pupil as a result of the pilot.

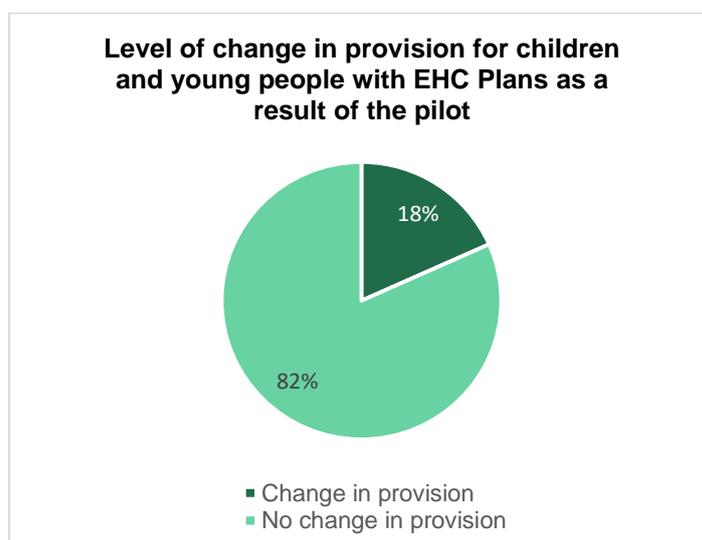
At a school level:

- 4 of the 9 pilot schools (44%) made **no changes** to any child or young person's support during the pilot
- 5 of the 9 pilot schools (55%) made **changes to at least 1** child or young person's support during the pilot



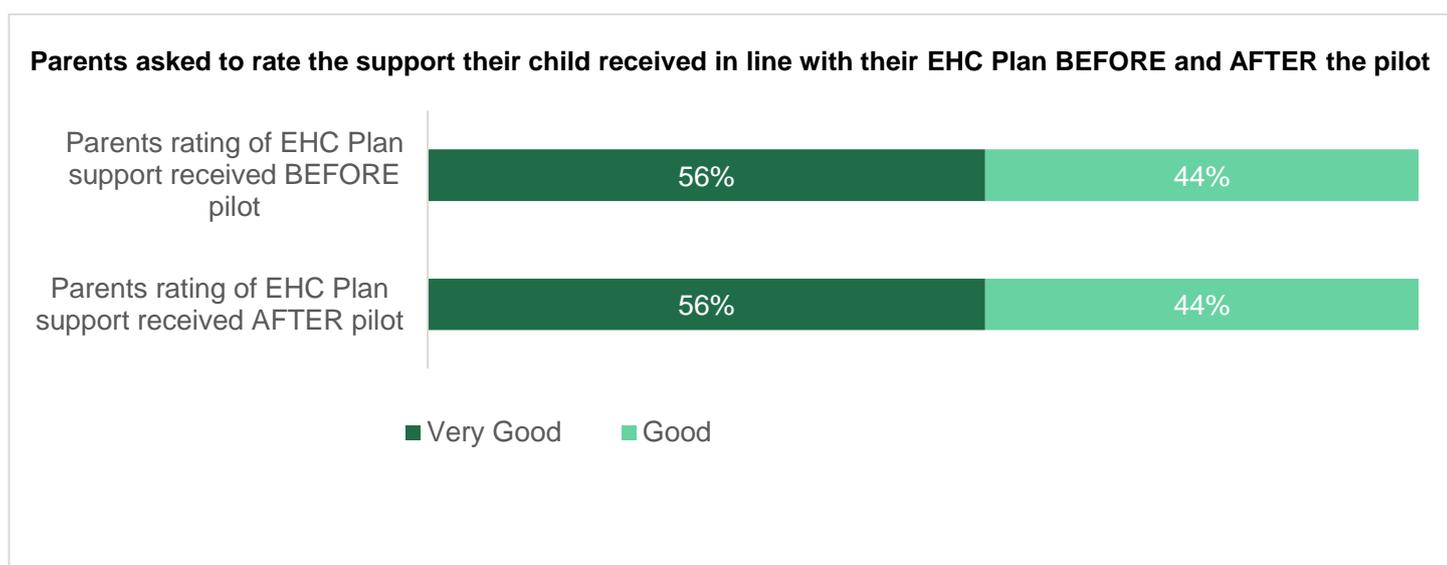
At an individual pupil level:

- **Support changed during the pilot for 18%** (11) of the 60 children and young people that took part in this pilot
- **Support remained the same for 82%** (49) of the 60 children and young people in this pilot



4.2. Parent/carer views on their child’s support

Parents were asked for their views around the support their child received in school in line with their EHC Plan before and after the pilot. Parents were also asked whether the quality of the support had changed as a result of the pilot and whether they had noticed any change in their child since the pilot had begun.



All responding parents/carers viewed the support their children received **positively** and there was **no change** in the overall ratings, or in any individual ratings, provided before and after the pilot.

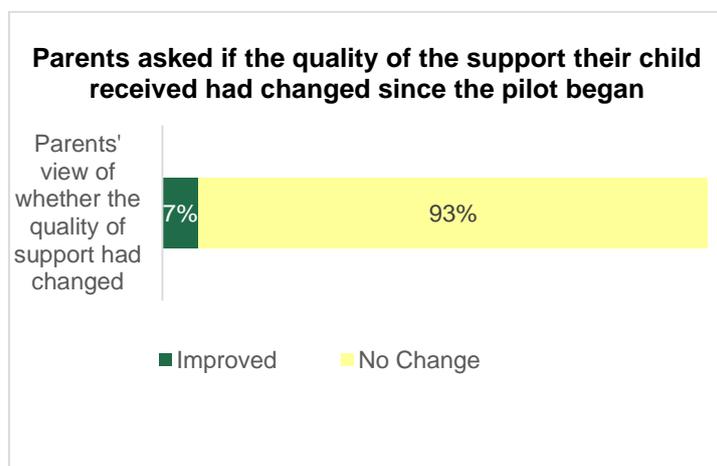
- 56% rated support as very good
- 44% rated support as good

Key themes that came through were:

- Good levels of support already in place that address the needs detailed in the EHC Plan
- Good communication already in place with school
- School already listens to parent views
- Child enjoys school
- Support hasn't changed / child has received same level of support throughout

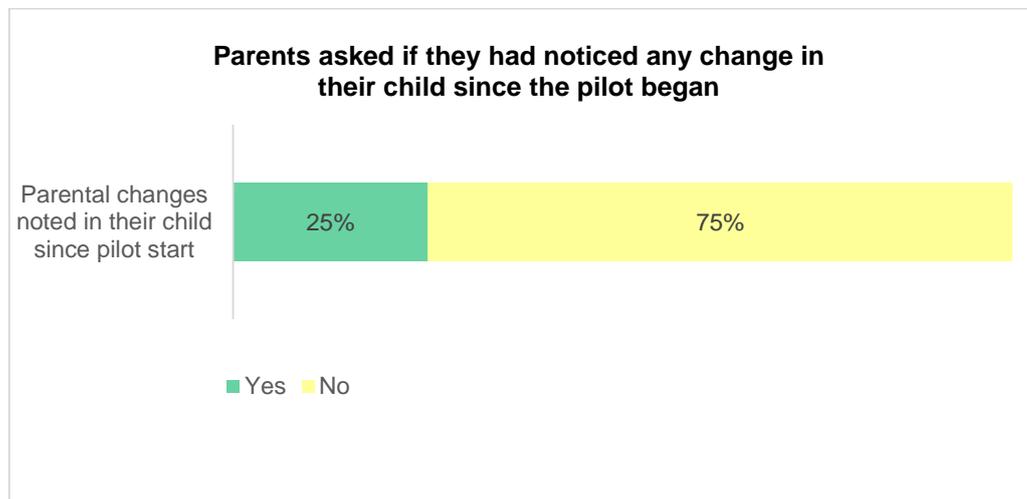
- When changes have occurred, this would have been put in place to support next steps / transition

Parents/carers were asked whether they thought the quality of their child's support had changed since the pilot began.



14 of the 15 parents responding noted no change in the quality of support their child had received (this question was left blank on another parent/carer response form, as the parent/carer felt they did not have sufficient evidence).

Although they responded to this question, 1 parent noted that this question was difficult to judge as their child did not require specialist equipment where the pilot would have allowed for a more flexible approach. This is worth noting as it provides an example of how some parents/carers may interpret descriptions of 'flexible provision'.



75% of parents stated no observed change in their child since the pilot start.

The 25% of parents who did report a change highlighted:

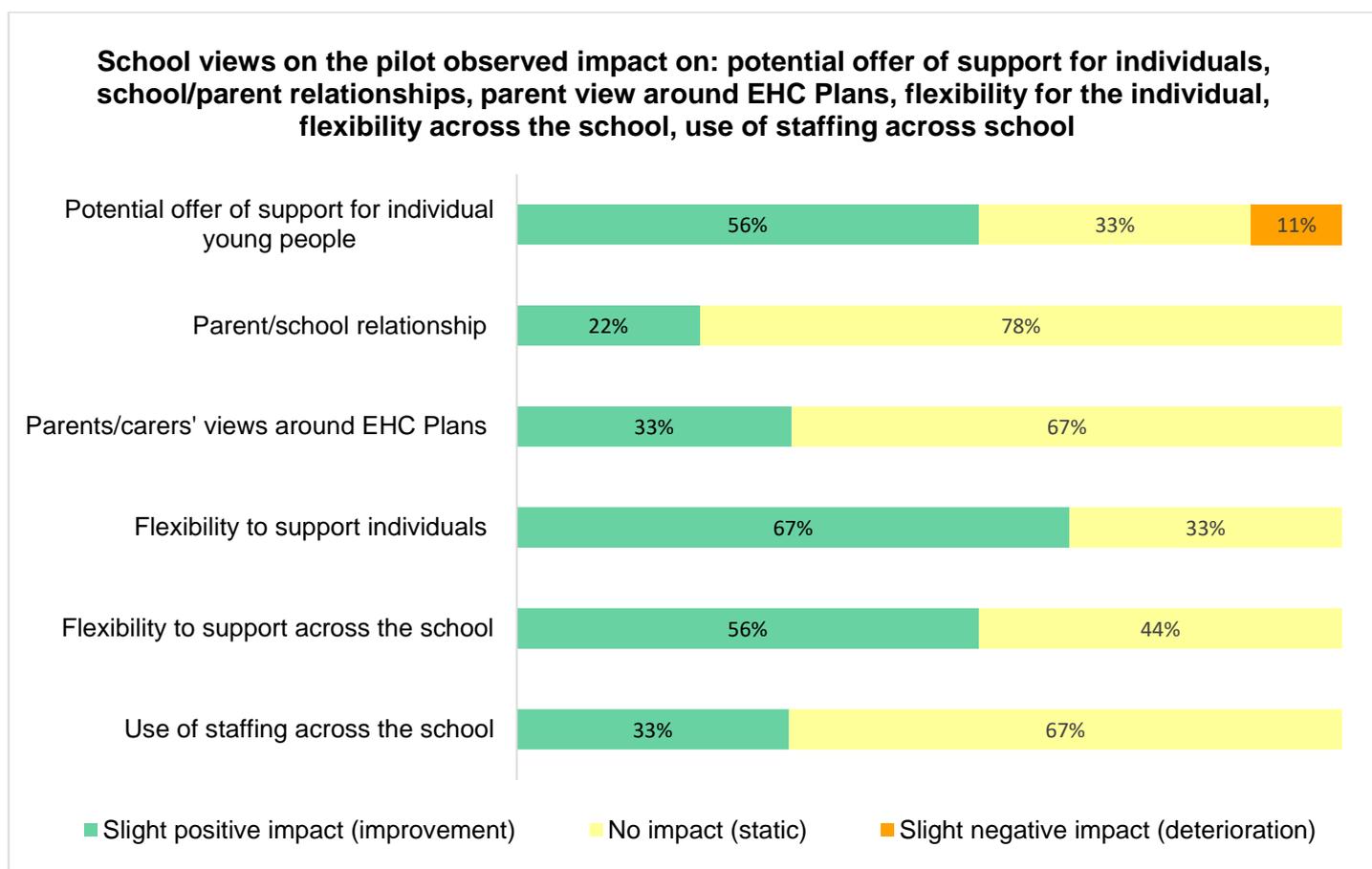
- Child was less reliant on specific staff
- Improved socialisation due to spending more time with other people
- Child is constantly progressing
- Some increased anxiety – however parent states they think this is due to other transitions rather than the pilot scheme

“There hasn’t been a change since the start of the pilot, but since the start of the year when it was explained to me, X has really changed. The support has been great. It’s amazing what the right support has done for him. It feels like he’s always got support despite him not having the ‘hours’ for it because its being used more creatively. The teachers are now making him work rather than him having the work done for him.”

Parent / carer of pupil in pilot

5. Overall impact (pilot schools’ experience)

Schools were asked a series of questions about the impact that they have observed relating to the piloted change from expressing total provision on EHC Plans in hours to a band.



For all areas bar one, all pilot schools reported observing either a slight positive impact or no impact.

For slight positive impact, a number of key themes were noted:

- Approach allowed for greater flexibility allowing more effective use of staff and resources (which has had benefits for staff and pupils)
- Increase in staff confidence in continuing to adopt a more flexible approach
- Improved openness with parents around how support/interventions can be managed flexibly
- Parents welcomed the opportunity to discuss support provision and to be part of the pilot

When ‘no impact’ was observed, schools overwhelming identified that:

- SEND needs already met by utilising support strategically and flexibly

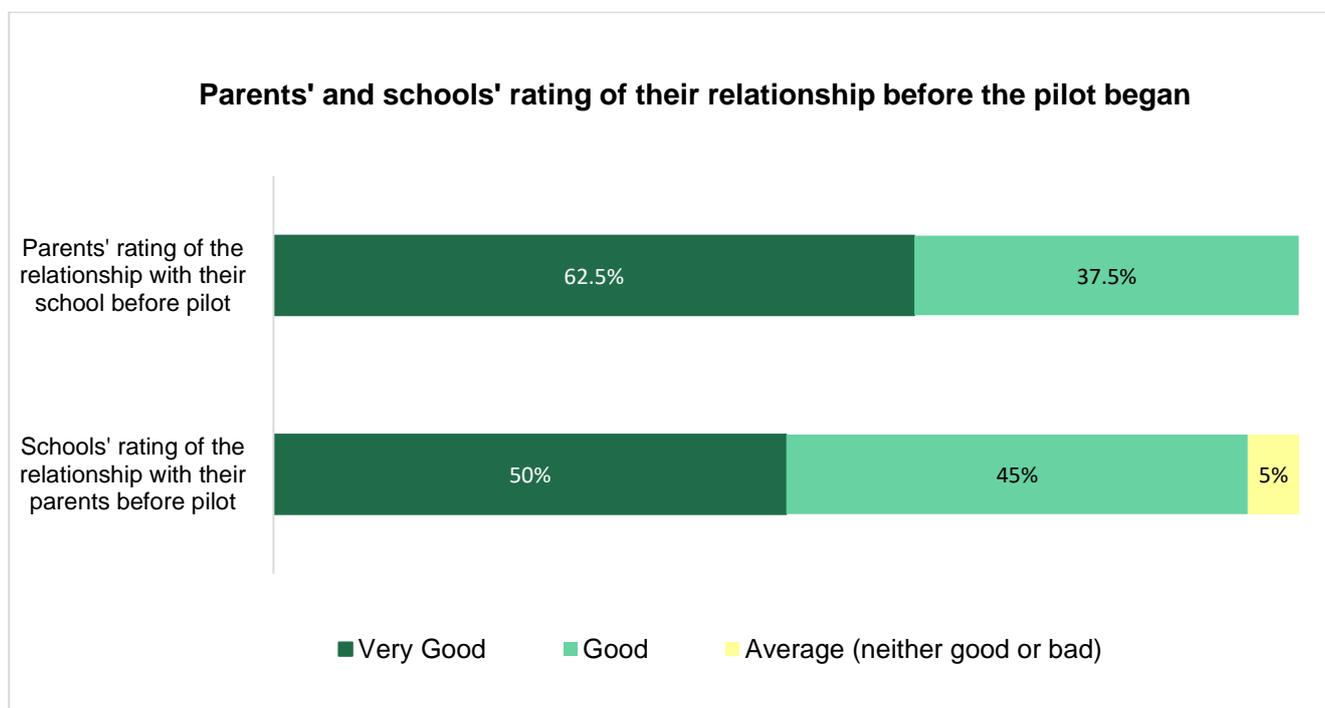
- Parents already happy with flexible support approach adopted

1 school did raise an observed slight negative impact for 1 measure, relating to the impact of the pilot on the potential offer of support for individual young people. This school noted that children who have particular types of need and who continue to need 1:1 support for the majority of the day are receiving less money and provision may be reduced. Whilst it is acknowledged that the piloted model may lead to a very small reduction in the funding provided to some children individually, the model was designed to ensure that any individual reductions were negligible. The model also allows for funding to be utilised in different ways, including sharing of resources. Some individuals would also see an increase in funding as they align into the new bands, if this piloted model was adopted across Cheshire East.

6. Parent/school relationship

6.1. Views before the pilot began

Both schools and parents/carers were asked to rate the relationship between the school and parent/carer before the pilot began (note that schools were asked to individually rate their relationship with the parents/carers of specific children taking part in the pilot – these results have been collated in the below chart).



The vast majority of parents and schools rated their relationship **positively** before the pilot, with no parents or schools rating any relationship as poor or very poor.

Parents rated:

- 62.5% as very good
- 37.5% as good

Schools rated:

- 50% as very good
- 45% as good
- 5% as average

Key themes that came through from parents were:

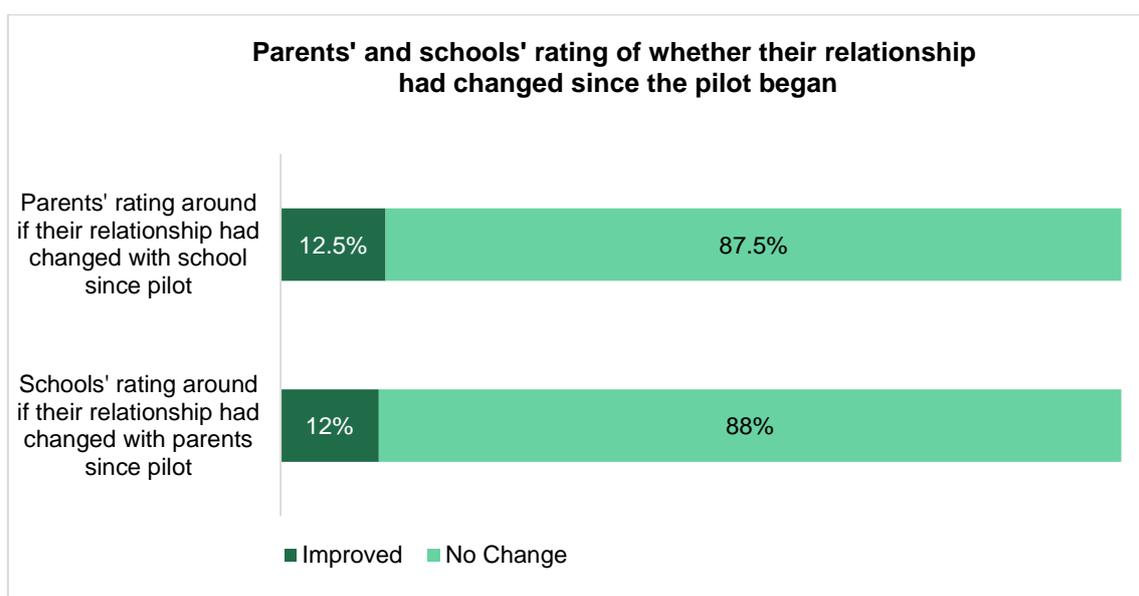
- Good communication in place between school and parents/carers
- School staff are approachable

- Parents/carers are kept informed
- Parents/carers are listened to and responded to positively so that best outcomes can be achieved
- School support child well

While parents generally viewed communication positively, one parent did highlight that at times communication has been vague, particularly around significant changes to support and how this will be delivered.

6.2. Views after the pilot

Both schools and parents/carers were asked whether the relationship between the school and parent/carer had changed since the pilot began (note that schools were again asked whether their relationship with the parents/carers of individual children taking part in the pilot had changed – these results have been collated in the below chart).



Parents/carers and schools reported an improvement for a small number of relationships, with the majority of both parents/carers and schools reporting no change.

In those parents where no change was noted, it was highlighted that:

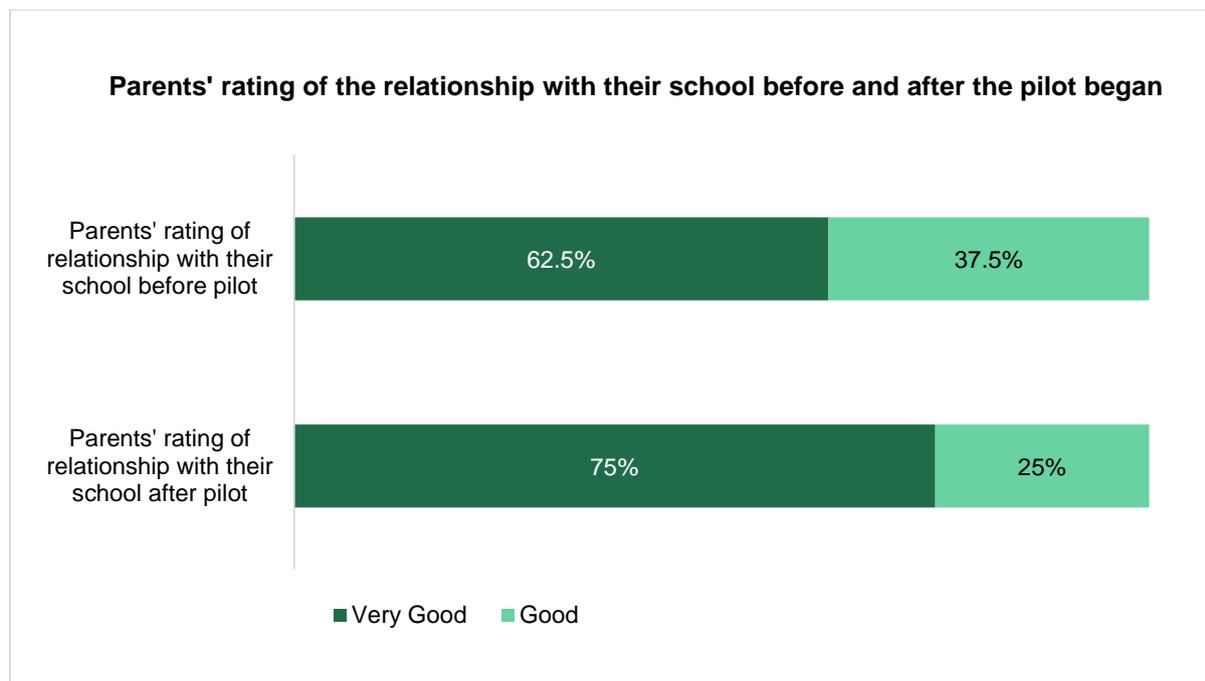
- Communication was already excellent

1 of the 2 parents/carers who noted an improved relationship highlighted that this change had occurred at the start of the year, not specifically following the pilot. It seems that the time spent by school with this parent explaining what hours on an EHCP meant and how support could be more creative, has led to a better understanding and consequently a better and improved relationship.

Key themes from schools for improved relationships were noted to be:

- Improved communication
- Opportunity to talk about how provision was managed was welcomed
- Parents felt more supported
- Parents happy with their child's response to change

Parents were asked about to rate their relationship with their child's school after the pilot.



The majority of parents viewed their relationship with their school positively before the pilot. **Relationships improved further** following the pilot as more parents rated that their relationship as very good (with 'very good' rating moving from 62.5% to 75%).

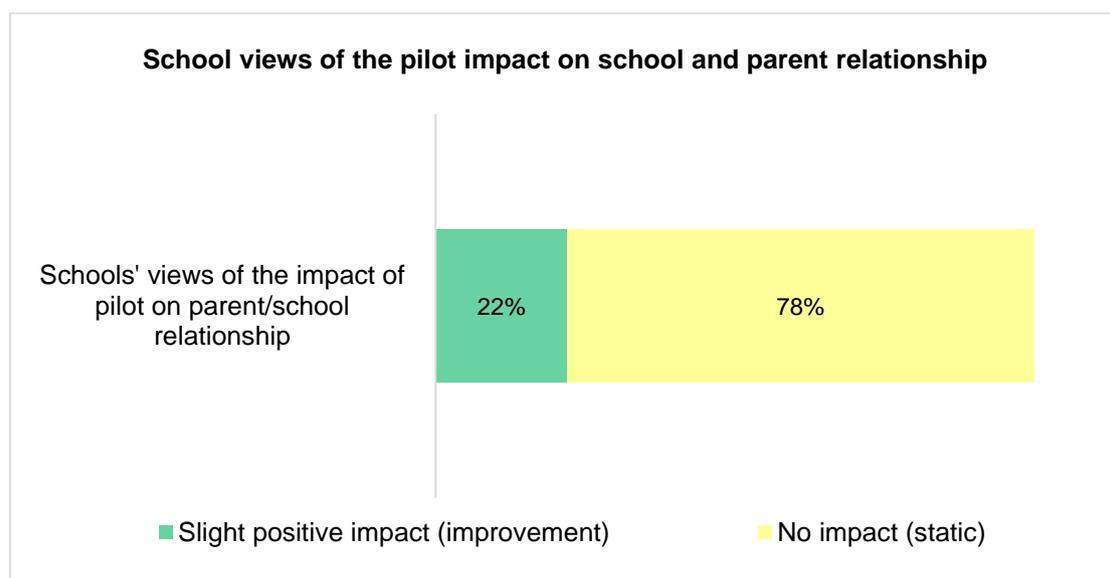
Indeed, there were no negative trends in scores given by individual parents/carers regarding their relationships with their child's school – all ratings given by individual parents/carers regarding relationships prior to the pilot either remained the same or increased (from 'good' to 'very good') after the pilot.

Therefore, the **pilot had a positive or static impact on relationships** between parents/carers and schools from parents/carers' perspectives.

Themes from parent/carer comments for this question included:

- No changes noticed
- Satisfied school is implementing required support / happy with support my child receives
- Child's needs are being met
- School have gone above and beyond / staff always go the extra mile (covered in comments from different parents/carers for different schools)

As part of measuring the overall impact of the piloted change, each pilot school was also asked to scale the impact of the pilot change on overall relationships between their school and parents/carers of children with EHC Plans.



While the impact of the pilot was perceived by some schools to slightly improve some relationships with parents (2 of the 9 schools, or 22%), the majority of schools felt that there had been no impact and relationships had remained the same (7 of the 9 schools, or 78%).

The following key themes were seen in school comments for this question:

- Relationships before the pilot were good with parents and this did not change
- The pilot supported current ways of working
- Parents enjoyed the opportunity to be part of the pilot and be involved in changes at a county level and being part of the process to inform positive outcomes
- Curious whether impact will remain as positive with any new families whose children need SEND support

7. Support for future implementation and other comments

7.1. Suggestions for supporting schools

In terms of supporting schools if this change was rolled out across Cheshire East, pilot school suggestions were mainly focused on ensuring that **clear guidance for parents was available** and that **schools were supported in communicating the change to parents**.

One pilot school specifically emphasised the need for **very clear explanations** to parents about **what the changes mean for everyone** – what it means for their child, what it means for the school and what it means to the local authority. This school also felt it was important that parents/carers have a very clear understanding of what the funding system means to a school and to them **at the point a plan is being written**, so parents have that understanding before schools have the conversations around their child’s support and how they will meet need.

Another suggestion was to clearly communicate that this is a no change position but an **opportunity to share good practice** around how support can be achieved through flexible models if it is appropriate to do, whilst also reiterating that, where children do require 1:1 support, this can also be achieved under the banding system.

One of the larger schools in the pilot commented that they may have better capacity to employ and release staff in different ways than smaller schools, and that **capacity building** may be key to improving low incident / early intervention support to reduce or manage the high needs impact. We were aware that school size could affect impact of this piloted

change in some factors, and ensured that a range of school sizes were included in the pilot. This will however be kept in mind during any wider roll out.

Other comments and suggestions received from pilot schools related to:

- Useful for schools to have the additional support when explaining what ‘hours’ mean and that an EHCP doesn’t automatically equate to 1:1 support (and that support is not reduced if it is not delivered via 1:1).
- Feel approach is moving in the right direction / will be a positive change for children
- Wider themes around SEND funding in Cheshire East, e.g.
 - Issues with national funding formula and use of deprivation factors
 - Issues with funding of Cheshire East primary sector (relative to secondary sector) and smaller schools, potentially leading to increased requests for assessment in order to attract funding for extra staff
 - Suggestions to improve early intervention and low incidence SEND funding, including capacity building through improved staff training and releasing trained staff to work across individual schools, and also across different schools

7.2. Suggestions for supporting parents/carers

In terms of supporting parents/carers if this change was rolled out across Cheshire East, parent/carer suggestions were mainly focused on the need for **consistent communication**, total **transparency** with parents/carers with **clear explanations of the changes**, and **offering continued opportunities for parent participation and feedback** throughout any changes.

There was particularly positive feedback from multiple parents/carers at one school where wider Cheshire East Council and working group members attended the introductory meeting.

“The presentation and meeting with other parents was brilliant, to link up with other parents, and 2 people from the sen team came which was good for if we had any questions”

Parent / carer of pupil in pilot

This is in contrast to the feedback from one parent at another school where wider colleagues were not involved directly in briefing meetings:

“More communications from the SEND team at Cheshire East, explaining to parents fully what the changes mean, how they can affect a plan and why the changes are being introduced. I did not find the letter and communications from Cheshire East, given to me by the school, very comprehensive or indeed helpful during the pilot sadly. “

Parent / carer of pupil in pilot

Indeed, there was a clear message from many of the parental suggestions about the benefits of **more communication and opportunities to meet with wider SEND colleagues from the council**, alongside school staff, about the proposed changes. Other related suggestions included:

- An annual meeting with all Cheshire East parents/carers (including new ones) to explain this each year so there are no misunderstandings.

- Use of the presentation would help
- Make it simple
- Information on a leaflet
- A frequently asked questions document
- A specific contact for parents to ask questions (difficulties with contacting keyworkers and the SEND team were noted)
- Just being kept informed

A small number of parents also commented about the need for clarity on how the changes may change EHC Plans or the level of provision, and for this to be clearly stated.

Other comments and suggestions received from parents/carers in pilot schools related to:

- Parents/carers pleased with support in place and that needs are being met (with one parent/carer providing detailed information on how a change in support in this academic year has had a very beneficial impact on their child)
- Ongoing conversations with SENCOs about where things can improve further has led to even more improvements in home/school communication (use of a home/school book)
- Ongoing concern around whether change will be beneficial to individual child. Open to new ideas, but not yet alleviated concerns around why the change is needed for those children who rely on support in terms of a TA and hours
- Concern that a lack of immediate impact to individual child's provision will automatically equate to the change [piloted model] being better

8. The voice of children and young people

Council colleagues received information on the views of 8 young people from 4 different pilot schools. Rather than being provided with a prescriptive feedback form, pilot schools were asked to capture children's views in the most appropriate format for them. School staff asked pupils questions about how they feel about school, and recorded their answers. Some pupils drew pictures of themselves, their classroom and the people who support them.

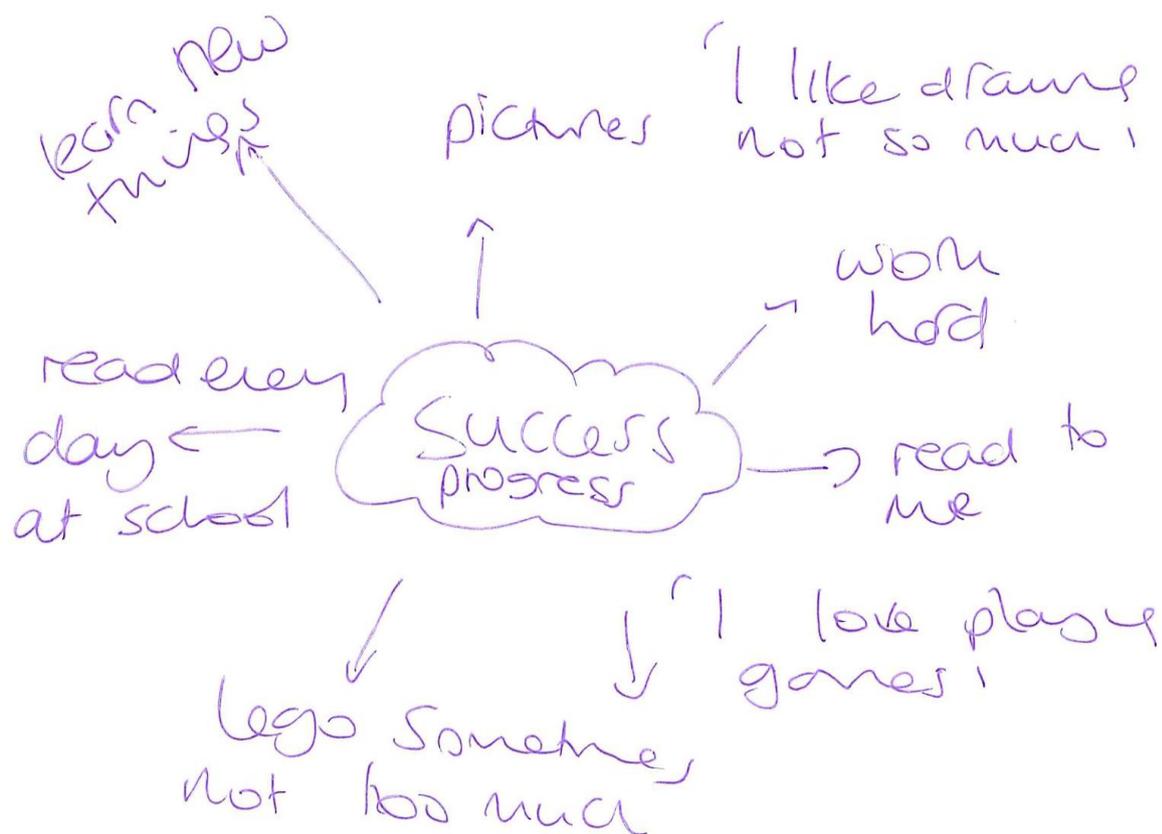
Some key summary points from young people's feedback are listed below, alongside a sample of demonstrating quotes.

When asked who helps them, all 8 pupils were able to clearly name school staff members and peers (friends), with one pupil even finishing a long list by saying:

'...and a lot of people I can't remember, I have so many friends'

Year 3 pupil in pilot

Pupils were able to talk about things that helped them, and their interests (with lots of support for friends, fidget toys and therapy dogs!).



Year 4 pupil in pilot

"trying don't give up"

"helping others helps me a little bit"

Year 3 pupil in pilot

"I feel happy about school. My friends make me happy and art and my teachers. My teachers are nice and help me. They help me if I have got something wrong they tell me how to do it right. If I get something wrong in maths they tell me how to work it out. When I am struggling to concentrate Mrs N tells me to use my fidgets and have a learning break where I can run around."

Year 4 pupil in pilot

"J reports that he knows that he has a TA to help him and can name all 3. He says they work with him at his table and with other children. He says that sometimes they work with just him on his own and that sometimes they have to do first aid – especially for him because he falls over a lot."

Year 1 pupil in pilot

"H reports that he likes his small group work in his separate classroom as it is quieter, he can understand easier and if he gets stuck the adults can help support him.

He also enjoys being in the main classroom too as he can listen to things the class are doing."

Year 5 pupil in pilot

"I like school now. All my teachers are really good. They're kind to me. Miss S [TA] is really clever. She helps me with my work. Mrs P [TA] helps me with my work. I like coming into school now. Miss S always has my work ready for me. I get to play and do my work. I do loads of work now. I never used to do any work. English is my favourite lesson because my handwriting is getting better. I read to my dad the other night. He was happy with me. I'm happy in school and love my teachers."

Year 4 pupil in pilot

When asked 'what helps you to learn?':

"I don't know! Counting I think and handwriting? It'll be tough in year 3. Counting will help me in year 3"

Year 2 pupil in pilot

Pupils were also asked about things they struggled with, and what would make school even better for them.

"People don't understand what I say sometimes"

Year 4 pupil in pilot

When asked 'what would make school better for you?'

"More art a bigger last break because last break isn't that long. My own table would be good because sometimes I get distracted by my friends."

Year 4 pupil in pilot

"J says school would be even better if there were more playtimes.

Year 1 pupil in pilot

"H says he doesn't think the school can help him anymore and he is happy with everything."

Year 5 pupil in pilot

9. Case studies

Pilot schools provided a total of **18** case studies to support the pilot, with a spread of pupil ages ranging from Early Years Foundation Stage and Reception up to year 9 and covering a range of needs.

How pupil support was delivered changed in some case studies during the pilot, and remained the same in others – which schools suggested was in line with each individual pupil's needs and the effectiveness of the current provision to meet needs as they presented at the time.

Examples of changes described in case studies include the following:

- Prior to pilot, pupil had 1:1 support from 1 single staff member at all times - good relationship but pupil lacked independence and was becoming too dependent on single staff member. Moved to same level of support from a range of staff members.
- Pupil previously had 1:1 TA support for number of hours on EHCP, but was isolated/missing out on social elements of learning and had other times where he wasn't supported (as 'hours' didn't cover this). Tension with parents around whether their child was receiving agreed 'hours'. Also difficult for young person to have a 'mind break'. Changed support to use of 4 different types (1:1, 2:1, small group support and whole class support) with example timetable of when support would be given - overall increase in time pupil supported and still retains some dedicated 1:1 sessions as needed.
- Pupil moved from another local authority area (where he had ad hoc 1:1 support) just before the pilot. Moved from the previous model of ad hoc 1:1 to timetable with mixture of provision and support staff.
- Pupil was undertaking social interventions in classroom in small group and 1:1. Pupil can struggle to work and focus in classroom. Agreed with family to move social communication work from classroom to delivery via new forest school provision. Pupil reported finding it easier to talk to peers when completing other tasks in this new environment.
- Pupil was benefitting from support from additional adults in class, and often worked in small groups or alongside other pupils requiring support; however, pupil was still showing a lot of off task behaviour. School introduced support from a qualified teacher 2 mornings a week to work with a group of pupils across year groups who were working at the same level. Noticeable improvement in the pupil's behaviour, progress and work quality (in these lessons and in others).
- Prior to pilot, pupil had a personalised curriculum in the afternoon (to meet SEMH needs) and used quiet space in a nurture support room. A decision was made with the family to try and increase the pupil's time in the classroom in the afternoons to support their transition into the next year group. School felt they had more flexibility to meet needs and section F provision in a different way.
- Pupil had TA support in most lessons and SALT interventions from hospital. During pilot, the school introduced use of a reading pen, tutor time interventions for quick snapshot SALT and more targeted 1:1 support on understanding exam questions for maths.