Education Endowment Foundation

Homework clubs

Scoping phase summary findings

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NFER

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National Foundation for Educational Research

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About the evaluator

This research was conducted by a team from the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER). The principal investigator for this study was Stephen Welbourne. Katherine Aston led the evaluation team, with Jose Liht leading the web-scraping, GenAI classification, and survey analysis, and Lillian Flemons leading the survey design. Sophie Ainsby led research operations for the survey, Lydia Wallis was our operations researcher, and Kamaljit Ahitan coordinated the project.

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Introduction

Homework completion and engagement has been found to be an important predictor of attainment (Eren and Henderson, 2008; EEF, 2021; Guo *et al.*, 2024; Harland *et al.*, 2024). Time spent on homework also appears to play a role, including in relation to maths attainment specifically. An analysis of the PISA 2022 data found that pupils who reported spending over one hour per day on homework (across all subjects) had significantly higher mathematics performance than pupils who reported spending less time than this (Ingram et al., 2023). Pupils who spent between 30 minutes and 1 hour a day on maths homework specifically had higher mathematics scores than pupils who spent less time. EEF's review of homework (EEF, 2021) found that published studies of homework in secondary education had an average positive impact, broadly equivalent to an additional five months of progress. However, EEF's security rating for this evidence is low, due to concerns with study design and lack of independent evaluations. The EEF commissioned an impact evaluation to generate causal evidence on this area. The project began with a scoping phase to assess feasibility of conducting a robust impact evaluation. The primary aim of the scoping phase was to test the feasibility of an impact evaluation. During the scoping phase we gathered information that may also be of interest to schools. This short report presents evidence from our survey of state-funded secondary schools in England, exploring the nature and variation of homework club provision and broader homework culture for pupils aged 11-16.

Methods

In September-October 2025, we conducted a survey of all state-funded secondary schools (n=3,189). We received responses from 187 schools (6%), of which 177 responses (95%) were from senior leaders. The survey included questions on homework setting and completion, approaches to supporting homework, whether the school has a homework club, and if so, how homework clubs are run, student attendance, and barriers and strategies for promoting attendance. To assess feasibility of an impact evaluation in this area, we also collected information about homework clubs by web scraping school websites, to compare with survey responses.

Given the low response rate, findings should be interpreted with caution, as they may not be representative of the wider population due to non-response bias.

Survey findings

Homework setting and completion

Schools were asked about the importance of setting homework in their school culture, the amount of homework set, completion rates and sanctions for non-completion. All schools who responded to the survey set some homework. The amount of weekly homework set varied substantially across schools. Based on schools' expectations of the time taken by an average student, the median homework set was 4 hours for Key Stage 3 (KS3), and 7 hours for Key Stage 4 (KS4). For maths, the median homework set was 1 hour for both KS3 and KS4. At KS3, almost all schools (89%) set between 0.5 - 1 hour of maths homework, while at KS4 there was a larger spread, with almost all schools (94%) setting between 0.5-2 hours. For English, the patterns of homework were very similar to maths.

Schools were asked to identify up to four sanctions which they used most when students did not complete homework. This was asked to understand whether homework clubs/support was used as a sanction. The most common responses were lunchtime detention (39% of schools), verbal warning (20%) and parental contact (16%). Almost a third of schools (29%) applied the same sanction(s) across all contexts, while many schools chose a response based on whether it was a repeated occurrence or not (46%), teacher discretion (42%) and/or student personal circumstances (41%).

Homework clubs

For the purposes of the survey, a homework club was defined as a dedicated and supervised time and space for completing homework that is explicitly advertised to students. We recognise that there is some ambiguity about

what provision would 'count' as a homework club. For example, if a school advertises that the library is open after school for homework completion, this may fulfil a similar function to a formal 'homework club' and may have been considered equivalent by respondents.

Almost all schools who responded to the survey (92%) reported having a homework club for KS3/4 students. This may be an overestimate compared with the population of state-funded schools in England, as schools with homework clubs may have been more likely to respond to the survey. Where schools did not have a homework club (n=13), reported reasons varied. The most commonly selected options were that students completed homework consistently (n=4) or that staffing a homework club would be challenging (n=3).

Schools who reported running homework clubs (n=172) were asked about how the clubs were run. Homework clubs were most commonly staffed by teaching assistants/support staff (73%) and/or teachers (51%), with over a quarter of schools deploying library staff (28%). Relatively few schools used senior leaders (10%). Other responses (5%), provided as open-text responses, included cover supervisors, prefects and sixth form students. Most schools expected staff at homework clubs to support students with homework (76%) and provided access to tablets/computers for all students (76%) or some students (19%).

Schools with homework clubs (n=172) were also asked about the targeting, timing and hours of homework club. Almost half of schools with a homework club (49%) ran a single homework club which was open to all students and subjects, while almost half (49%) targeted homework clubs, most commonly to specific students (25%), year groups (20%) or subjects (19%).[1] Almost all schools with homework clubs offered at least some of this provision after school (91%), while almost half of schools (47%) offered some provision at break or lunchtime. Relatively few schools (14%) offered homework club provision before school.

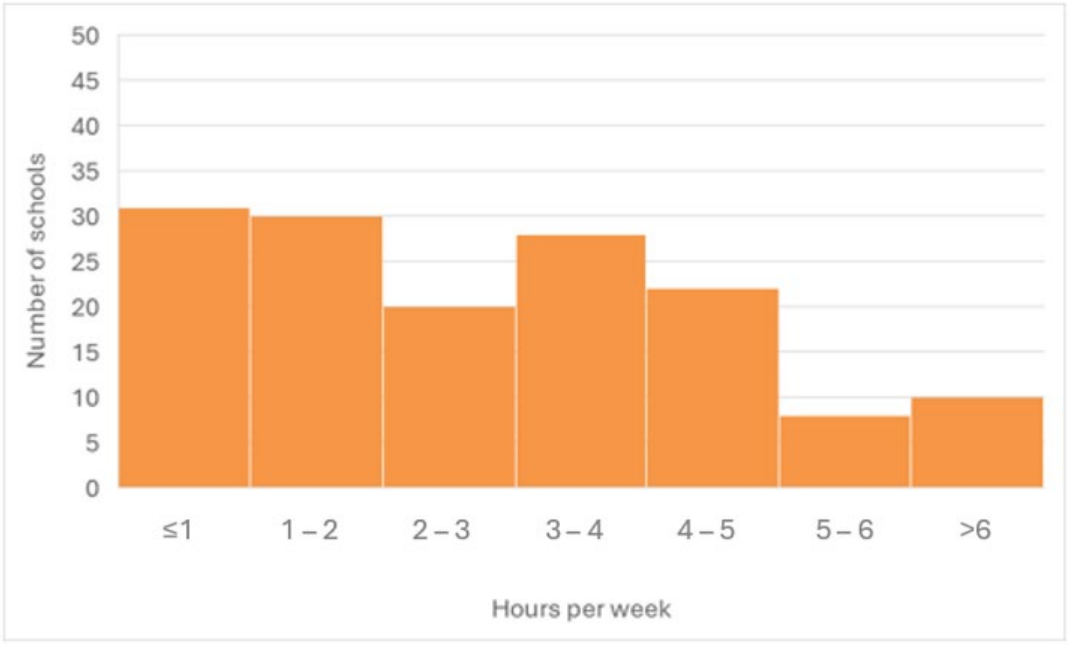
Schools were asked about the total hours of homework club they offered each week, indicating the total time investment by the school.[2] Among schools who reported the total hours of homework club offered (n=170), the median weekly time provided was 4 hours. Responses ranged from 0.5 hours to more than 9 hours.

As the scoping study had a particular emphasis on the time available to an individual student to complete their maths homework, we also asked questions to establish how many hours per week of homework club are available outside the school day, where KS3/4 students could complete maths homework. This excluded homework clubs during breaks within the school day (i.e. at break or lunchtime), or with a specific subject focus other than maths, but included general homework clubs. Where different homework clubs were available for different year groups, we asked for the number of hours available for each year group (7-11) and used the average number of hours, to create a single figure for comparison with other schools.[3]

Of schools who reported a homework club (n=172), most (87%) had some time outside school when students could complete maths homework. Among these schools (n=149), the median weekly time available was 3 hours, and the mean was 3 hours 15 minutes. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of time available.

[1] The remaining 2% of respondents did not know whether their homework club was targeted.
[2] Please note that where homework clubs are targeted to different year groups (20% of schools), this would differ from the amount of time available to a specific student where homework clubs were targeted. For example, a school offering one hour of homework club for each of Years 7-11 would be investing 5 hours a week.
[3] For schools offering homework clubs to each year group, the median time available was 1 hour per week for each year group Year 7-Year 10, and 2 hours per week for Year 11.

Figure 1: Hours of homework club outside the school day where students can complete maths homework

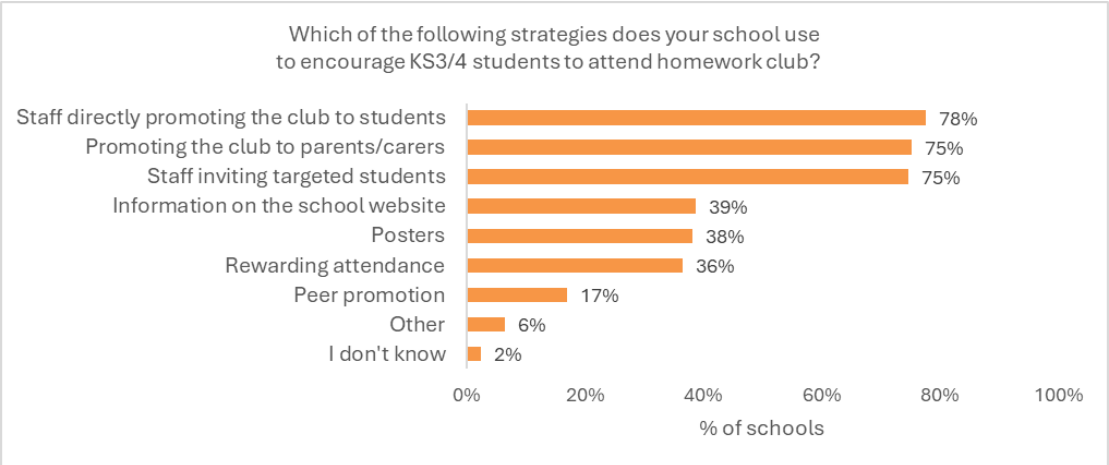


Homework clubs scoping survey, schools with some homework club provision outside the school day where students can complete maths homework (n=149).

Together, these analyses show that behind the apparently ubiquitous provision of homework clubs, there is wide variation in the number of hours available for students, including the hours available outside the school day (when most students are expected to complete their homework).

Most schools with homework clubs (n=172) were using multiple strategies to encourage students to use homework club. The most common strategies were staff directly promoting the club to students (78%), staff inviting targeted students (75%) and promotion to parents/carers (75%). Details are shown in Figure 2 below.

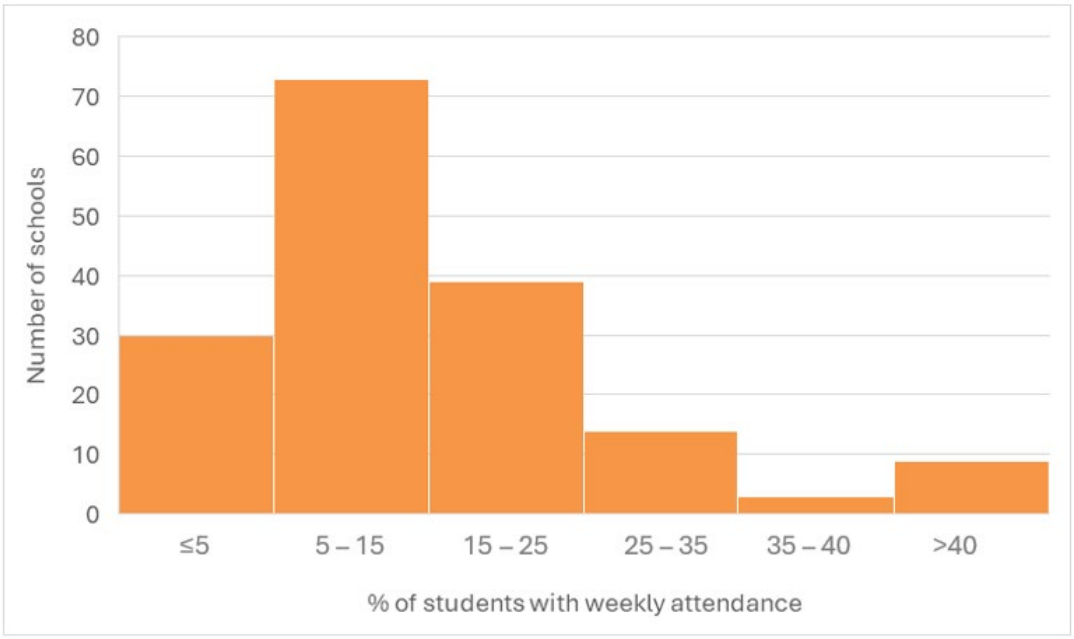
Figure 2: Encouraging attendance at homework club



Homework clubs scoping survey, schools with homework clubs, n=172

Respondents were asked to indicate the approximate percentage of KS3/4 students who attend homework club at least once a week. The mean reported proportion was 16% (standard deviation 15%), while the median was 12%.

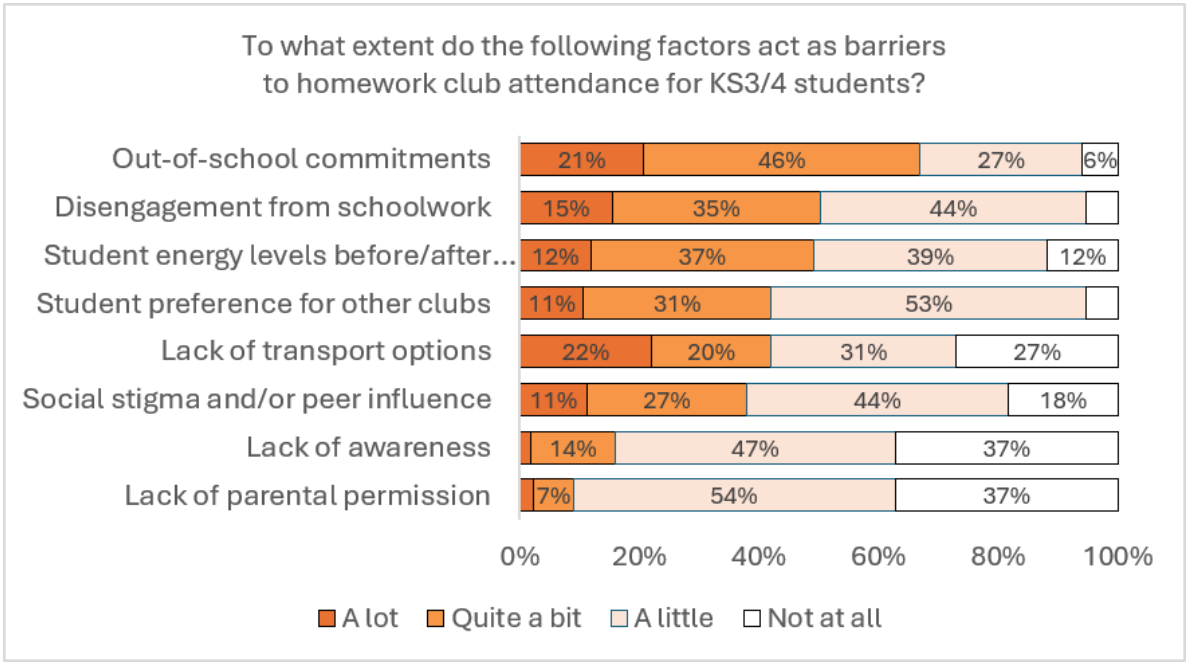
Figure 3: Staff-reported percentage of KS3/4 students who attend homework club at least once a week



Homework clubs scoping survey, schools with homework clubs, n=168

Based on staff perceptions, the most extensive barrier to student attendance at homework club was out-of-school commitments (67% of schools reported this was a barrier 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'). This reflects the finding that most homework clubs were held after school and would therefore compete with students' existing commitments. About half of schools reported that disengagement from schoolwork (50%) and student energy levels before/after school (49%) were significant barriers (reported 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'). Details are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Barriers to homework club attendance

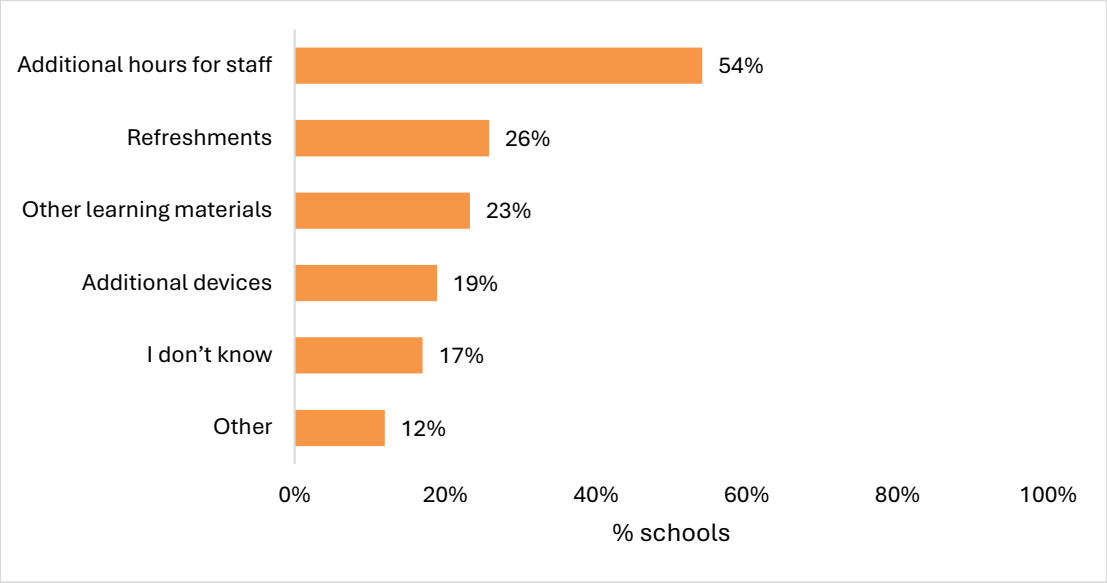


Homework clubs scoping survey, schools with homework clubs, n=169

Financial cost of homework clubs

Schools were asked to identify any direct financial costs they incurred from running homework club. The most frequently reported financial cost for schools was employing staff for additional hours to run homework club, reported by about half of schools (54%). Other commonly reported costs were refreshments, learning materials, and additional devices.

Figure 5: Direct financial costs of homework club



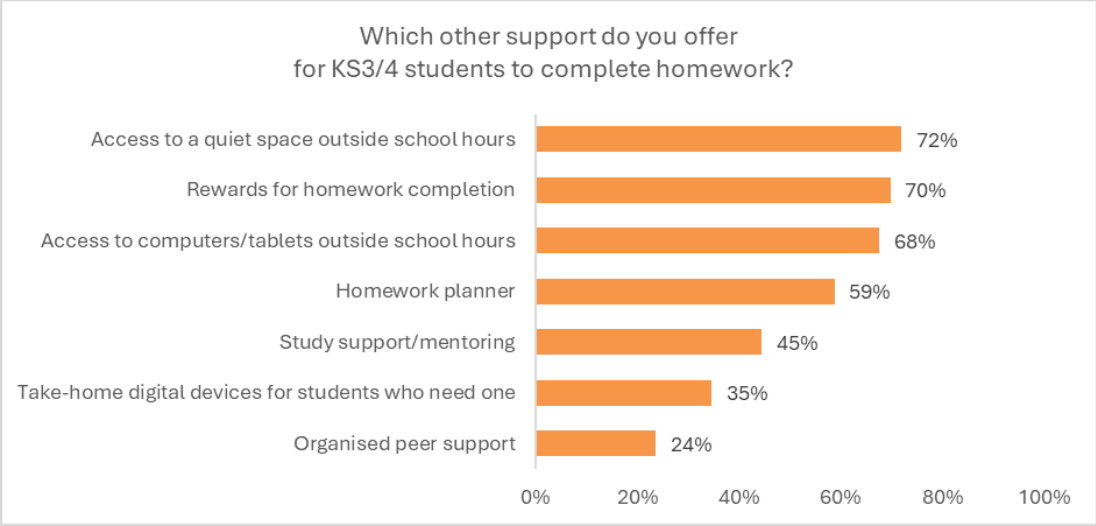
Homework clubs scoping survey, schools with homework clubs, n=169

Other homework support

All survey respondents were asked about other forms of homework support. The most common forms of support other than homework clubs were access to a quiet space outside school hours[4] (72% of schools), rewards for homework completion (70%), access to computers/tablets outside school hours (68%) and a homework planner (59%). Details are shown in Figure 6 below.

[4] This is distinguished from a formal 'homework club' because available spaces (e.g. a library or computer lab) may not be directly supervised, and/or may not be directly advertised to students for homework completion.

Figure 6: Other forms of homework support



Homework clubs scoping survey, schools with homework clubs, n=182

Information about homework clubs on school websites

As part of the scoping research, we used web scraping to search school websites for 50 schools who responded to the survey, and collect any text relating to homework clubs. We compared this with manual searches of the same school websites. For each school, we compared whether the school appeared to provide a homework club, based on (1) web scraping (2) manual searches and (3) survey response. We assumed that the survey response was accurate. This analysis showed that the findings from the website did not match the survey response for about a quarter of the small sample of schools. Most commonly, schools reported in the survey that they ran a homework club, but we were unable to find this information on the website. This aligns with the survey finding that less than half of schools use their website to encourage homework club attendance.

Conclusions

Almost all schools who responded to the survey had some form of homework club. While the low response rate to the survey means this number may not accurately reflect the prevalence of homework clubs, it does suggest that homework clubs are a widely used strategy to support homework completion.

Among survey respondents with homework clubs, the median school provided a total of 4 hours of homework club each week. This provision of 4 hours is in line with the median hours of homework set at Key Stage 3, but less than the median seven hours of homework set at Key Stage 4. Further, almost half of schools said they targeted homework club to specific subjects, year groups or pupils, which may reduce the time available to an individual student. Considering the time available for students to complete maths homework outside school hours (which was the focus subject for this scoping study), there was a wide variation in the number of hours available. However, about three quarters of schools also provided access to a quiet space outside school hours, which could supplement more formally advertised or supported homework club provision.

Schools' homework clubs varied by when they are held, who staffs them, and whether staff provide active support or simply supervision. Almost all schools who responded to the survey provide some after-school homework clubs. However, respondents perceived that out of school commitments were a significant barrier to attendance at homework club, which may limit their accessibility to some students who need them.

In conjunction with the survey, our scoping research investigated the feasibility of web scraping school websites to understand the national distribution of homework club provision. This analysis showed that some schools which reported homework clubs via a survey did not advertise this on their websites. Similarly, less than half of schools who responded to the survey said they used the school websites to encourage attendance. So school websites are not a reliable way of determining information about the provision of homework clubs.

School are investing substantial time in homework clubs, and about half are also incurring ongoing staff costs, such as additional hours. As there is currently no evidence about the impact of homework clubs, or how they can be most effective, it is important to undertake more rigorous research to inform leaders' decisions about how best to support homework completion, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Given the range of approaches to homework clubs and other homework support, this should include identifying the mechanisms through which homework clubs aim to improve homework completion and quality, and testing whether these work in practice.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

Page 3 – Ask All, SR, Nudge				
Job role				
B	What is your **primary** role within the school?	*Please select one response.*	1	Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
			2	Other member of the Senior Leadership Team
			3	Year group or subject lead
			4	Teacher
			5	Teaching Assistant (TA) or other support staff member
			6	Other – please explain: [OE – 20 characters max]

Page 4 - Ask all, slider scale, Nudge		
Homework culture in your school *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*		
C	How would you describe the role homework plays in your school's overall approach to teaching and learning in **KS3/4**?	**[slider scale – 100 stopping points with no percentages shown]** **[baseline - 0]** We don't set any homework. **[midpoint - 50]** We set homework but it's not a core part of our teaching and learning model **[endpoint - 100]** Homework is a core part of teaching and learning at our school

Show questions D to U (or pages 5 to 22) if C is not equal to 0.

Page 5 – Ask all, slider scale, Nudge
Homework culture in your school *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*

D	How would you describe homework completion rates in **KS3/4** at your school?	**[slider scale]** **[baseline]** Most students **rarely** complete the homework that is set **[midpoint]** Most students **usually** complete the homework that is set **[endpoint]** All students **always** complete the homework that is set

Page 6 - Ask all, slider scale, Nudge			
Homework expectations at your school *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*			
E	Approximately how much time is the average **KS3** student expected to spend on homework per week...	1	...overall? **[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every hour]** '0 hours' to '19+ hours
		2	...for Maths? **[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
		3	...for English? **[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'

Page 7 - Ask all, slider scale, Nudge			
Homework expectations at your school *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*			
F	Approximately how much time is the average **KS4** student expected to spend on homework per week...	1	...overall? **[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every hour]** '0 hours' to '19+ hours'
		2	...for Maths? **[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
		3	...for English? **[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'

Page 8 - Ask all, ranking, Nudge, Randomise 1-10				
Sanctions for homework non-completion				
G	What sanction(s) would a KS3/4 student at your school expect to receive if they did not complete their homework? Please rank (up to) the four most common sanctions, where 1 is the most common and 4 is the least common. You will be asked about exceptions in the following question.		1	Lunchtime detention
			2	After-school detention
			3	Compulsory attendance at homework club
			4	Verbal warnings
			5	Temporary loss of access to extra-curricular activities
			6	Parental contact
			7	Reflection or apology notes
			8	Additional homework
			9	Academic consequences (e.g. grade deductions)
			10	Suspension or exclusion
			11	No sanction
			12	Other – please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters]

Page 9 - Ask all, MR, Nudge, Randomise 1-4				
Sanctions for homework non-completion				
H	What determines which (if any) sanction is applied?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Student personal circumstances (e.g. home environment, SEN)
			2	Student behaviour in other areas
			3	Teacher discretion

			4	Whether it is a one-off or repeated occurrence
			5	Another factor – please briefly explain: [OE – max 30 characters]
			6	The sanction is always the same [mutually exclusive]

Page 10 - Ask all, SR, Nudge				
Homework clubs				
I	Does your school offer any homework clubs for students in KS3/4? *By homework club, we mean a dedicated and supervised time and space for completing homework that is **explicitly advertised** to students.*	*Please select one response.*	1	Yes
			2	No
			3	I don't know

Page 11 - Ask if selected I.1, MR, Nudge				
Homework clubs				
J	What is/are the homework club(s) at your school called?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Homework club
			2	Other(s) – please provide: [OE – 50 characters max]
			3	I don't know [mutually exclusive]

Page 12 - Ask if selected I.2, MR, Nudge, Randomise 1-5				
Homework clubs				
K	To the best of your knowledge, what is/are the reason(s) for your school *not* offering a homework club?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Our students wouldn't use it.
			2	We don't have the space.
			3	It would be too challenging to staff.

			4	We don't see the benefit of it.
			5	Students already complete their homework consistently.
			6	Other – please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters]

Page 13 - Ask if selected I.1, mix of SR and MR, Nudge				
Homework clubs If your school offers more than one homework club, please respond to the following questions for **all** of your clubs combined.				
L.1	When is homework club offered?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Before school
			2	Break time or lunch time
			3	After school
			4	I don't know [mutually exclusive]
L.2	Who supervises homework club?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Teacher(s)
			2	TA(s) or support staff
			3	Library staff
			4	Senior Leader(s)
			5	Other - please briefly explain: [OE – 30 character max]
			6	I don't know [mutually exclusive]
L.3	Are supervising staff expected to support students with their homework?	*Please select one response.*	1	Yes
			2	No
			3	I don't know
L.4	Do students have access to a school tablet or computer during homework club?	*Please select one response.*	1	Yes, all do
			2	Yes, some do
			3	No

			4	I don't know

Page 14 - Ask if selected I.1, SR, Nudge		
Homework clubs *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*		
M.1	Approximately what proportion of KS3/4 students at your school attend homework club at least once per week?	**[slider scale]** 'None' to 'All'
M.2	What is the total amount of homework club time your school offers to KS3/4 students per week? *If there are multiple homework clubs, please complete for all the clubs **combined**.*	**[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
M.3	How much of this homework club time occurs during school hours (e.g. at lunch time)?	**[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'

Page 15 – Ask if selected I.1, MR, Nudge				
Homework clubs				
N	Is your KS3/4 homework club provision targeted in any way?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	No, there is one homework club for all students and subjects. [mutually exclusive]
			2	Yes, our homework clubs are targeted to specific year groups.
			3	Yes, our homework clubs are targeted to specific subjects.
			4	Yes, our homework clubs are targeted to specific groups of students (e.g. with SEN, eligible for Pupil Premium).
			5	Other – please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters max]

Page 16 – Ask if selected N.3 and NOT N.2, SR, Nudge	
Homework clubs We are particularly interested in understanding how homework clubs might help with the completion of maths homework specifically. Approximately how many hours per week of homework club are available **before/after school** for KS3/4 students to complete **maths homework**? Please do not include time that is available during lunch or at break. This includes general/cross-subject homework clubs, as well as maths homework clubs. *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*	
O	**[slider scale – labelled every 2 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'

Page 17 – Ask if selected N.2, SR, Nudge		
Homework clubs We are particularly interested in understanding how homework clubs might help with the completion of maths homework specifically. Approximately how many hours per week of homework club are available **before/after school** for students in the following year groups to complete **maths homework**? Please do not include time that is available during lunch or at break. This includes general/cross-subject homework clubs, as well as maths homework clubs. *Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*		
P.1	Year 7	**[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
P.2	Year 8	**[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
P.3	Year 9	**[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
P.4	Year 10	**[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'
P.5	Year 11	**[slider scale – labelled every 5 hours with stopping point every half hour]** '0 hours' to '9+ hours'

Page 18, Ask if selected I.1, MR, Nudge, Randomise 1-7				
Homework clubs				
Q	Which of the following strategies does your school use to encourage KS3/4 students to attend homework club?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Staff directly promoting the club to students (e.g. during tutor time, assemblies)
			2	Staff inviting targeted students (e.g. students who have not completed homework)
			3	Peer promotion
			4	Posters
			5	Information on the school website
			6	Promoting the club to parents/carers (e.g. newsletters, text messages)
			7	Rewarding attendance (e.g. snacks, house points)
			8	Other – please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters]
			9	I don't know [mutually exclusive]

Page 19, Ask if selected I.1, SR per row, Nudge					
Barriers to homework club attendance					
To the best of your knowledge, to what extent do the following factors act as barriers to homework club attendance for KS3/4 students at your school who you think would benefit from attending? *Please select one answer per row.*		1 Not at all	2 A little	3 Quite a bit	4 A lot
R.1	Student preference for other clubs				
R.2	Out-of-school commitments (e.g. family responsibilities, other activities)				
R.3	Student energy levels before/after school				

R.4	Lack of transport options				
R.5	Social stigma and/or peer influence				
R.6	Lack of awareness				
R.7	Disengagement from schoolwork				
R.8	Lack of parental permission				
R.9	Other – please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters]				

Page 20, ask all, SR, Nudge			
Homework clubs			
S	How long has your current approach to homework clubs been in place? Please exclude disruption resulting from the pandemic. *Please answer even if your approach is **not** to offer a homework club.*	*Please move the slider on the scale to the position that best reflects the situation in your school.*	**[slider scale – labelled every 2 years with stopping point every year]** This is the first year 1 year..... [increase in integers] 9 years 10+ years **[separate tick box]** I don't know (click 'Reset' if you have already moved the slider) [separate]

Page 21, ask if selected I.1, MR, Nudge, Randomise 1-4				
Homework clubs				
T	Which of the following additional costs does your school incur because you run a homework club? *Please **exclude** resources originally purchased for other purposes, even if they are also used for homework club.*	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Additional hours for staff (i.e. increased contract hours or additional payment)
			2	Additional devices (e.g. laptops, tablets)
			3	Other learning materials (e.g. textbooks, equipment)
			4	Refreshments
			5	Other - please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters max]

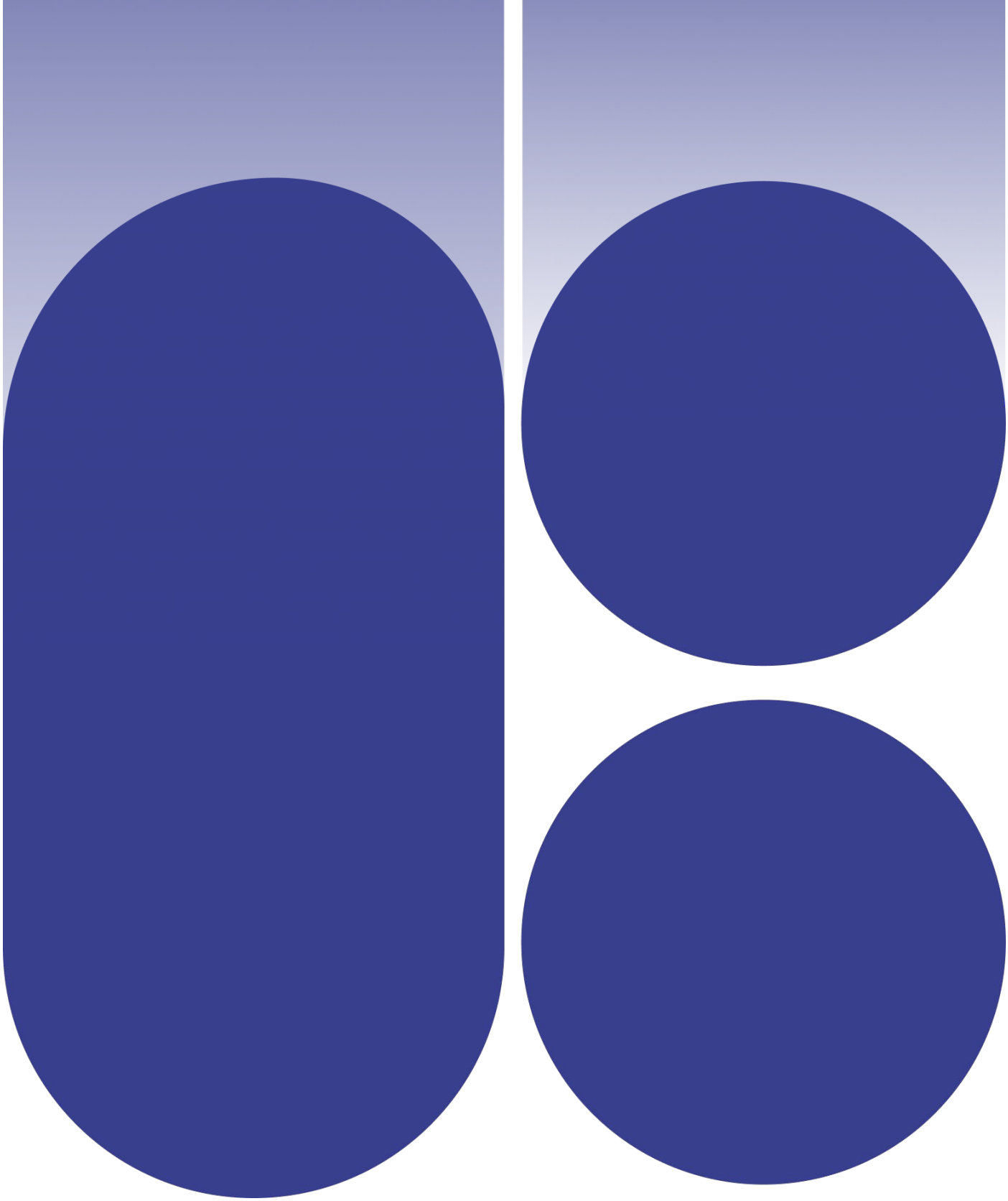
			6	I don't know [mutually exclusive]

Page 22, ask all, MR, Nudge, Randomise 1-7				
Support for homework completion				
U	Which other support do you offer for KS3/4 students to complete homework?	*Please select all that apply.*	1	Homework planner (e.g. digital or paper)
			2	Study support/mentoring (e.g. school staff or volunteers)
			3	Organised peer support (from other students)
			4	Rewards for homework completion (e.g. house points)
			5	Access to a quiet space outside school hours (e.g. classroom, library)
			6	Access to computers/tablets outside school hours (e.g. IT suite, library)
			7	Take-home digital devices for students who need one
			8	Other – please briefly explain: [OE – 30 characters]
			9	We don't offer any (other) support to students to complete their homework [mutually exclusive]
			10	I don't know [mutually exclusive]

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