



# The impact on teaching and learning community languages in Scotland during the **COVID-19** pandemic

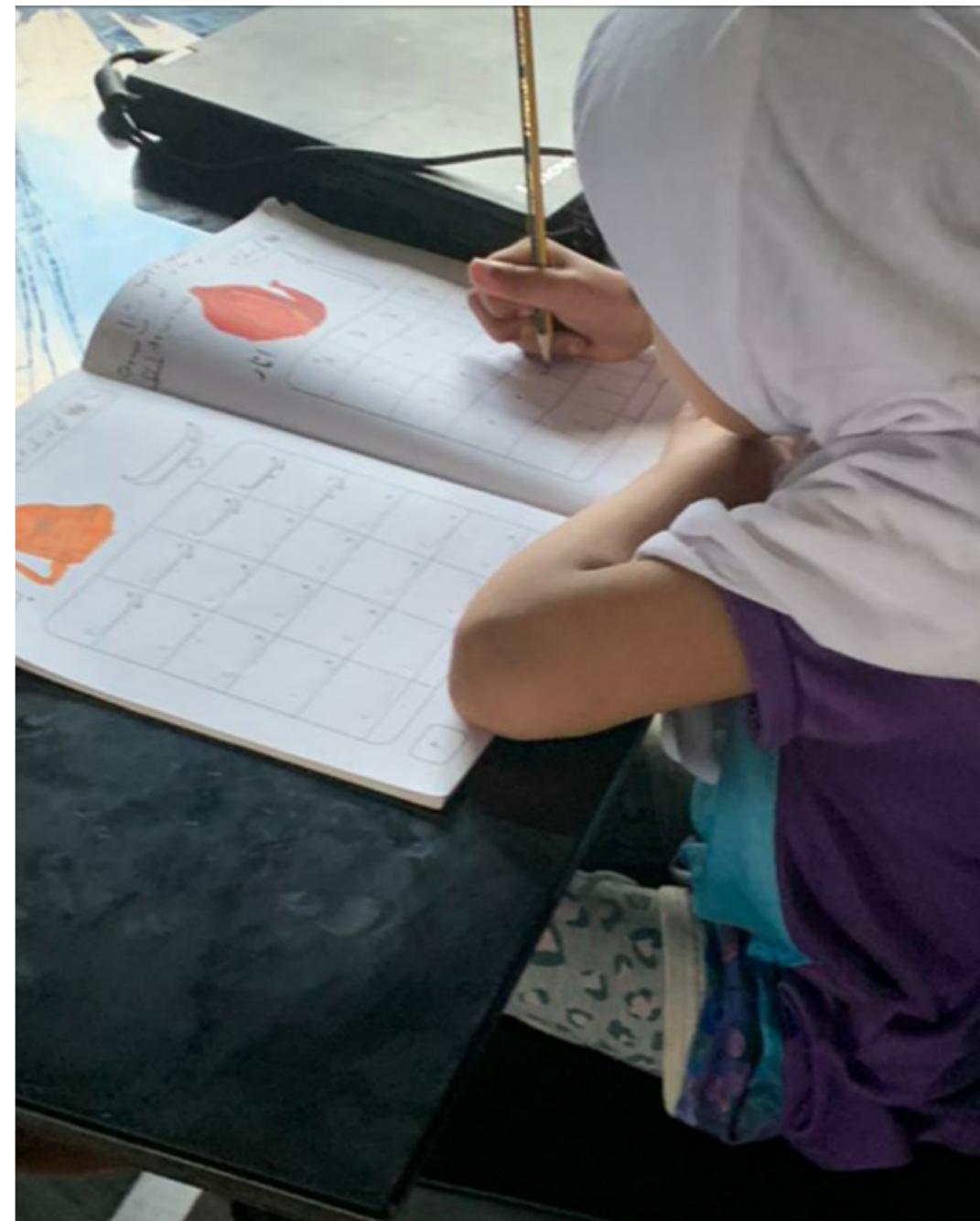
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# Executive summary

As part of the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all local authority schools closed from 20 March 2020. As schools adapted to delivering remote learning and teaching, so too did complementary schools, teaching community languages to a significant number of children and young people in the evenings and at the weekend. This report adds to a growing research base on the impact of remote teaching and learning on school-aged pupils during the pandemic but also sheds light on important learning outside of mainstream school provision, which often goes unnoticed. We describe the transition to remote learning and teaching; the choice of digital tools used for effective learning at home; learner engagement before and after lockdown; the challenges faced, and any benefits of the interim solutions initiated to meet the needs of multilingual learners.



# Data sources

The report is based on national data gathered from an online questionnaire and interviews with representatives of complementary schools. Data was collected from September to December 2020 in order to capture evidence about remote learning and teaching during the first lockdown. Questionnaires were returned from 34 complementary schools representing 19 different community languages (Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Polish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Danish, Dutch, French, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Punjabi, Spanish). Interviews were conducted with 13 participants covering 11 community languages (Mandarin, Cantonese, Polish, Japanese, German, Hungarian, Hebrew, Dutch, Italian, Russian, Arabic). Capturing the experiences of complementary schools during lockdown will provide insights into the capricious nature of complementary schools and help inform how the teaching of community languages can be supported more effectively in the future within the context of Scotland's national 1+2 Language Strategy.



# Key findings

- **All schools<sup>1</sup> sought to ensure the pupils' learning would continue at home, with a range of solutions implemented including experimenting with a range of tools and finding new ways to engage learners.** The majority of schools delivered real-time online lessons at the usual time but some schools also investigated ways to encourage independent learning. Schools drew on the expertise within their own school community to support the transition to remote learning and teaching and some schools searched for new online resources from their heritage country.
- **Almost three-quarters of schools witnessed a drop-off in learner engagement. The schools reported that the reduced engagement was more acute amongst the younger age group.** In general, lessons during lockdown were shorter, with schools attributing the reduction in lesson times and drop-off in engagement to several factors, including demands on parents' time, the learners finding it difficult to focus, and parents looking to limit the amount of time their children spent in front of a screen.
- **The majority of schools consulted with teachers and parents on decisions about how to teach during the pandemic but most schools did not consult with their learners.** It emerged from the research that there is scope for schools to explore further opportunities for consulting with learners on a range of school-related matters, and create spaces for learners to take ownership of their learning. Though the particular circumstances and size of schools may impact on the nature of these opportunities, it is vital that learner agency is prioritised especially in the context of lockdown.
- **The majority of schools reported that they did not find the move to remote learning and teaching easy.** Challenges included teachers' unfamiliarity with new ways of working, interacting effectively with pupils online and a home environment not conducive for study. Although schools attempted to incorporate cultural elements into their lessons, a vast array of cultural and physical activities were no longer offered because of lockdown restrictions and school site closures. This could have an impact on children's and young people's physical wellbeing.
- **The majority of schools believed the pandemic offered benefits and new opportunities for teaching community languages.** Although the schools reported that the challenges of remote learning and teaching outweighed the benefits, the participants noted a number of benefits such as new ways of teaching, more effective parental engagement and being able to reach new pupils from a wider geographical area.

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<sup>1</sup> Hungarian playgroup closed during lockdown but resumed online at the beginning of the academic year. The Urdu school had closed at the beginning of the pandemic because the local authority would no longer fund the teacher's salary.

# Conclusions and recommendations

This research has provided an in-depth analysis of the impact on teaching and learning community languages in Scotland in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has revealed a committed and concerned group of teachers, who were interested in changing practice and delivering teaching in new ways in challenging circumstances.

**We recommend that the 1+2 Language Strategy Implementation Group investigates different models of provision including building on lessons learned about remote teaching and mainstreaming community languages in order to re-engage learners.**

The drop off in learner engagement raises concerns about the consequences of the short-and longer-term loss of community language skills, particularly amongst the younger age groups. Complementary schools know their learners and families well and provide an important social and cultural service to their communities. Therefore, the school can build on what they have learned about remote teaching and learning and use the experience to develop and implement

new and creative ways of working in the future in order to reach new learners. Language learning provision can also be extended to include different models of provision including learning community languages in mainstream schools using virtual learning environments.

**We recommend that the Scottish Government in collaboration with local authorities should consider different funding options to complementary schools and establish partnership agreements that support their longer-term viability.**

A number of factors including a loss of revenue from tuition fees, teacher retention, local authority budget cuts and Brexit have impacted seriously on the viability of some schools. Building respectful partnerships with local authorities and mainstream schools will allow complementary schools to establish effective networks to share and reflect on what works well and access a wide range of professional learning opportunities to support the quality of teaching and learning.

**We recommend that further research is essential to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of families, particularly the learners themselves, and to assess the full impact of the pandemic on community language learners' educational attainment, multilingual skills and life chances.**

This report has offered insights into the perspectives of school representatives such as headteachers, board members and teachers. Although these representatives are likely to be also parents, it is vital that other perspectives are heard to achieve a comprehensive and detailed account of the after-effects of school closures to help inform measures that can be put in place to sustain learner engagement and support community language learning. There is particular scope for schools to consult more closely with learners, and further develop opportunities for pupil-led learning in complementary school settings.



# 1. Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and ‘lockdown’ measures implemented in March 2020, mainstream schools in Scotland were rapidly forced to change teaching methods as an alternative to face-to-face classroom teaching and learning. The same can be said about complementary schools (also known as community or heritage language schools) which operated in the evenings and at the weekend pre-pandemic. These part-time schools, initiated and organized by volunteer parents, play a key role in supporting the linguistic, cultural and sometimes faith education of a significant number of multilingual children and young people. Little is known about this type of educational provision outside of their own language communities but previous research has highlighted the many challenges faced by complementary schools such as unsustainable funding, lack of professional development for teachers and limited access to technological resources (**Hancock & Hancock, 2018**).

The transition to emergency remote learning and teaching has also highlighted concerns about the preparedness of all (schools, teachers, families and learners themselves) for effective teaching and learning online (**Bond, 2020; Education Scotland, 2021; Lucas et al., 2020; OECD, 2020**). Studies from Scotland have also highlighted how school closures have exacerbated the existing inequalities in our education system presenting significant challenges to disadvantaged pupils who may not have access to digital devices and a conducive home environment for study (**Child Poverty Action Group, 2020**;

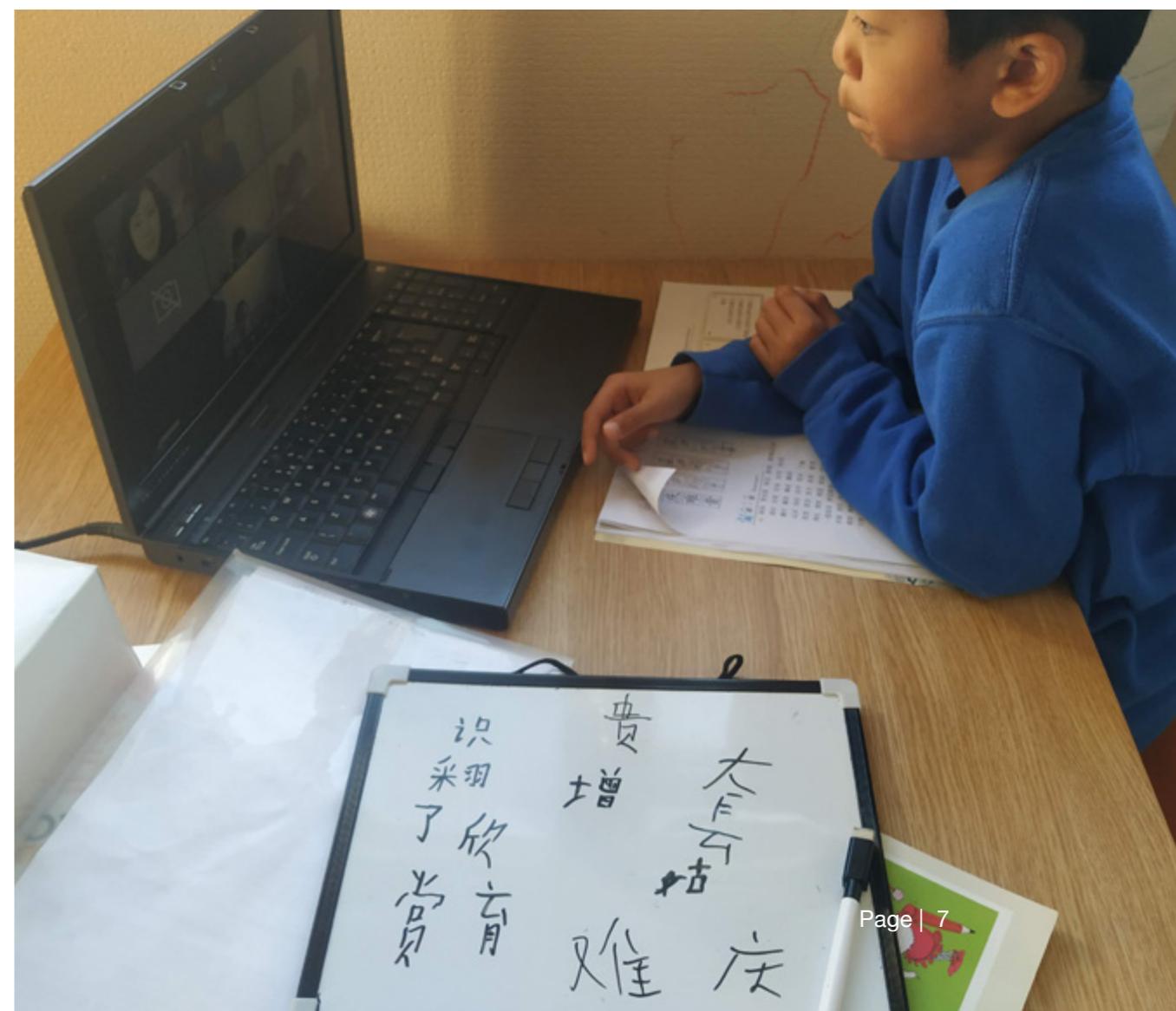
**Scottish Government, 2021**). Furthermore, this disadvantage is likely to be more prevalent amongst black and minority ethnic groups (**Assan and Hemady, 2020**).

This research project was initiated to explore the impact of the sudden changes to teaching and learning community languages in Scotland as a result of an extended period of school closure. Although mainstream schools returned to elements of face-to-face teaching in Scotland between August and December 2020, complementary school sites remained closed because of access restrictions to mainstream school premises and community centres. The research also aimed to gather information about the transition to remote teaching; the choice of digital tools used for effective learning at home; learner engagement before and after lockdown; the challenges faced, and any benefits of the temporary solutions initiated to meet the needs of multilingual learners. Documenting the experiences of complementary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic can shed light on aspects of school leadership, the values and purposes of the schools, and help inform how the teaching of community languages can be supported in the future within the context of Scotland’s national 1+2 Language Strategy (Scottish Government, 2012). Although the research is focused on the first lockdown, the findings are applicable to current and future planning in relation to complementary schools and community language provision.

The findings in this report are based on two interrelated data sets. A 24-item questionnaire, generated by the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) tool was distributed by email to 94 complementary schools in Scotland, using an updated database of provision from a previous research study (**Hancock & Hancock, 2018**). The diversity and unstable nature of the sector means some complementary schools move in and out of existence because of a lack of available teachers and restricted funding. Also, some organisations are just a small group of parents and children meeting in community premises or private houses and therefore not officially identified as community language schools. Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to identify if religious settings, such as Mosques, Gurdwaras and Synagogues, provide language as well as faith teaching.

A pilot of the questionnaire was sent to two separate complementary schools to gain feedback on the design and amendments made. Questionnaires were returned from 34 complementary schools (36% response rate) representing 19 different languages (Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Polish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Danish, Dutch, French, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Punjabi, Spanish). Two thirds of the languages were represented by more than one school, with Mandarin being the most common (n=7), followed by Arabic (n=6), Urdu (n=5), and Polish (n=5). Six schools from the survey teach more than one language - Mandarin and Cantonese classes (n=3), Arabic and Urdu (n=2), and one school provides classes of nine different languages.

The questionnaire also included a space at the end where the participants could write down their contact details if they wanted to contribute further to the project by doing an online interview. As a result, 13 follow-up online interviews were conducted covering 11 different languages (Mandarin n=2, Polish n=2, Cantonese n=1, Japanese n=1, German n=1, Hungarian n=1, Hebrew n=1, Dutch n=1, Italian n=1, Russian n=1, Arabic n=1). The semi-structured interviews were framed from a collection of topics covered in the questionnaire to provide reasonable consistency across a range of interviews, whilst remaining loose enough to allow for a free-flowing conversation to capture individual variation.



## 2. Key Findings

### Transition to remote learning and teaching

All schools sought to ensure the pupils' learning would continue at home, using a range of solutions. Some schools moved to remote teaching earlier than others because of a heightened awareness of lockdown measures in other countries.

*Covid started in January and many families travelled to China for the Chinese New Year, so we cancelled the New Year Gala at the beginning of February and already moved to online because parents were anxious [about being in the school].* (Mandarin Chinese School)

*We share the same school as the Chinese school who stopped live classes before us, so we started looking at tools in Italy. When the school closed we looked at alternatives because Italy was already in lockdown so we were prepared.* (Italian School)

A number of schools were able to draw on their own expertise and knowledge of people within the school community to support the transition to remote teaching.

*One teacher was trained in online pedagogy and helped train the other teachers using Zoom but using kinesthetic special activities so we can improve contact with young children. The teachers meet every week and we exchange ideas.* (Russian School)

*One member of the Board of Trustees is a teacher in a mainstream school and she has done professional training on online learning.* (Mandarin Chinese School)

*The teachers also have other jobs so it takes time to set up anything new. [At the beginning of lockdown] volunteers from the [local University] set up the Zoom platform and the students did the PowerPoints and students sat in on classes as assistants. The teachers said the PowerPoints were high quality. But then student volunteers went home.* (Cantonese/Mandarin School)

*IB [International Baccalaureate] allows opportunity for a mother tongue for a sixth subject so I teach Dutch for IB all over the world so I am used to doing it online using Skype every week. But the internet can be bad in some countries.* (Dutch School)

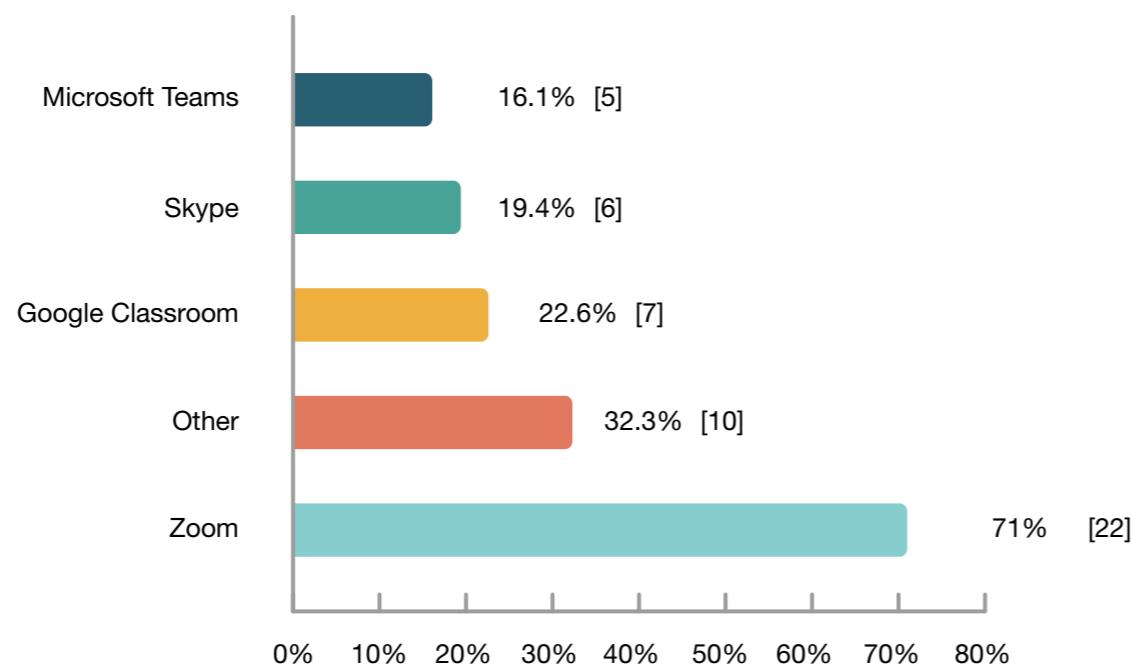
Some schools reported that they developed 'self-help' guides for parents and learners.

*We provided training to the teachers and detailed guidance to students and parents. We also supported parents facing technical issues.* (Portuguese School)

*At the beginning we had a lot of questions from parents. It was quite intense, we probably needed a helpdesk. Parents can find it quite daunting. We put a guide for parents and children on our website with instructions for streaming classes online.* (Italian School)

Schools were asked what tools they used for learning and teaching. Zoom proved to be the most widespread tool (71%), followed by Google Classroom (22.6%), Skype (19.4%) and MS Teams (16.1%). Other methods included WhatsApp (n=3), DingTalk (n=2), Portuguese platform (n=1) and Go To Training (n=1). Tools with no cost were an important consideration for the schools.

*The transition went smoothly. We closed doors on 14 March a week before lockdown. [Online learning] was already on our 'to do' list and introduced in stages. So I already had a fair insight into how it could be done. Zoom seemed to be the best platform.* (Private Languages School)



**Figure 1. Platforms used for online teaching and learning.**

*We relied on people having their own hardware and subscribed to Google Suite for education, which is free.* (Italian School)

A number of the schools adopted a trial and error approach, and some used a mixture of different online learning tools.

*I looked at three tools and went to Google Suite. It is free and very good to organise teachers and homework. When we started using [it] there were improvements in Google Classroom by providers as more people were using the platform. We also looked at Microsoft but it is not convenient or well structured. I looked at Zoom but there are problems with security. This is what drove us to Google.* (Italian School)

*Community schools do not have a lot of assets. We had to use free software and a platform with no support so it is hard for teachers. DingTalk<sup>2</sup> like MS Teams is free and popular in China as schools moved to online teaching [in China]. We can do more remote teaching together and can share homework. There is a lot of functionality but designed for China so sometimes there are network problems. I hadn't heard of DingTalk before the pandemic, now we use a mix of Zoom and DingTalk.* (Mandarin Chinese School)

*We decided to use Zoom for online teaching but at the same time we needed a teaching platform. We chose Google Classroom because it doesn't cost money, we didn't know what it was like but used it to help children and parents with homework. You can upload children's work.* (Japanese School)

*Zoom cuts out. I tried Jitsi platform last time. I will try one more next week and decide on the best platform.* (Hungarian School)

*It was down to me. I use email, WhatsApp, Zoom and Skype to stay in touch with the students.* (Dutch School)

Several schools explored opportunities to supplement the online learning lessons through physical materials and other resources.

*We sent physical packages of learning and craft materials to be used during Zoom sessions.* (Hebrew School)

*We share information and homework on Facebook. We created private groups for the parents. We continue working from the same book, but we also added a lot of different information. Visual educational online learning: songs, pictures, stories, quizzes online.* (Lithuanian School)

*We used our Facebook closed group to offer ideas for parents. Songs, nursery rhymes, children's stories were shared.* (Hungarian School)

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<sup>2</sup> DingTalk is an enterprise communication and collaboration platform based in Hangzhou, China. It was founded in 2014 and by 2018 was one of the world's largest professional communication and management mobile apps with over 100 million users.

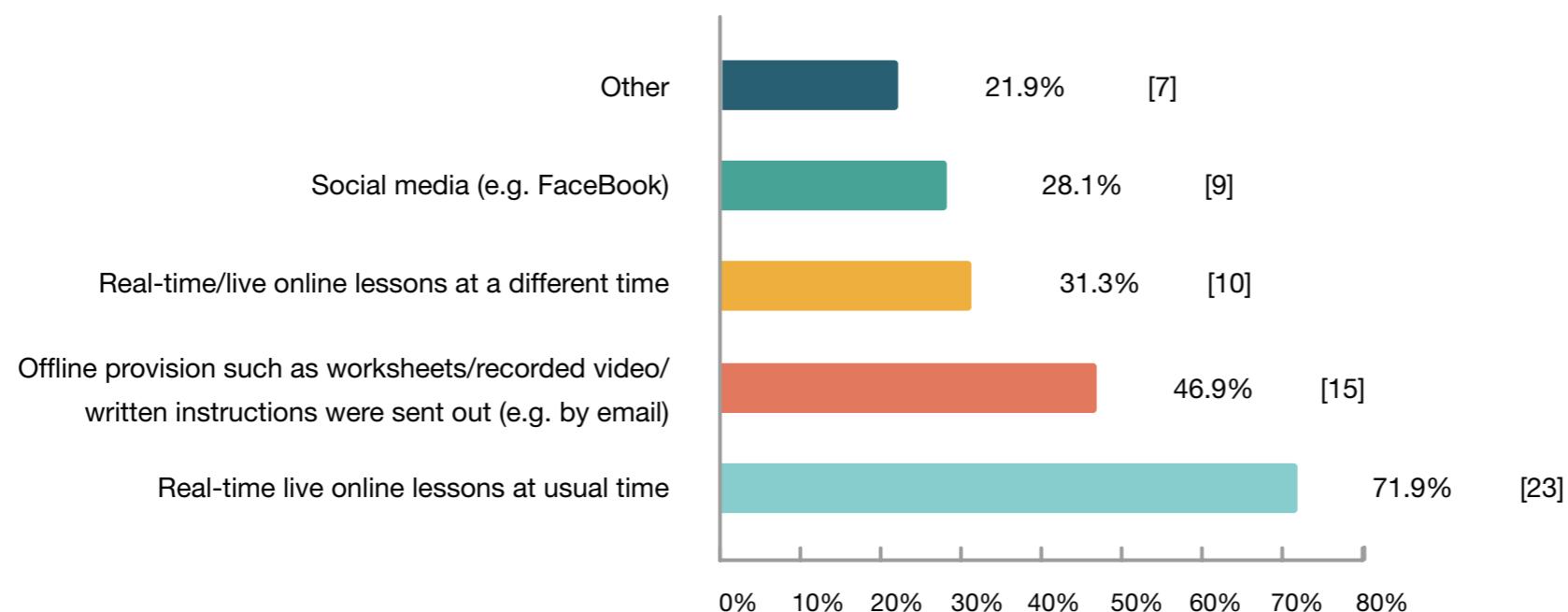
A few schools reported that they accessed online resources from their heritage country.

*Online platform developed by Portuguese publishers and supported by the Portuguese Government ('Escola Virtual').* (Portuguese School)

*The Chinese Government helped the teaching of Chinese around the world through the Government backed Global Chinese Learning Platform. Videos are available and help with how to keep children's attention.* (Mandarin Chinese School)

*We read little stories like what the children in Israel learn. It was a pick and mix approach. I am quite comfortable choosing my own stuff. Before we used workbooks but there is loads of free stuff on the internet from Israel. I use a programme from Israel for children having difficulty with literacy.* (Hebrew School)

Schools were asked what methods they used to provide learning to pupils at home. The majority of schools (71.9%) delivered online lessons live at the usual time with just under half (46.9%) providing learning offline. Ten schools also responded that they delivered live online lessons but at a different time compared to pre-pandemic times. Other methods included Padlets (n=1), Portuguese platform (n=1), WeChat (n=1) and WhatsApp (n=1).



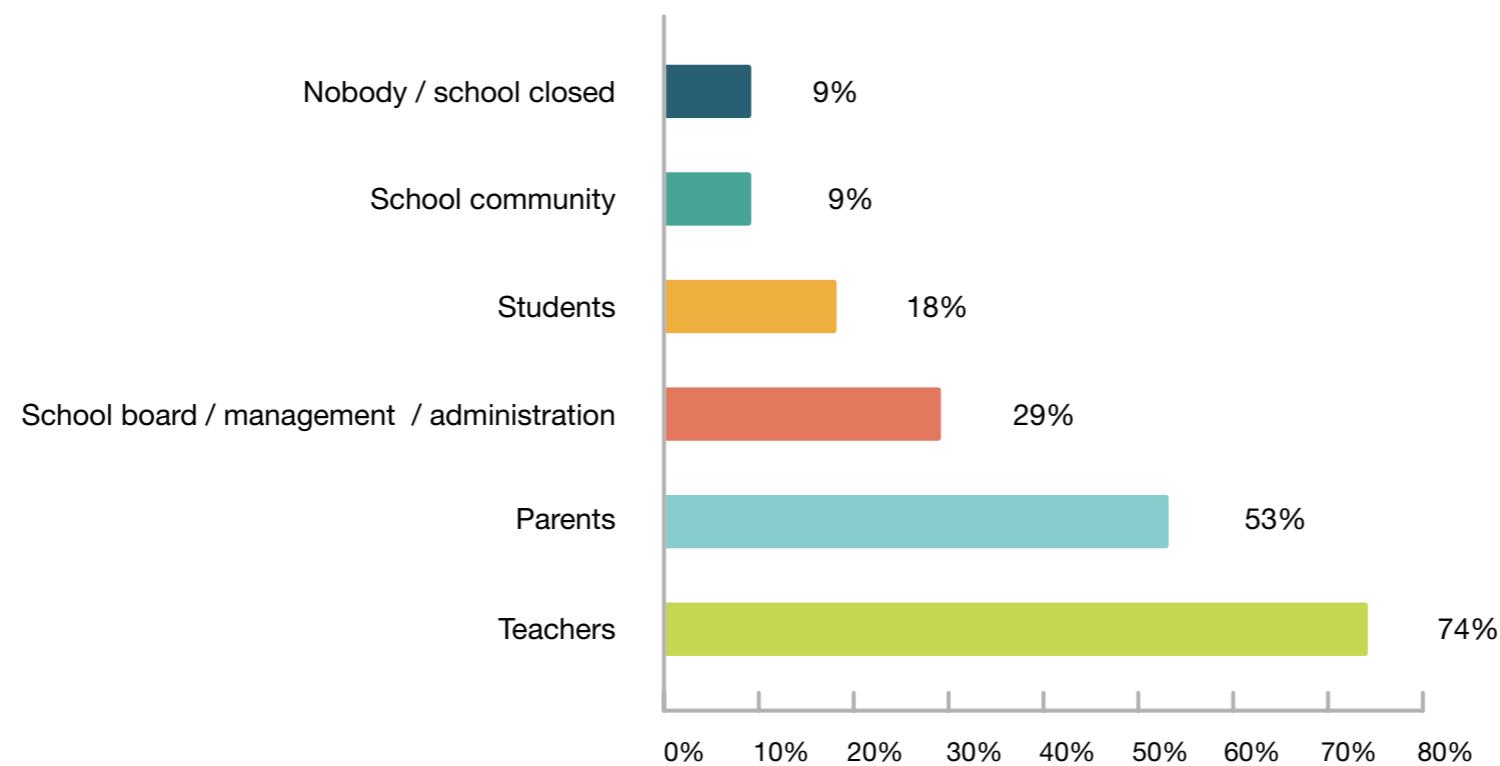
**Figure 2. Methods used to provide learning at home.**

School closures in March brought new challenges for complementary schools, the most important one being the new ways of delivering teaching via online sources. Schools were asked who was consulted about the teaching methods during the pandemic. Almost three-quarters of schools (74%) consulted with teachers, just over half (53%) consulted with parents but only six schools consulted with the learners themselves.

*The school is run by a parent committee. It made the decision after consulting with teachers and parents. (German school)*

*It started as a personal initiative of one teacher, but later we consulted all teachers and parents via conversations and a survey. (Hebrew School)*

*We asked parents and teachers if they want to use [the Global Chinese Learning Platform] as a main resource as it will save us a lot of time. Some Chinese schools in the UK use the Chinese resource as the main resource. The advantage is it is more professional but they don't know our kids. We know them individually. It's like giving lectures to hundreds of people but you don't know them. Our teachers know them very well. [Our School] decided to use it as a supplementary resource. (Mandarin Chinese School)*



**Figure 3. Consulting about the teaching during the pandemic.**

*The teachers were not asked [about online tools]. We couldn't go into the [venue] so we had no other choice but to cancel lessons.* (Japanese School)

Nearly three-quarters of the schools indicated that there had been a drop-off in pupils engaging in lessons during lockdown.

*20% less than face to face lessons.* (Cantonese/Mandarin School)

*At the moment, the lessons take place online. Unfortunately, half of the children stop learning Lithuanian.* (Lithuanian School)

The drop-off in engagement was attributed to several factors, including the learners finding it difficult to focus, and parents looking to limit the amount of time their children spent in front of a screen. This lack of engagement was also more acute amongst the younger age group of learners.

*Engagement depends on the age of the children. We lost a lot of children from the Cantonese classes. Parents don't want more on screen learning at the weekend as they do enough during the week, so we cancelled the youngest class. Children older than 10-years are not too bothered about screen time so we just continued.* (Cantonese/Mandarin School)

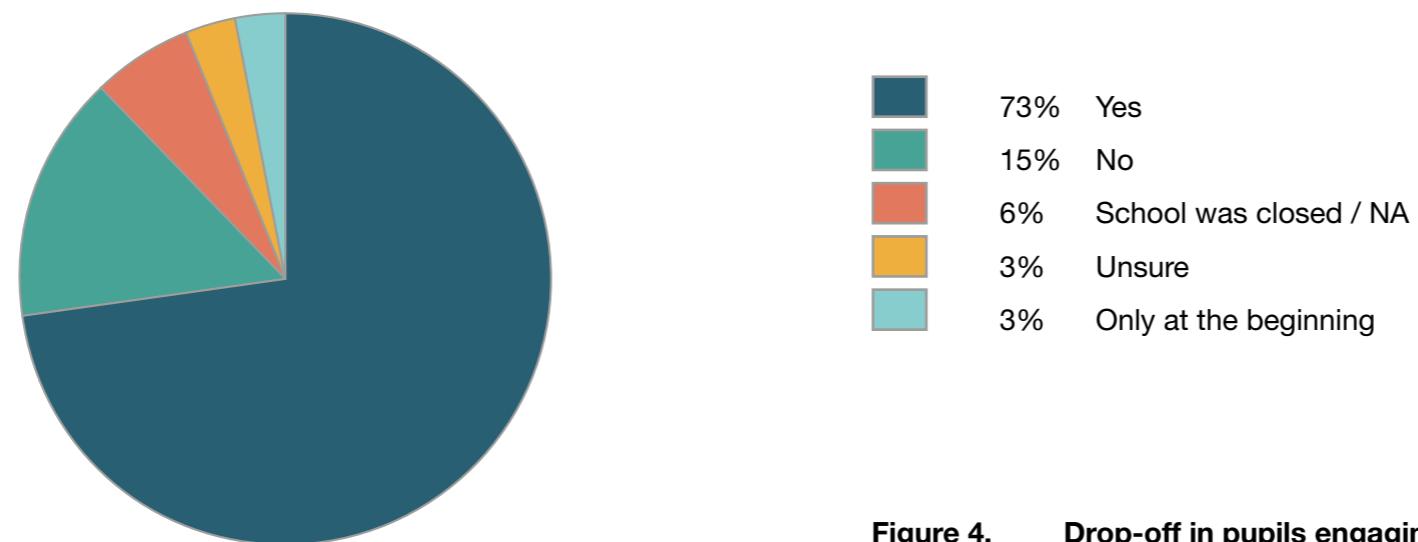


Figure 4. Drop-off in pupils engaging in lessons.

*There has been a big drop in pre-school and P1 and P2. Those still enrolled don't participate as regularly as the parents now have to spend one hour with their children. There has been a 50% drop off. (Mandarin Chinese School)*

*The young classes stopped. Teenagers are able to do it on their own. Three-year olds can't sit for quite so long in front of the screen. (Russian School)*

*Yes, as especially for children with additional support and young age found it difficult to stay on the task. (Urdu/Arabic School)*

Schools were asked how much time was spent on lessons before and after the lockdown. In general, lessons during lockdown were shorter; the number of schools teaching lessons of less than two hours increased from 15 to 19, while those teaching lessons of more than two hours reduced from 18 to 13.

*We now have a concentrated 40-minute lesson. It was one and a half hours before lockdown including play. The main goal was to keep the kids in contact with each other. (Hebrew School)*

*After the first hurdle they engaged well but we reduced lessons to one hour as important for dialogue and language learning. (Italian School)*

*We are trying to reduce lesson time. First have 40- minute lesson then take a break and then do homework. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

*We used to do 40-minute lessons and reduced to 30 minutes. (German School)*

Some schools commented that the external pressures associated with the pandemic, and the demands placed on teachers, parents and learners, had led to a reduction in lesson times.

*All of the board members are voluntary. To re-organise and switch to online was a huge challenge. Pupil participation was high throughout (we cancelled the fees for the last term, which may have helped). Continuing online is representing another challenge as students have now started to drop out. (Portuguese School)*

*Some students left because of the pandemic, people feel it is too much. (Japanese School)*

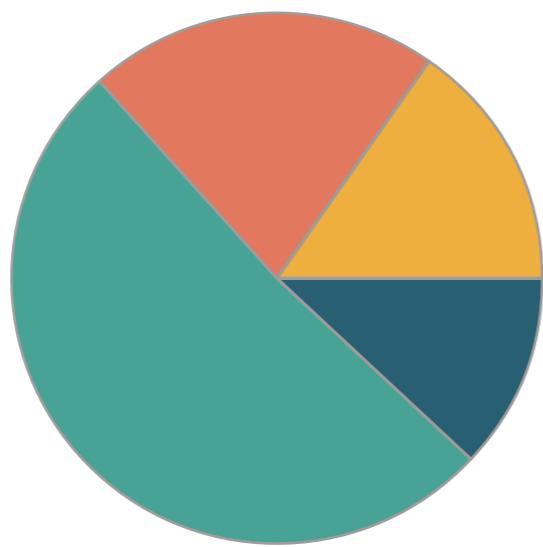


# Challenges of remote teaching and learning

Figure 5. shows that most schools (63.6%) ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘disagree’ that it has been easy to support pupils with quality teaching and learning during the pandemic. In the interviews the school representatives expanded on the reasons behind these views. Their responses covered a wide range of issues such as lack of teacher confidence and unfamiliarity with remote teaching, barriers to learning and teaching online and an unconducive environment at home for study.

*Teachers didn't see [remote learning] as additional work. They still have to prepare classes and nobody complained. However, some struggled at first with online tools. (Italian School)*

*One teacher had a meltdown because Zoom didn't work, she had to ask parents to return to the lesson and log on again, it feels like a hassle. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*



12.1%	[4]	Strongly disagree
51.5%	[17]	Disagree
21.2%	[7]	Neither agree or disagree
15.2%	[5]	Agree
0%	[0]	Strongly agree

**Figure 5. Do you agree: It has been easy to support pupils with quality teaching and learning at home during the pandemic.**

*Some teachers who have been teaching for decades said they didn't want to do online [teaching]. We are looking at ways of providing training. Notifying parents by email before lesson and using email for communication is a hurdle for some teachers.* (Cantonese/Mandarin School)

*Although parents don't have to travel to [School] and the lessons are shorter, the teacher workload is more. Normally [teachers] check homework during breaktime but it is more time-consuming checking homework online.* (Japanese School)

Assessing children's and young people's learning and progress was also a significant challenge. Several schools highlighted the importance of parental engagement, in the sense that young children needed the help of their parents to engage with the technology and to participate online.

*You don't see the body language, online teachers see only a small picture or a small video. Another challenge for older children is they start chatting to each other, sending messages to each other. It is not appropriate. You need to tell the teacher to remind them of rules of online teaching and remind parents.* (Cantonese/Mandarin School)

*The main change was I looked into quizzes to make it more exciting. It is more difficult for students to do things together, they don't find it easy to speak up online.* (Dutch School)

*It is big, big work for parents. Previously I met parents often but now I just look at the screen.* (Russian School)

*In class I can see their writing but now it is submitted. I am not sure how much is their own work or help from their parents so it is difficult to assess their writing.* (Japanese School)

A common theme noted by the schools was children and young people not having a conducive home environment to study.

*There are several families with laptop and internet problems or noise at home.* (Russian School)

*Because of online learning some families have three siblings and families may not have more than one device. We had to make a complicated timetable.* (Japanese School)

*Some families have three or four children and not enough devices or rooms. They just use the phone.* (Mandarin Chinese School)



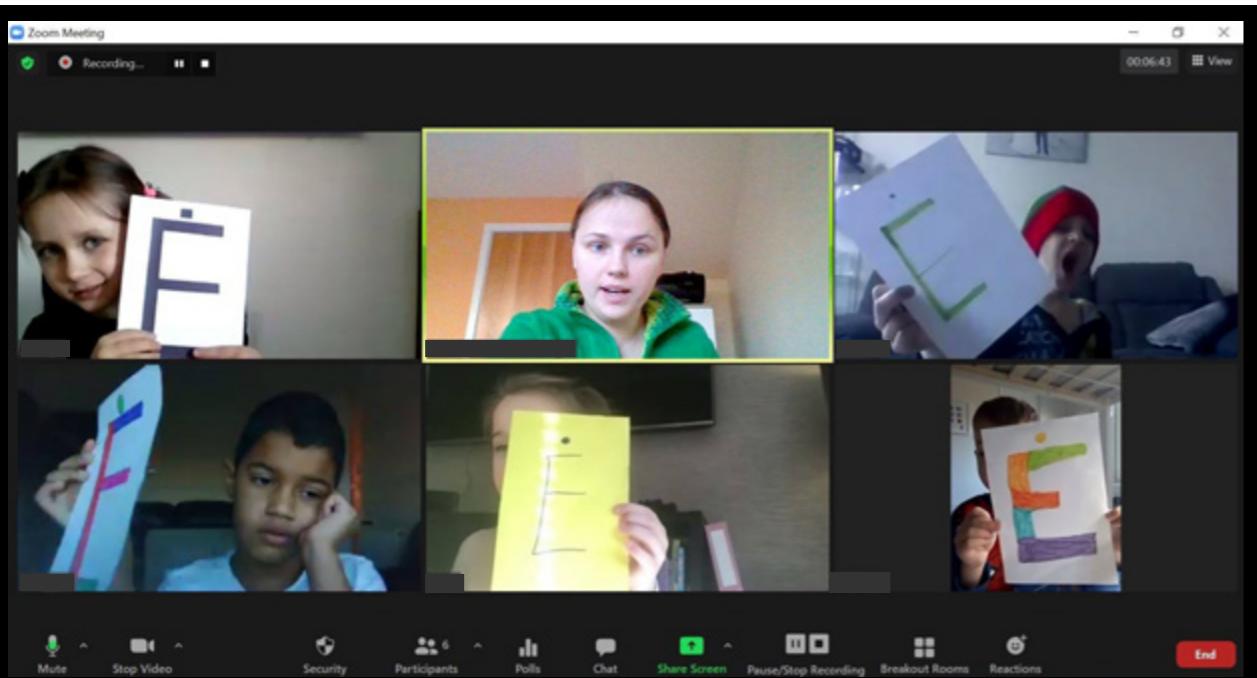
*A lot of parents are working in the caring profession, it is not well paid, on the minimum wage and living in short term tenancies with poor connectivity. (Polish School)*

*Parents have lost interest a bit - I can hear them in the background on a work phone call. (Dutch School)*

*It is difficult for parents, some are professionals but others work long hours in hospitality. Some parents do not have the time. Every day they are given a task to do, but we can't enforce because all families are different. (Mandarin Chinese School)*

Schools were asked what cultural related activities they were no longer able to provide because of closures to school premises.<sup>3</sup> The list of activities was very extensive and wide ranging but the most popular were associated with expressive arts such as dance (n=8), crafts and drawing (n=7), music and musical instrument (n=6) and sport (n=4). Some of the activities were linked to cultural interests such as a chess club (Russian school), calligraphy and poetry (Chinese school) and faith practices (prayers). Cultural activities that revolved around festivals and traditions such as Chinese New Year and Eid al-Fitr were cancelled. Furthermore, social events such as graduation ceremonies and new academic year celebrations were called off. It is quite clear that the pandemic brought a narrowing of the interactions not only between students or students and teachers, but also between students and their cultural heritage. The lack of physical activities could also have an impact on children's and young people's mental health and well-being. During the interviews a number of the participants described how the closure of school premises has resulted in a loss of community as parents and teachers are no longer able to interact and socialise with one another.

*We are losing the community spirit and there is less communication amongst the teachers. They feel less motivated. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

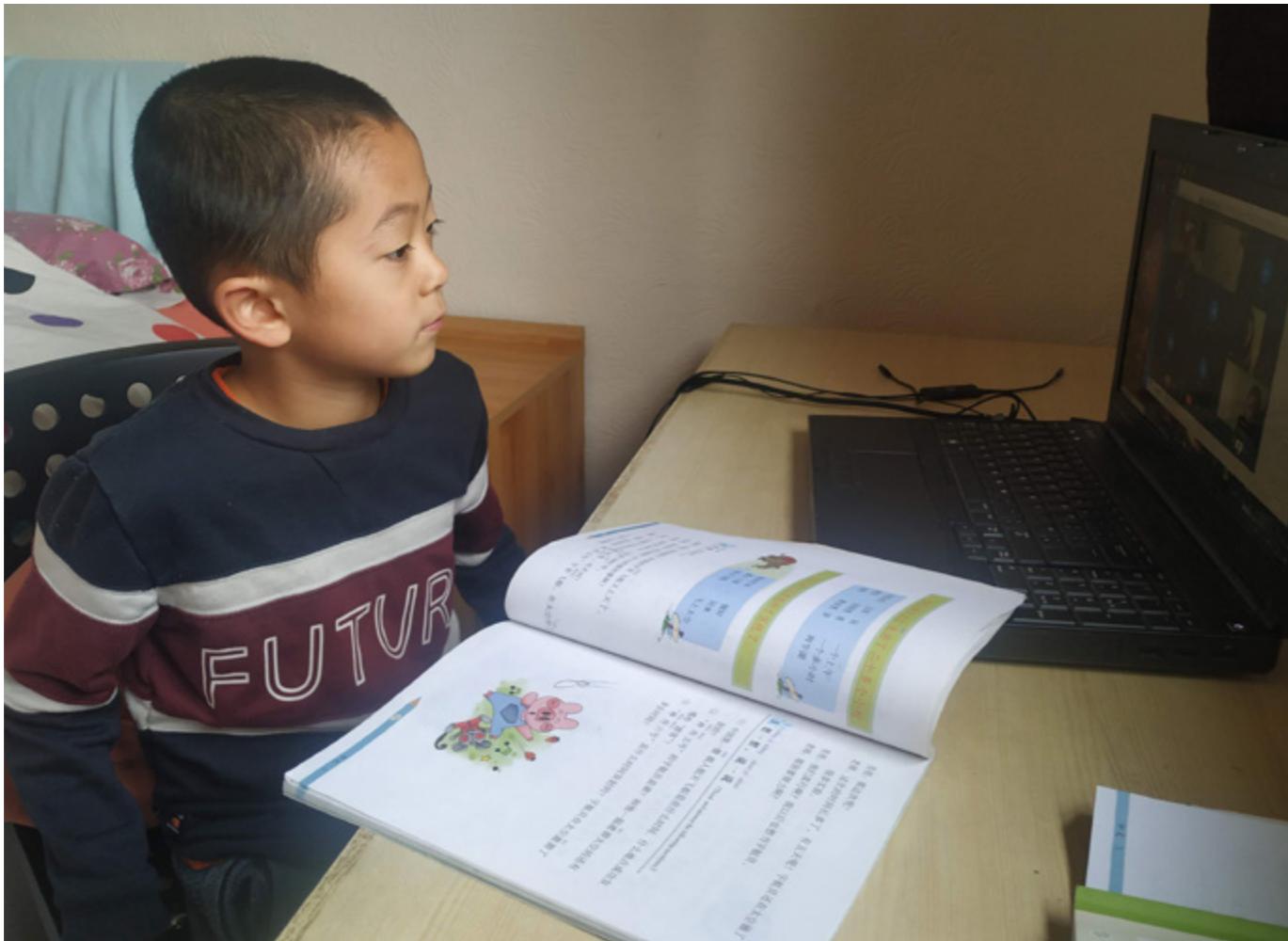


<sup>3</sup> 59% of complementary schools used a mainstream school building for teaching before the pandemic. Other venues for complementary schools included places of worship (n=5), community centres (n=5), private venue (n=1), youth club (n=1), and own home (n=1).

For some schools a combination of cuts in local authority funding for community language teachers and a loss of revenue due to the reduction in pupils paying tuition fees has impacted on the viability of schools.

*Polish schools are finding it difficult to teach online, they are struggling to survive with no tuition fees. Some [schools] have closed altogether. (Polish School)*

*The financial challenges is increasing pressure on the school as the number of students are halved but we have to keep our teachers. The school received less tuition fees after less students attended the lessons [during the pandemic]. Also the Council fund has stopped in May 2020. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

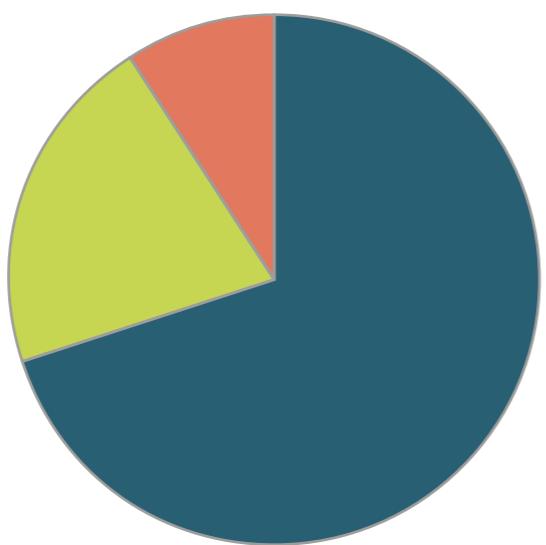


# Benefits of remote teaching

Although the challenges of the move to remote teaching outweighed the benefits, the majority of schools (70%) believed the pandemic did offer some benefits and new opportunities for teaching community languages. These advantages include (in order of popularity) new ways of teaching and alternative resources (12), enhanced parental engagement (9) and being able to reach new students (6).

*Teachers also recorded Zoom sessions and kept as a resource for children who missed lesson. (Mandarin Chinese School)*

*We are using a lot of videos online rather than relying on traditional teaching methodology. We are now giving [the pupils] more dedicated learning experience rather than a generic one. We are doing reading fairy tales on video and made them available on Facebook. (Italian School)*



[Dark Blue Box]	70%	[23]	Yes
[Light Green Box]	21%	[7]	No
[Orange Box]	9%	[3]	School closed / N/A

**Figure 6. Benefits and opportunities offered by the pandemic.**

*We now use more online resources, like online videos, they are more easy to access and embed in teaching. Resources were there in the past but the [mainstream school] only allowed us to use PC, internet and whiteboard for only two hours. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

*During the pandemic, the children who are attending the online lessons, have an opportunity learning from different resources: the Lithuanian quizzes, films, stories, visual perception of the text, songs, even to see more YouTube about the Lithuanian culture, traditions, participate in different online tuitions. (Lithuanian School)*

Some teachers felt that there was now scope for more innovation and to develop new skills.

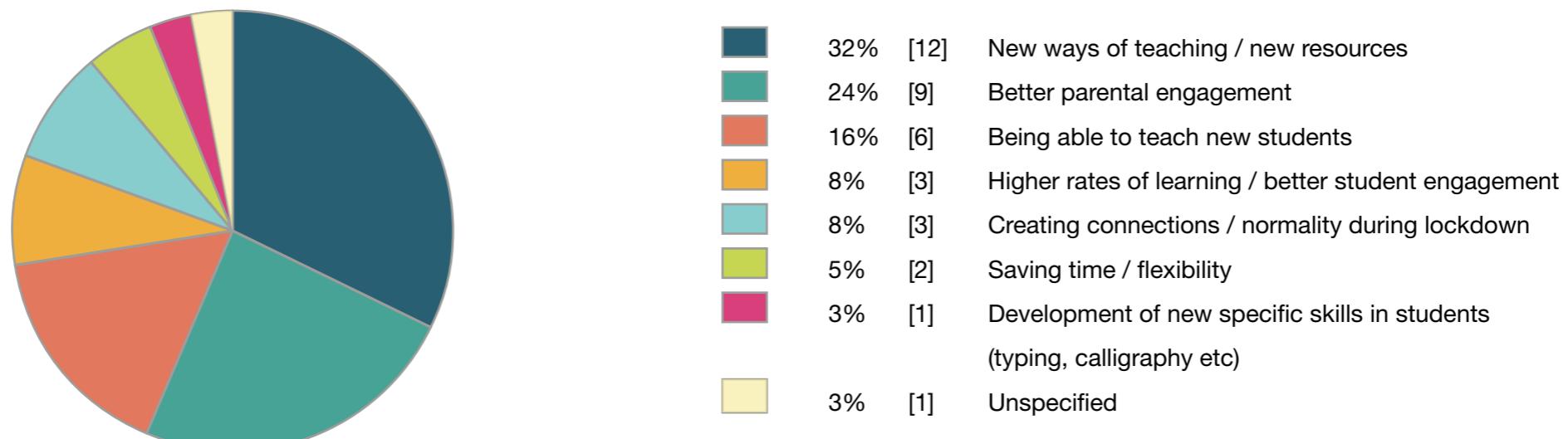
*New ways of teaching, researching different resources. (Urdu School)*

*The benefits are at the level of introducing novel ways of teaching, innovative tools and diversity of resources. (Portuguese School)*

*Teachers made effort on learning how to use technology to teach and enhanced skills for using different resources. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

*I would say if not a lockdown, I would not get such an experience as I have got now. I learnt new ways of teaching online. I need to prepare more to engage more with the children. I say 'take something from your fridge that is white' or 'find me something that is soft.' You need more active learning for the younger ones. (Lithuanian School)*

*I have started offering one-to-one sessions with kids and created little projects for the families to do. (Hebrew School)*



**Figure 7. Types of benefits/opportunities noticed.**

Some participants also highlighted learners developing new literacy and computer skills through remote teaching and learning during the lockdown.

*I teach eight- and nine-year olds and they have learnt to type Japanese characters. It is useful to them. All computers have Japanese typing now so it is already set up and parents also use Japanese on their devices. (Japanese School)*

*The children can write on the chat board on Zoom. They are using skills to write in Lithuanian. They have to change the keyboard to use the Lithuanian alphabet on the computer. (Lithuanian School)*

*Teachers learned new skills of doing online teaching. The kids also learned using new technologies. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

Although some schools noted the demands on parents (see Challenges section above), they also reported that remote teaching provided opportunities for more parent engagement in their children's learning.

*Yes, we have experienced much enhanced parental engagement and even higher rate of learning beyond the sessions which was very low. Before parents just dropped off their kids. More parents are engaged. They don't speak Hebrew at home but now they sit with their kids and can support kids a lot more. (Hebrew School)*

*They [parents] took responsibility for their child's learning to get prepared with the resources required for the lesson like arts and crafts were used in most of the classes and most of the parents especially with the young age children, were able to print and get resources for their children. (Urdu/Arabic School)*

*Parents are also involved during lesson time and can judge the quality of lessons, more collaborative working. Relationship developed between teachers, learners and parents. (Bengali School)*

*It increases the work of parents, but they appreciate what the school is doing to maintain learning. Parents take photos of assignments and upload. (Japanese School)*

*Definitely parents put effort and help. All parents help us a lot. (Russian School)*

*Enhanced parental engagement as many assisted their children in classes. (Danish School)*

Remote teaching also provided an opportunity for complementary schools to engage with new learners from a wider geographical area.

*We are also more inclusive now. Children who came from afar only came occasionally now attend every time. (Hebrew School)*



*We can expand our reach to areas we can't normally reach - we are supposed to do the whole of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Now we can allow children to participate remotely. (Italian School)*

*Furthermore, there has been a demand to start conducting regular distance learning lessons for the children living not only nearby, and further in England and other parts of Scotland. (Lithuanian School)*

*Offering Zoom sessions means geographical barriers disappear and more Hungarian children can participate. (Hungarian School)*

*It is better to learn from home because some families are located outside of [the city]. Several people couldn't travel every Saturday. (Russian School)*

Schools mentioned that the move to remote teaching had saved parents time and saved the schools money on rent.

*Parents travel quite far from the Borders and Fife and parking is difficult in the city. Now there is no need to travel so it saves them a lot of time. (Mandarin Chinese School)*

*No longer pay rent and fees for cleaners so we have saved that cost. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

*We are saving on rent and reinvesting it into teaching materials. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

*Flexible timing, no need for pre-booking of paid classroom in a community hall. (Bengali School)*

*Others had more time to engage in language learning due to changed working patterns. We also saw an increase in students who usually could not attend in house lessons due to distance. (German School)*

When asked about any other noteworthy opportunities for their school during the pandemic, the schools also mentioned shared textbooks via online platforms, using electronic questionnaires for parents and electronic homework for students, opportunities for better feedback for students, gaining knowledge of online teaching, and further opportunities for teacher collaboration thanks to online teaching.



# Future changes to teaching and learning

The majority of schools (67%) reported that they will continue to make use of the changes they had made to teaching and learning during the pandemic when schools re-open. Several schools commented that once they were able to re-open they would move to a more hybrid approach, combining face-to-face teaching with provision of online lessons.

*I am thinking about being more creative when we get back to normal. Maybe offer Monday to Friday after school classes. (Cantonese/Mandarin School)*

*We are aiming to continue [with online learning] as an alternative approach of learning for those who will not be interested in going to school after pandemic. (Bengali School)*

*We will retain (online) for the future maybe adding a midweek lesson. (Italian School)*

*When school reopens, we'd like to resume the face-to-face teaching as it is more effective for learning the language in a group. But we will continue to offer online resources as the additional support material. (Mandarin Chinese School)*

The schools were also planning to maintain the use of certain digital tools and resources that they had found enhanced learning during the pandemic. They were also keen to explore ways in which they could expand their activities and develop or maintain more inclusive and flexible ways of working.

*For teaching younger children, traditional methods are still preferred, but for the older children, there is scope to have more activities done online. We are also looking to expand the amount of activities we run for online events such as story reading or lectures by famous Italian people, which are now easily accessible online. (Italian School)*

*Use of online platforms may be continued as a complement to 'traditional' resources. (Portuguese School)*

*Google Classroom can be used after school reopens, because it is useful to manage pupils' homework. (Japanese School)*

*So much online video material is available online. I am thinking of making video clips for the students. (Dutch School)*

*Changes made were to involve children more actively so will help more when back to face-to-face teaching. (Urdu/Arabic School)*

The Dutch school provided an interesting example of how future working may involve more international collaboration.

*A [12 year-old] Dutch girl went back to Netherlands and she was struggling, she had spent a long time in Scotland. I contacted the teacher [in the Netherlands] and we agreed I would talk through the written assignment with her. So, the beginning of lesson is with the teacher and then we have breakout using MS Teams. I think it is wonderful.*  
(Dutch School)

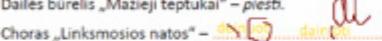
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Dailies būrelis „Mažieji teptukai“ – piešti.  
Choras „Linksmosios natos“ –  dažoti

Šokių būrelis „Trepšiukai“ – 

Gitarų būrelis „Pirmaoji melodija“ –

Teatro būrelis „Paslapptis“ –

Surask ir nuspalvink žodžius: teptukas, dūdelė, batelė, smulkas, dažai, kamuolys.

Aš augu

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# Future Challenges

A number of schools raised concerns about the future prospects of community language learning but also offered solutions. Some challenges were noted in relation to recovering from the impact of the lockdown on learning and teaching, and the associated drop-off in learner engagement.

*I am worried a lot about getting back to normal and getting parents back. Some parents do not have a strong Chinese link because they are second or third generation.* (Cantonese/Mandarin School)

*We can't get families to come along to classes and we need to focus on widening our catchment area.* (Italian School)

*We are concerned about the economic and social impact of the pandemic. Most Hungarians (like most Eastern Europeans) work in the tourism, hospitality and cleaning industries and are paid relatively low salaries. Unemployment is and will be an issue. We have already heard of some families that moved back to Hungary after losing their jobs.* (Hungarian School)

Some of the Polish schools called for greater recognition of the mainstreaming of the Polish language in schools in Scotland as a means of developing and maintaining the language, but acknowledged the economic challenges faced by local authorities.

*I am not sure about the long-term prospects [for the School]. I am hoping for mainstreaming Polish and the [local authority] is ambitious but local authorities are struggling financially.* (Polish School)

*With a very high number of children of Polish origin in schools it would make perfect sense to introduce Polish to schools.* (Polish School)

The above illustrates that the pandemic is just the latest in a series of challenges for complementary schools, and some were vulnerable or had to close even before the pandemic. The fact that some schools are continuing to develop and thrive in spite of such difficult circumstances, and the continuing benefits they provide for minority language communities in Scotland, shows why they deserve greater recognition and support.

### 3. Discussion and recommendations

*The pandemic can't stop our journey of learning Mandarin.*

(Mandarin Chinese School website)

*Everybody does this work from the bottom of their heart.*

(Hungarian School)

This research has provided an in-depth analysis of the impact on teaching and learning community languages in Scotland in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school closures that followed. It has revealed a committed and concerned group of teachers, who were interested in changing practice and delivering teaching in new ways in very challenging circumstances.

That said, the majority of schools reported a drop-off in learner engagement, particularly amongst the younger age group.

**We recommend that the 1+2 Language Strategy Implementation Group investigates different models of provision including building on lessons learned about remote teaching and mainstreaming community languages in order to re-engage learners.**

Scotland also has a wealth of knowledge and experience in learning-at-distance, such as e-Sgoil<sup>4</sup> for the teaching and learning of Gaelic to isolated communities in the Western Isles and shared learning spaces to support collaboration between Universities and mainstream schools (**Coyle et al. 2020**). These virtual learning environments can be extended to include community language teaching and learning in response to the demand from language communities, parents and pupils. Mainstreaming provision raises the status of community languages by opening them up to all learners and avoids community language speakers feeling they have additional work to learn the language in the evening and at the weekend (**McFarlane, Deerin & Payne, 2018**). This model of support requires suitably qualified teachers of community languages. As part of the 1+2 Language Strategy pilot projects are about to commence for the teaching of Polish and Arabic in primary schools and more languages can be added to this menu of offerings.

Previous research (**Hancock & Hancock, 2018**) revealed a large number of vibrant Polish Saturday schools throughout Scotland with a pool of well qualified teachers. However, during the interviews concern was expressed by not only a number of Polish schools but also other schools about their future prospects. For some schools a combination of Brexit, cuts in local authority funding for heritage language teachers and a loss of revenue due to the reduction in pupils paying tuition fees has seriously impacted on the sustainability of schools.

**We recommend that the Scottish Government in collaboration with local authorities should consider different funding options to complementary schools and establish partnership agreements that support their longer-term viability.**

This funding model would formalise the role of complementary schools and this contract would include the opening up of resources, such as online learning platforms used by mainstream schools. This type of collaboration can also allow complementary school teachers to engage in wider professional learning networks to support a future where remote teaching has a more central role. In this way, some of the benefits of remote teaching expressed by complementary schools in this report can be built upon, particularly reaching new learners and enhanced engagement with parents. For information and guidance on partnership arrangements see **Ramalingam and Griffith (2015)** and **Anderson, Chung & Macleroy (2018)**.

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<sup>4</sup> E-Sgoil is funded by the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. In 2018 the Scottish Government published its Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland Enhancing Learning and Teaching Through The Use Of Digital Technology. <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00505855.pdf>

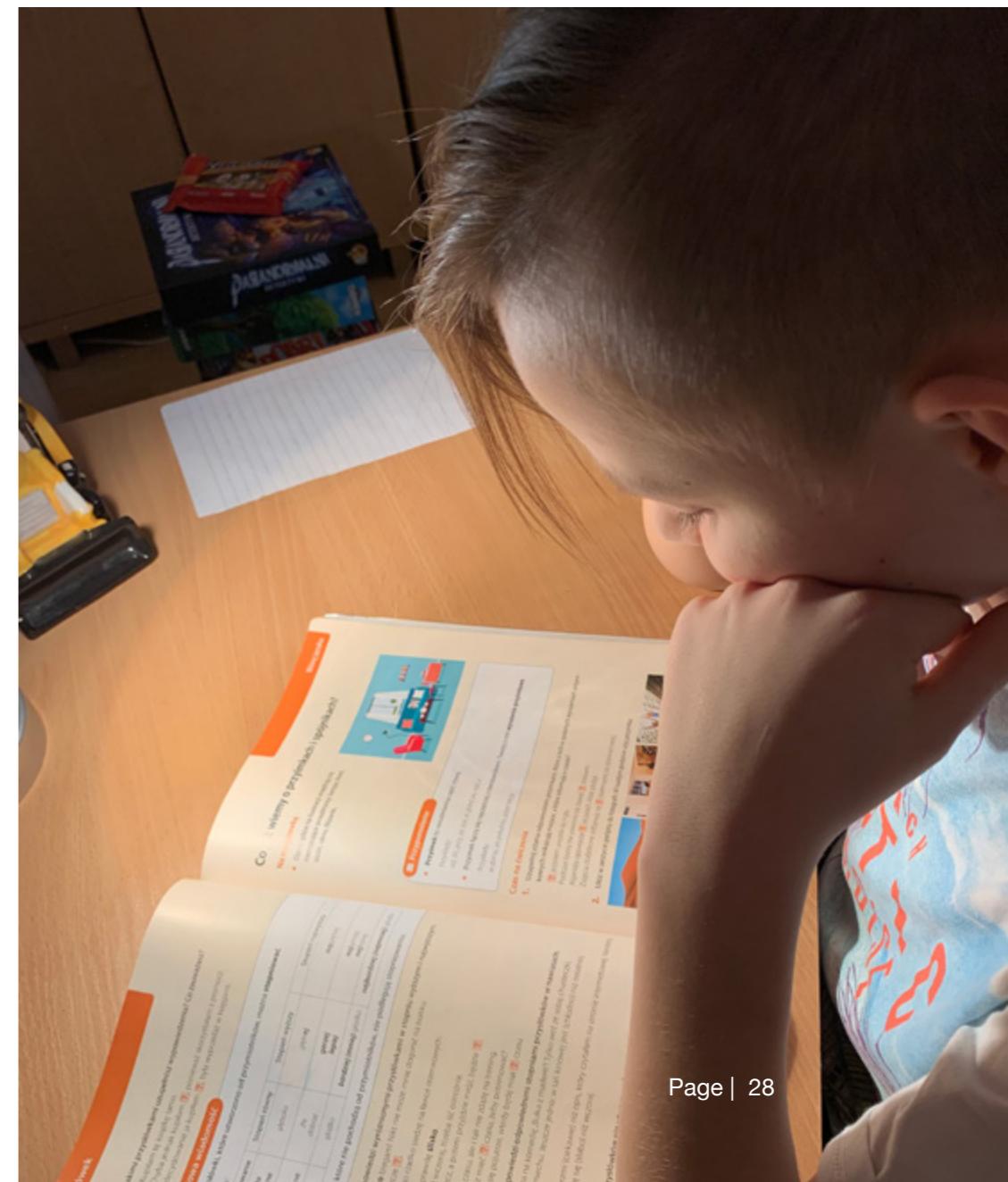
The findings in this report are from the perspectives of an individual in a complementary school. Although the sample of schools reflects a wide range of languages, the survey does not capture the full national picture of remote teaching and school closure. In addition, though some schools consulted families on decisions around learning and teaching, there is scope for schools to develop further opportunities for learners to share their perspectives and take ownership of their learning.

**We recommend that further research is essential to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of families, particularly the learners themselves, and to assess the full impact of the pandemic on community language learners' educational attainment, multilingual skills and life chances.**

The social, cognitive, cultural and economic benefits of bilingualism have been widely documented. If Scotland does not capitalize on the linguistic potential of its citizens it will further limit the workforce of community language teachers, bilingual support assistants and interpreters/translators. Wasting the inherent multilingual resources will have an impact on Scotland's global outlook as we emerge from a COVID-19 dominated world.

## Do you have any questions about this report?

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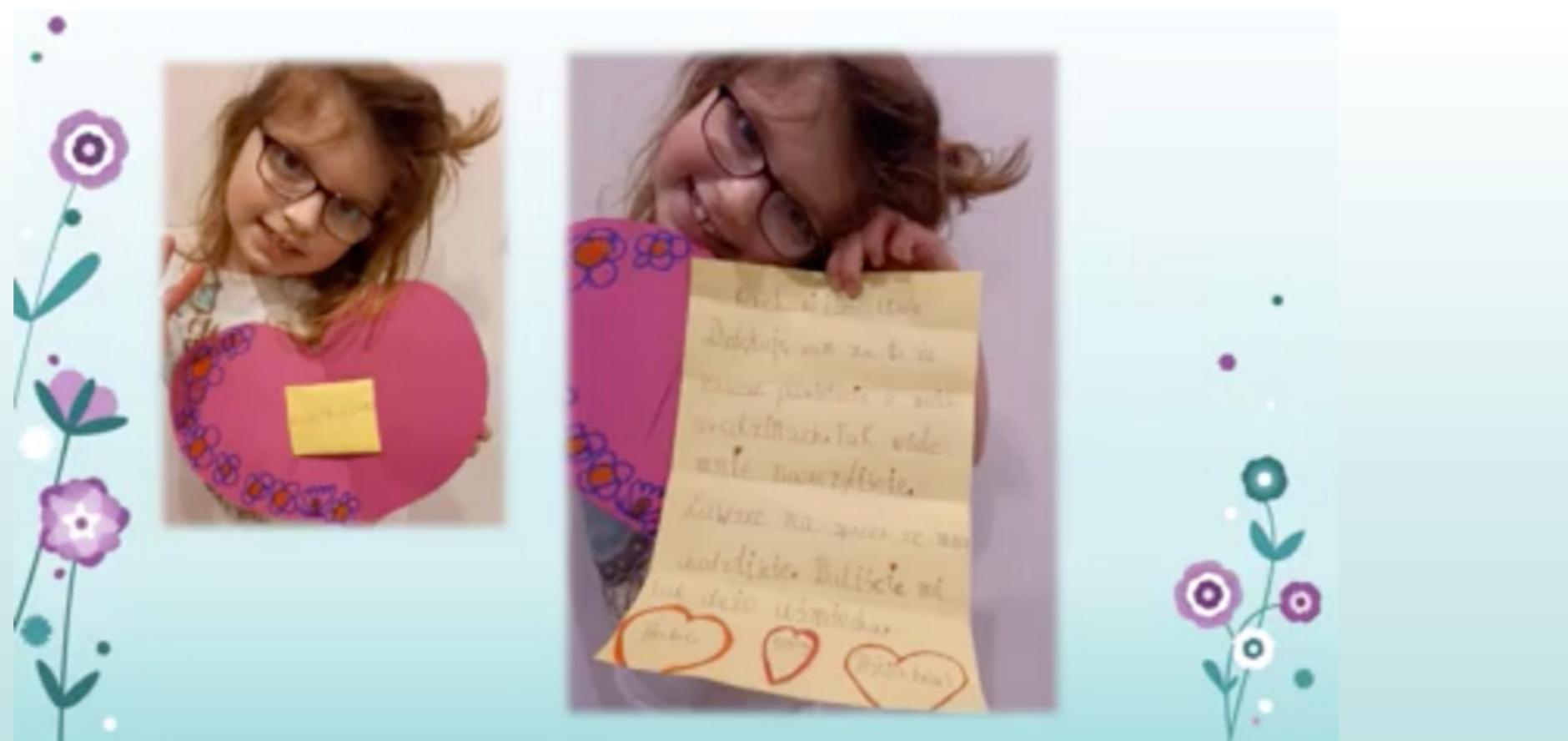
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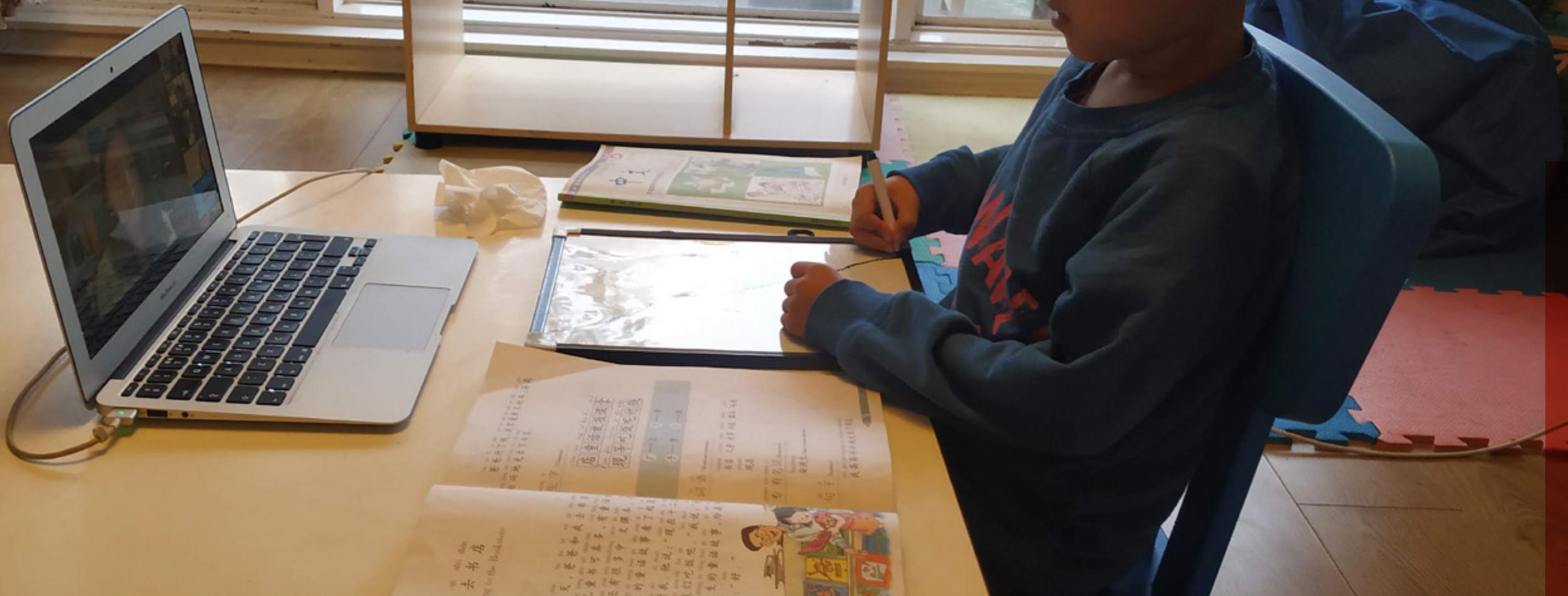
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