Pupil and Parent Voice

NFER Parent Voice Omnibus November 2011 Survey

Science experiments

Gatsby Charitable Foundation

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Introduction

Nine questions were submitted by Gatsby to NFER's Parent Voice Omnibus Survey in November 2011. The questions covered the following topics:

- Importance of regularly carrying out experiments during science lessons and reasons for carrying out science experiments
- Importance of skills in carrying out experiments vs knowledge of scientific concepts
- Time spent on science experiments
- School facilities and funding for science experiments
- Science experiments in the home

This report provides supporting information about the respondents (parents) of the survey and tabulated basic frequencies of the results. This report forms one part of the output from the Omnibus survey. The analysis is also presented in a set of cross-tabulations and a raw data set, both produced separately in Excel.

Supporting information

How was the survey conducted?

These are data from the November 2011 survey, completed by a panel of 1,000 parents of children aged 4-18 who are in school/college/full-time education. The survey was conducted online and parents were asked to complete the questionnaire between 11th November and 21st November 2011.

What was the composition of the panel?

The panel included parents from a good spread of Government Office Regions in England. Forty five per cent of the respondents had children in primary school, 37 per cent had children in secondary school and 17 per cent had children in both primary and secondary schools. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of the panel demographics.

Table 1: Panel demographics		
		% in sample
Gender of parent	Male	37
	Female	62
	No response	1
Age of parent	Under 20	3
	20-29	20
	30-39	33
	40-49	25
	50-59	14
	60 or above	4
Year group of parents' children	Reception (aged 4-5)	17
	Year 1 (aged 5-6)	11
	Year 2 (aged 6-7)	11
	Year 3 (aged 7-8)	13
	Year 4 (aged 8-9)	12
	Year 5 (aged 9-10)	11
	Year 6 (aged 10-11)	10
	Year 7 (aged 11-12)	10
	Year 8 (aged 12-13)	10
	Year 9 (aged 13-14)	10
	Year 10 (aged 14-15)	9
	Year 11 (aged 15-16)	11
	Year 12/first year college/lower six form (aged 16-17)	8
	Year 13/last year college/upper six form (aged 17-18)	11
Government Office Region	East Midlands	9
	East of England	10
	London	21
	North East	5
	North West	13
	South East	9
	South West	9
	West Midlands	10
	Yorkshire and the Humber	11

Due to rounding and multiple responses permitted for 'year group', percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

How representative of parents of school-aged children nationally were the parents corresponding to the parent panel?

The achieved sample of parents formed a representative sample of households across England as defined by the seven major groupings within Educationacorn. Educationacorn is a geo-demographic segmentation and is a classification of census output areas and the postcodes contained within them, designed to discriminate across factors relating to education and school performance[1].

Table 2 shows the representation of the achieved sample against the educationacorn population statistics.

Table 2. Sample representation by Educationacorn categories

Educationacorn category	% Sample*	% Population**
Contextually Challenged	13	12
Deprived Foundations	5	5
Disconnected Neighbourhoods	7	7
Metropolitan Aspirers'	5	5
Educationally Hesitant	33	33
Aspirational Families	23	23
Affluent Establishment	13	13
Unclassified	1	1
N	1000	

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Sources: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011, ** Provided by CACI (Educationacorn) in November 2011, population of 9829589 families in England*

How accurately do the findings represent the national position?

We are confident that the omnibus sample is broadly representative of parents nationally, as defined by Educationacorn, and provides a robust analysis of parents' views.

[1] http://www.caci.co.uk/343.aspx

Tabulated results

Table G1

How important is it to you that your child regularly does experiments during their science lessons in school?	%
Very important	54
Quite important	39
Not very important	3
Not at all important	<1
Not sure	1
Not applicable	2
N =	974

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G2

What do you think is more important for young people to gain at school – skills in carrying out scientific experiments or knowledge of scientific concepts?	%
Both equally important	81
Skills are more important	9
Knowledge is more important	9
Neither is important	<1
Don't know	1
N =	990

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G3

Which, if any, of the following do you think is the most important reason your child should do science experiments?	%
To help them gain practical skills valued by employers	30
To help them gain practical skills needed to study science further	31
To help them enjoy science	36
Other reason	2
Don’t know	<1
No response	<1
N =	956

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G4

How important do you think it is that parents should be informed about the facilities and equipment in school science departments before they make choices about which secondary school their child should attend?	%
Very important	44
Quite important	48
Not very important	6
Not at all important	<1
Not sure	2
N =	980

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G5

Who do you think should be responsible for ensuring that secondary schools have sufficient funding directed at maintaining good quality laboratories and equipment for practical science?	%
The Government	43
Schools	11
Both	45
Don't know	1
N =	989

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G6A

Do you ever do scientific experiments at home with your child?	%
Yes, as part of school homework only	19
Yes, out of interest only	23
Yes, as part of homework and out of interest	30
No	28
No response	<1
N =	956

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G6B

Please explain why you do not do scientific experiments at home with your child.	%
Lack of time	10
My child has never asked to do these with me	5
Don't know what my child is currently studying at school	2
My children does them on their own at home	<1
I don't know what to do or what experiments to do	13
Lack of equipment/resources/facilities	21
Experiments have been part of my child's homework/no science homework	8
The opportunity or need has not arisen	3
Parent is disabled	<1
My child is too old for this to be of value/equipment required is more specialised	3
Parent lacks scientific knowledge/expertise/confidence to do this	11
My child is too young for this	8
Lack of space	<1
Lack of money for equipment/resources	1
Never thought about doing experiments at home	3
My child is not interested in science/not studying science	3
The school never asks/encourages parents to do experiments at home	3
This is not needed/not necessary	4
No reason/Don't know	2
We do other things with my child/child prefers to do other things	<1
Parent is not interested in this	2
Health and safety concerns	5
Child at boarding school/not living with respondent parent	<1
Experiments are/should be done at school	7
Inappropriate for child's age	2
Child has special educational needs	<1
Parent feels they are too old	<1
Other subjects take priority	<1
Child doesn't want parent to be involved or doesn't want to do experiments at home	<1
Other relevant/vague comment	<1
Irrelevant/Uncodeable	2
N =	324

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Parents were able to give up to three reasons.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G7

Which of the following would be most likely to encourage you to try scientific experiments at home with your child or do them more often than at present?	%
Being given a list of recommended experiments designed to be done in the home	61
Experiments being a homework requirement	39
More interest from my child	31
Being given a list of experiments that will engage my child's interest	41
Being given a list of experiments that will engage my interest	10
Evidence that doing the experiments would help my child's science learning	25
Support/encouragement from my child's science teacher(s)	17
If other parents at my child's school were doing this	2
Other (please describe below)	10
Nothing, I would never do it	2
Nothing, I already do enough	3
N =	956

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G7 other

Please explain why you do not do scientific experiments at home with your child.	%
If my child asks or wants to do them	1
Experiments that use equipment/resources that are readily available e.g within the home	4
If my child is studying or interested in or wants to learn more about science	3
Clear/better understanding of the curriculum	<1
Help with cost - cheap experiments or equipment that is available free/cheaply or on loan	4
A list of equipment/resources	<1
Experiments that are quick to do	<1
Having access to better/more specialised equipment	<1
Having access to the required equipment/resources generally	9
Increased availability of science education toys/kits	1
No mess	<1
Ideas for experiments	1
More/Information/guidance/instructions, from school or elsewhere	9
Experiments that are interesting/fun/enjoyable to do	4
Experiments that are relevant to the real world	2
Easy/simple experiments to do	4
Experiments that are safe/Assurance about safety of activities	3
Doing experiments is part of good parenting	<1
If it is for my child's progress/learning/future	4
Guidance on the curriculum and experiments that are relevant to the curriculum/child's work in school	2
Practice/experience/training in doing experiments with my children	1
Having time	4
Experiments that work	<1

Encouragement/prompting/incentive for me to do this	2
Experiments that family members can participate in/learn from together	1
Information/experiments that are related to the age of my child	<1
Parent feels they lack knowledge	1
Home experiments are part of good parenting or dependent on level of education/interests of the parent	<1
Equipment/resources supplied by the school	2
A web site or other digital/media resource about science experiments in the home	3
After school club or Parents evening to provide information or demonstrations for parents	<1
Funding from science based companies	<1
School being proactive in encouraging/involving/informing parents	<1
Space to do the experiments	<1
Experiments that link with scientific facts	<1
Homework or more home work generally	1
Response already covered by response given to G7	4
Another option from the list in G7, in addition to 3 already selected	2
Nothing else/Not applicable	7
Not sure	3
Other relevant/vague comment	7
Irrelevant/Uncodeable	5
N =	692

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Parents were able to give up to three reasons.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.

Table G8

In your opinion, how much time does your child spend carrying out experiment in their science lessons?	%
Too much time	3
The right amount of time	34
Too little time	25
None	2
I don't know how much time my child actually spends carrying out experiments in science lessons	32
I don't know how much time my child actually spends carrying out experiments but cannot judge whether or not this is the right amount	3
No response	1
N =	956

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Parent Omnibus Survey November 2011.