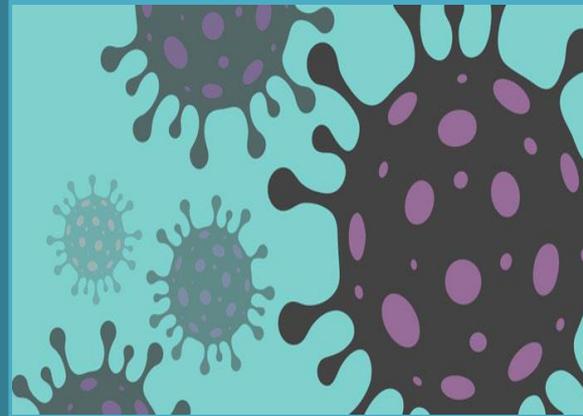




# School Completion Programme Dublin 1 & 7

Covid-19 Impact Survey

Colette Moran



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# Introduction



## Covid-19 Impact Survey

It is indisputable that the Covid-19 school closures and subsequent lockdown will have a significant impact on young people in Ireland. Children have missed many significant milestones including communions, confirmations and graduations. This period has been particularly difficult for children who are transitioning from primary to secondary level education as they have missed the rites of passage typically associated with this transition. However, it is unfair to assume that any transition young people face is entirely negative, and as the results have shown, many students have been able to identify both positive and negative experiences as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions.

At the School Completion Programme we strive to help meet the needs of the young people we engage with. In order to do this effectively, we need to understand what these needs are, and this was why the Covid-19 impact survey was created. It is hoped that the results of the survey will help the School Completion Programme staff team in the development of our Covid-19 transition workshop which we will be developing throughout the summer holidays and will hopefully roll out in schools in the new academic school year. The results obtained from the survey contain a snapshot of the feelings of young people around school closures during the Covid-19 lockdown and will help to inform our understanding of their experiences as we develop the programme.

Data collection on the survey took place from the middle of May until the middle of June 2020. The survey received a total of 85 responses, which represent 6 of the 9 schools in our Dublin 1 & 7 cluster. The responses received are from 5 primary schools and 1 secondary school in the area. Please note that any reference to class group throughout this report refers to the class group of respondents for the academic year 2019/2020, meaning 6<sup>th</sup> class respondents will be entering secondary school in September. All responses have been anonymised for this report. The findings are presented question by question, with some additional commentary expanding on the responses given by students. Themes which emerge are also highlighted. One of the primary themes identified were how many of the students missed face-to-face learning and were eager to return to school. Another theme was how students felt they had more time when in lockdown, and they reported enjoying spending this time with family, getting more sleep and exercising. It is important to note the range of responses received. For some students, doing schoolwork online was a difficult experience and some students reported feeling that they were struggling with

completing their school work and with their mental health. Other students have reported that they prefer online learning, have adapted well, and are enjoying having more time to engage with their hobbies.

A selection of student quotes has been presented as the final section in the report. Please note these quotes are unedited and remain in their original form.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the schools who distributed the survey amongst their students and encouraged them to take part. It is hoped the findings may also be beneficial to staff care teams as they plan for their students return to school.

Many thanks also to each and every student who took the time to share their experiences with us. It has helped guide us and our work in supporting our young people through this challenging time, and will allow us to hopefully represent your views in a meaningful way in our finished programme.

# Survey Questions



## 2. Survey Questions

- ? How do you feel about school being closed?
- ? What is good about it?
- ? What are the challenges?
- ? How well are you adapting to online learning?
- ? How are you keeping in touch with your friends?
- ? What are you enjoying?
- ? What are you missing?
- ? How are you looking after your mental health?
- ? What have you learnt from this?
- ? Is there anything else you would like to add?

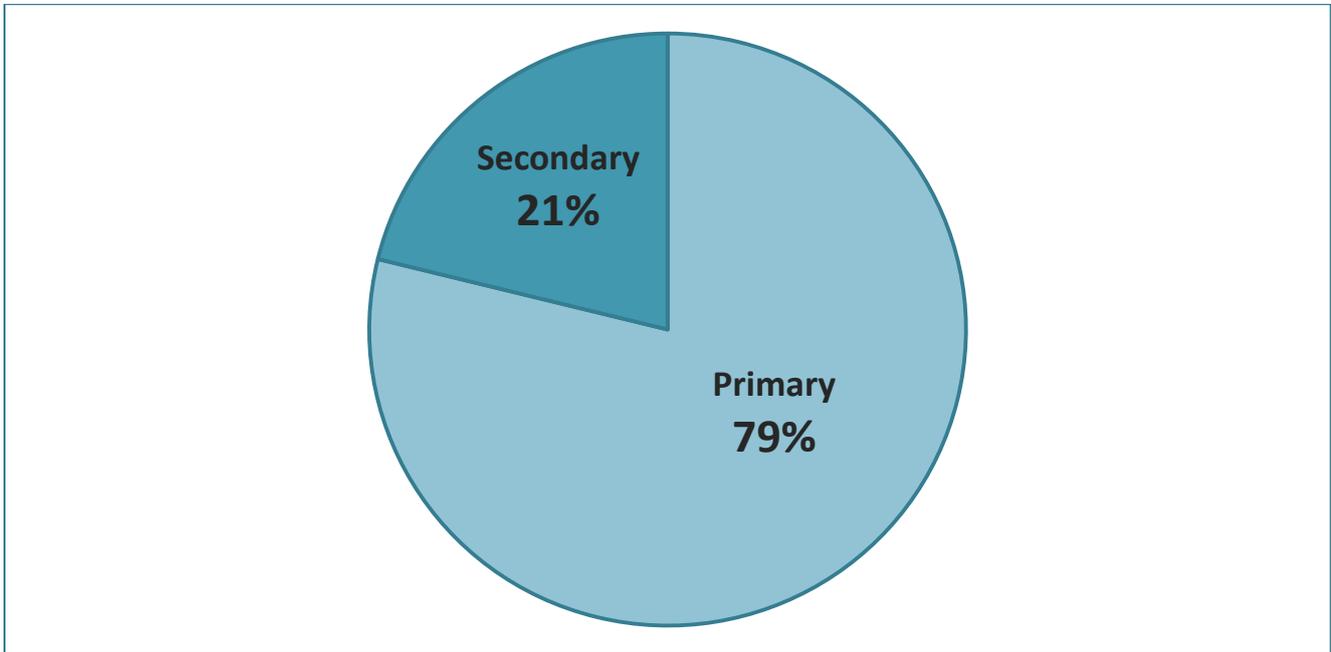
# Response Overview



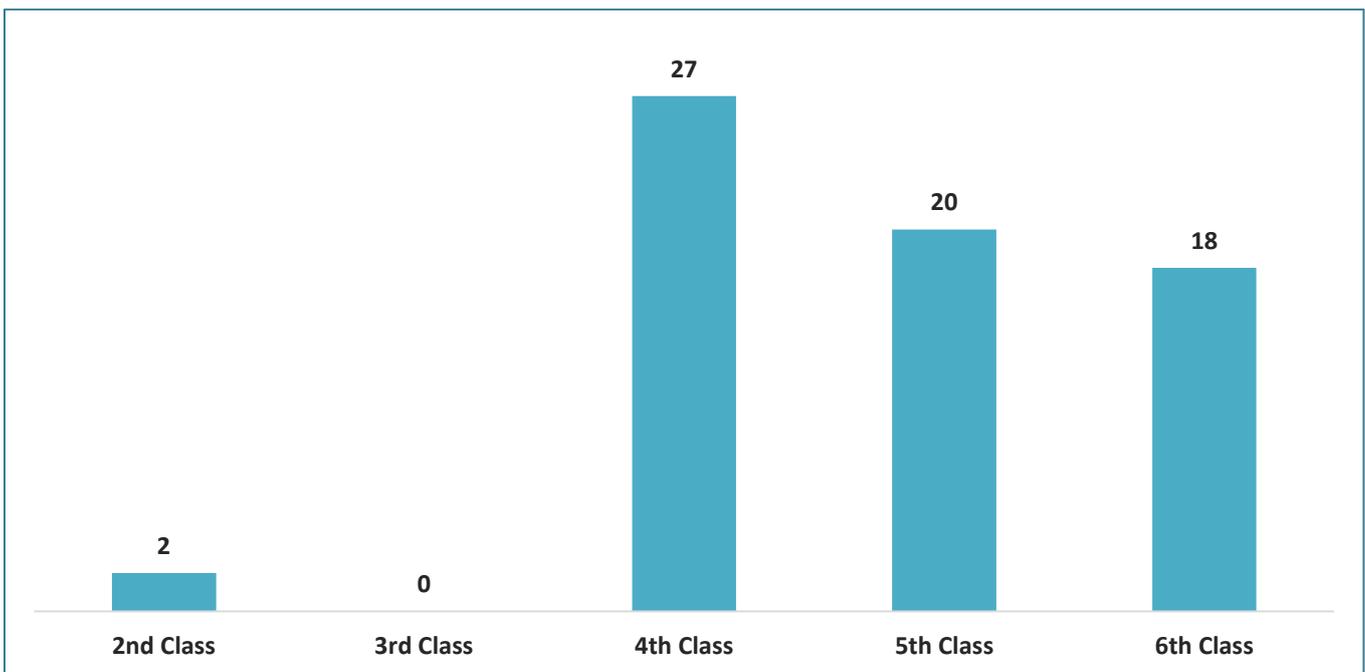
### 3. Response Overview

The information in this report is based on a total of 85 survey responses.

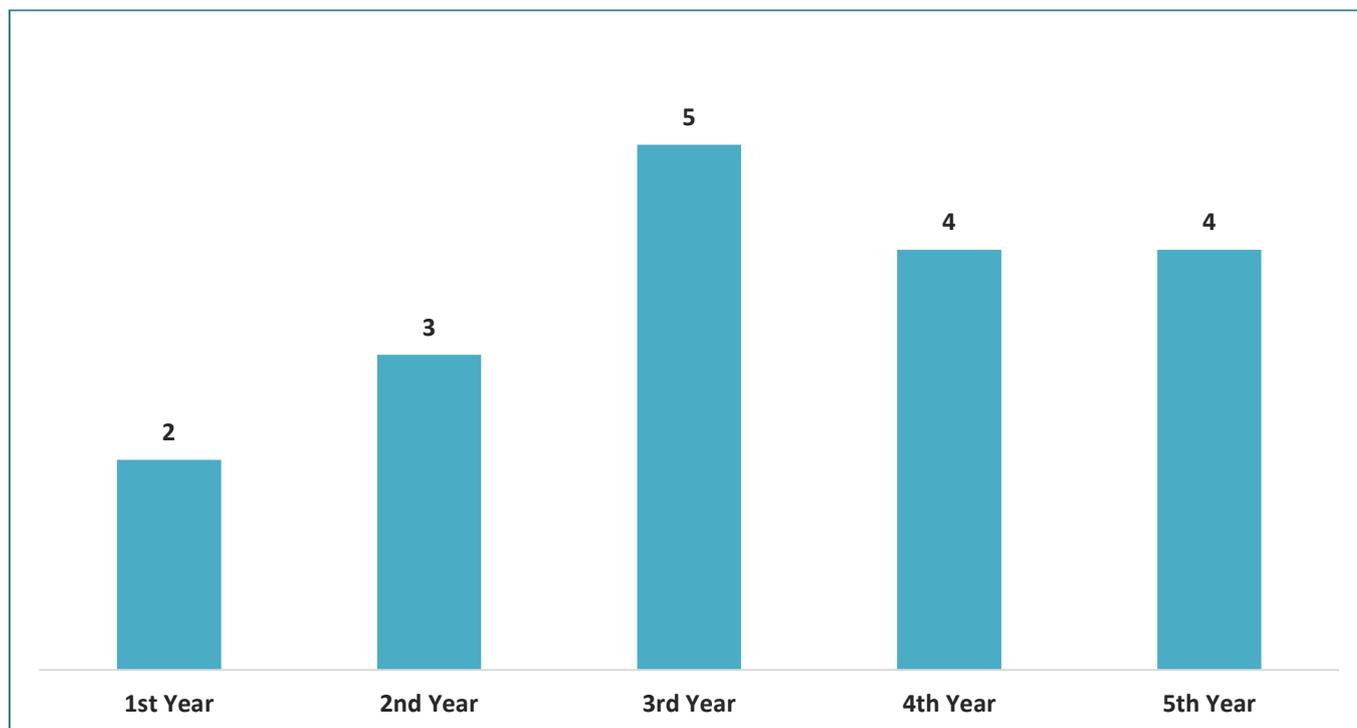
Breakdown of responses across education level:



Breakdown of primary school responses by class group:



## Breakdown of secondary level responses by class group:

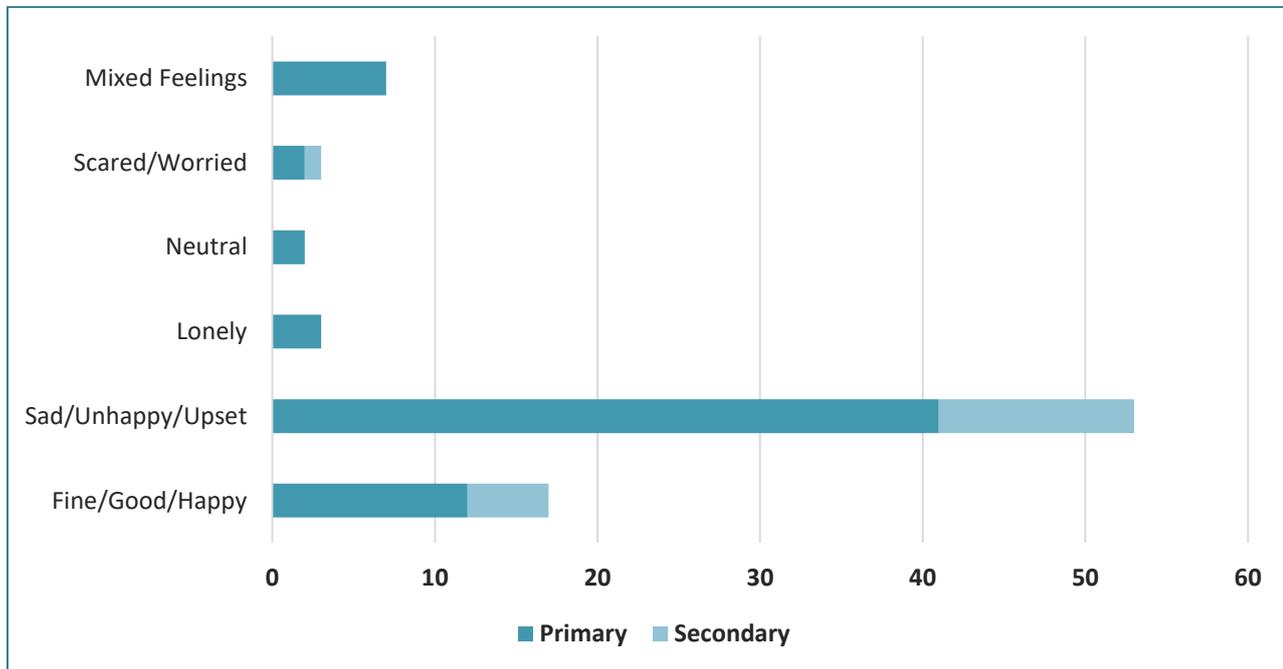


# Overall Findings



## 4.1 Question 1:

### How do you feel about school being closed?

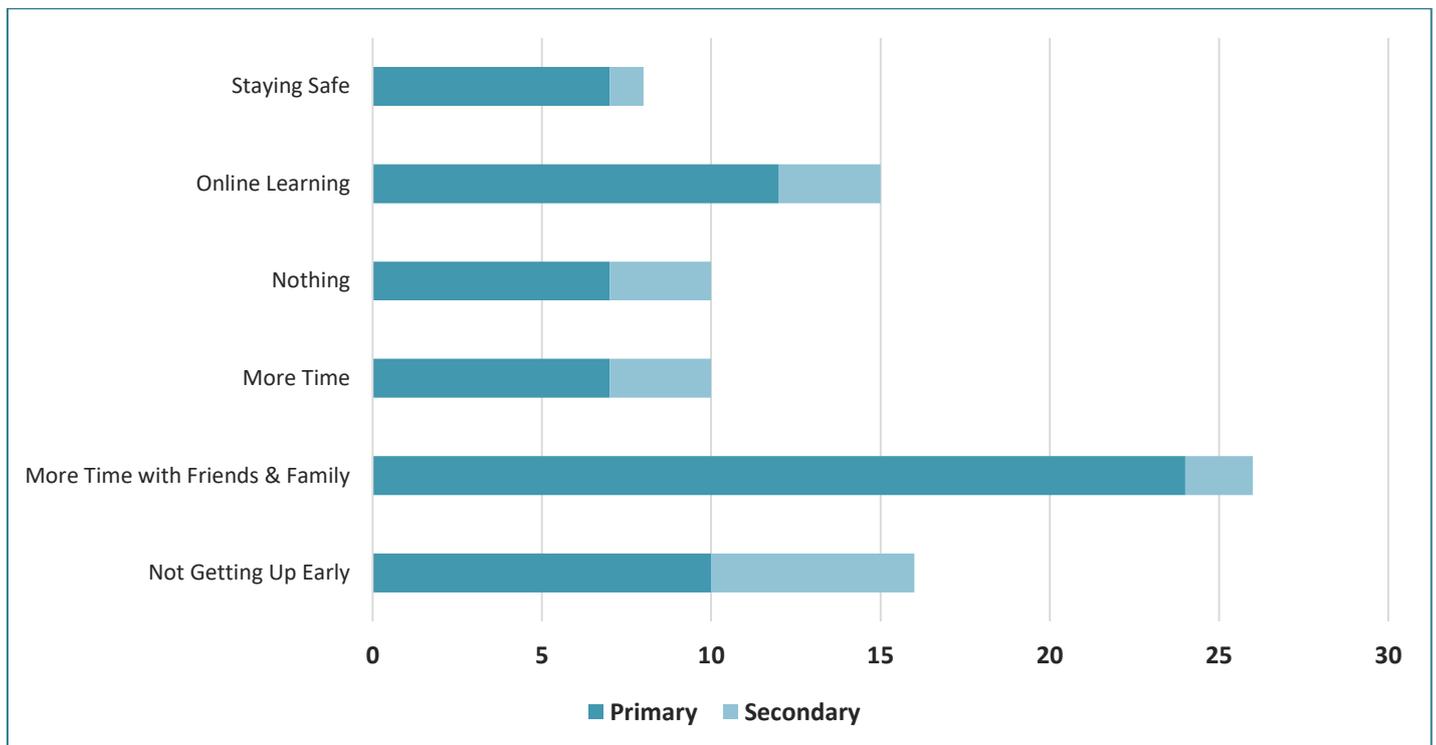


A majority of students for both primary and secondary school reported feeling negatively about the school closure, and described feeling unhappy/upset or sad about no longer being able to attend school. Other primary students specifically wrote about feeling scared/worried or lonely about the school closures. A small number of students reported feeling neutral about the school closures, with another small group of respondents reporting having mixed feelings around the closures.

It is worth noting these responses are a snapshot, and it is likely student's feelings around the school closures varied over time.

## 4.2 Question 2:

### What is good about it?



Thirty-six students referred to the increased amount of free time they now had as a positive element of the school closures and Covid-19 lockdown. Ten responses referred to more time in general, and a further twenty-six referred to an increased amount of time to spend with friends and/or family.

Sixteen students mentioned not having to get up as early as a positive outcome of the school closures. Other students mentioned being able to do school work in their pyjamas or not having to wear their school uniform as a positive outcome.

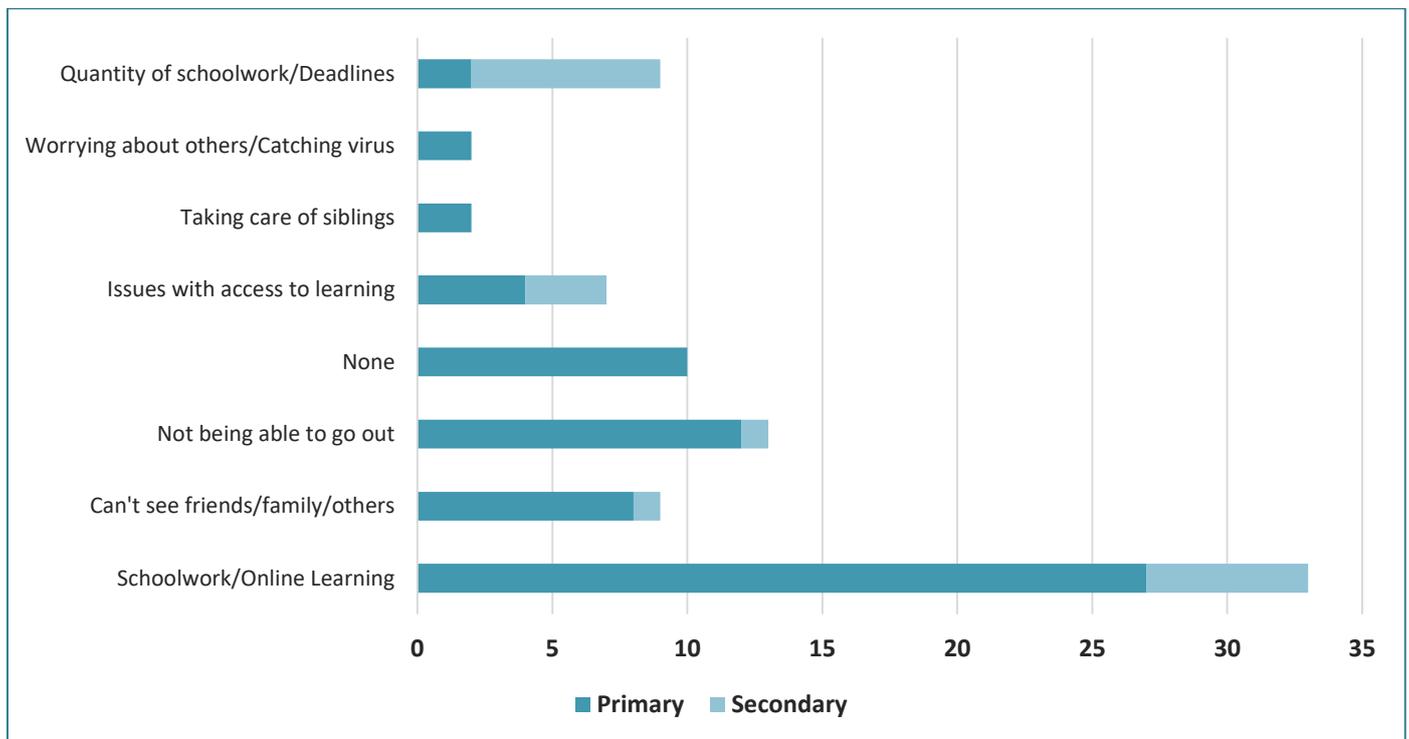
Fifteen students mentioned that they were glad to still be engaged with school in some way through online learning, and mentioned being able to learn at their own pace and still being able to communicate regularly with their teachers and peers as a positive element of the school closures.

Eight students reported that what they felt was good about the school closures were ensuring everyone's safety by staying home and following the safety guidelines.

Ten students could not identify any positive elements of the school closures and Covid-19 restrictions.

## 4.3 Question 3:

### What are the challenges?



Nine students reported feeling pressured by the quantity of schoolwork they were receiving, or that they were struggling to meet deadlines in relation to their schoolwork. This was a more common response among secondary students, with seven of the eighteen students in secondary school referring to the quantity of their school work as a challenge.

Two students mentioned having to take care of younger siblings while their parents were working as a challenge to being able to engage with online learning. A further seven students identified issues with accessing online schooling which included not having internet access and not having appropriate devices.

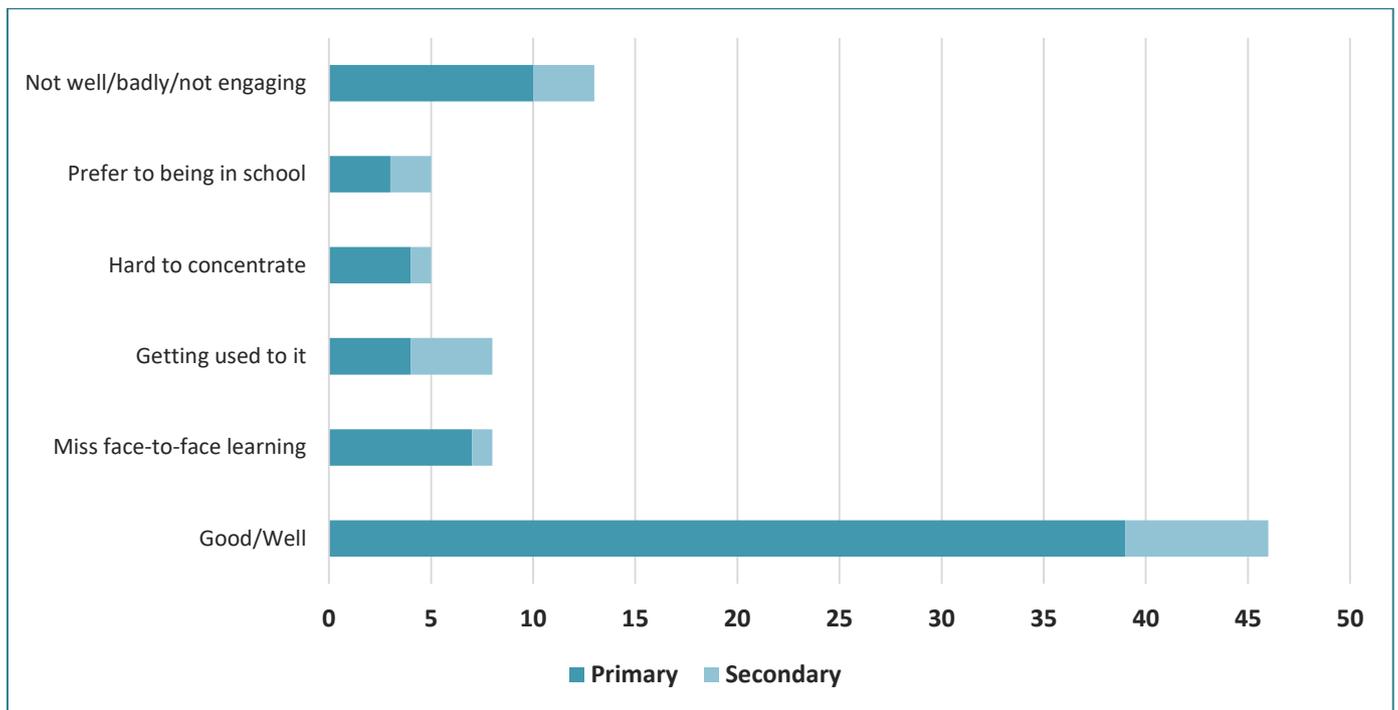
Thirteen students felt having to stay inside during the lockdown was a challenge, while a further nine students felt not being able to see friends and family was the biggest challenge. Some students mentioned missing friends or family members who were overseas.

A large number of respondents, thirty-three students, felt that online learning was the biggest challenge during the school closures. Students reported missing face-to-face learning, being able to ask their

teachers questions in person and having the company and support of their peers. Students reported that the lack of routine and finding the motivation to stay engaged as challenges during this time.

## 4.4 Question 4:

### How well are you adapting to online learning?



Thirteen students, ten in primary and three in secondary, reported that they were not doing well with online learning, and felt it was going badly, with some students admitting they had stopped engaging with online learning as they had found it too difficult.

Five students reported that they preferred online learning to being in school and wished they could continue on with online learning even when school resumed. It is interesting to note the contrast in responses, with some students admitting they struggled with online learning and other students reporting they preferred it.

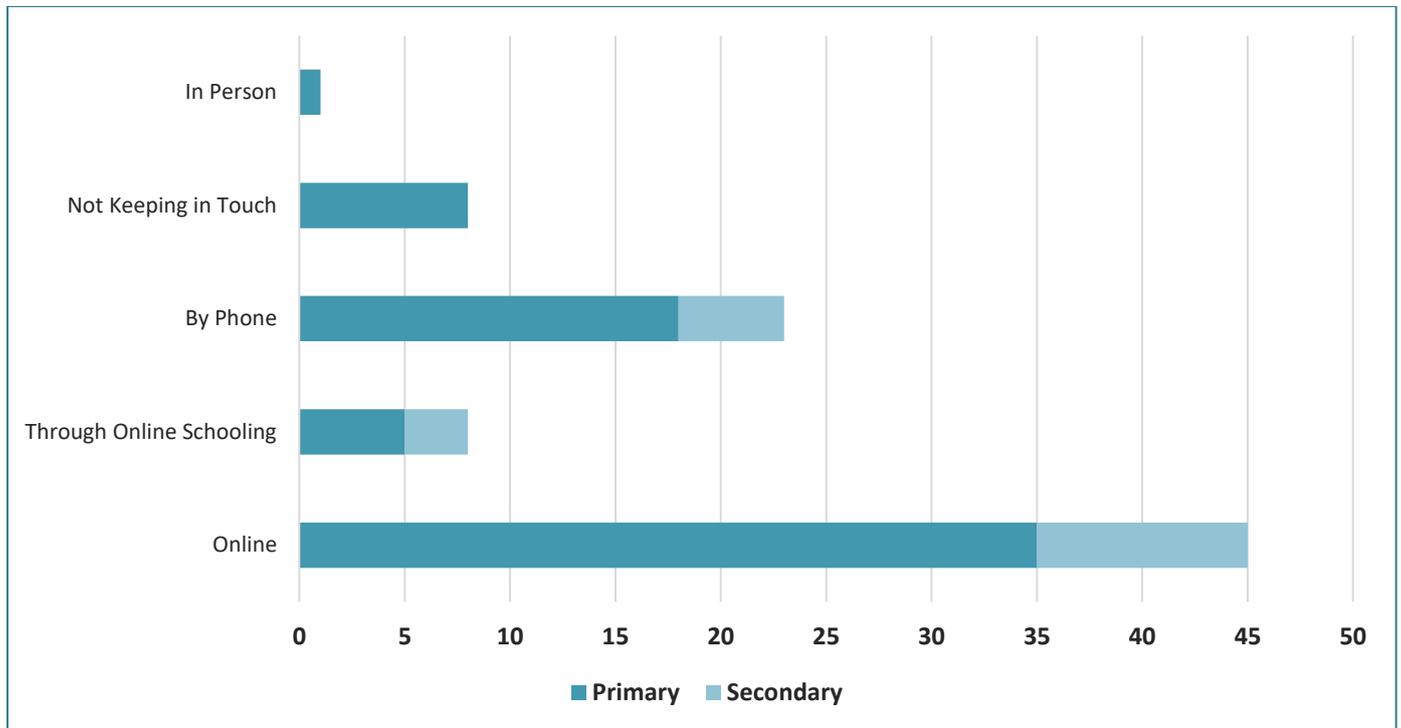
Five students reported that they were finding it hard to concentrate on their schoolwork while doing it from home, and that staying motivated to complete tasks was also a challenge.

Eight students reported that it had been difficult in the beginning, but that now they were getting used to it they were finding it easier. A further eight students replied that they missed being in a school environment, specifically mentioning missing support from their teacher and their classmates.

Forty-six students reported that they were doing good or well with the transition to online learning. Children have had to adapt quickly to the change in their schooling, and many seem to have done this quite well. It does appear that there are a number of students who may have found it difficult to engage with online learning who may be in need of support when school resumes to prevent them falling behind their peers. As students have adapted to their temporary normal of learning online during the Covid-19 restrictions, they will also need support as they transition back to education, particularly after such a long time being out of school.

## 4.5 Question 5:

### How are you keeping in touch with friends?



The majority of students reported keeping in touch with their friends through online communication. The ways in which they reported keeping in touch online included through Roblox, PS4, Instagram, Whatsapp, video calls, X-Box, Fortnite, Snapchat and Skype.

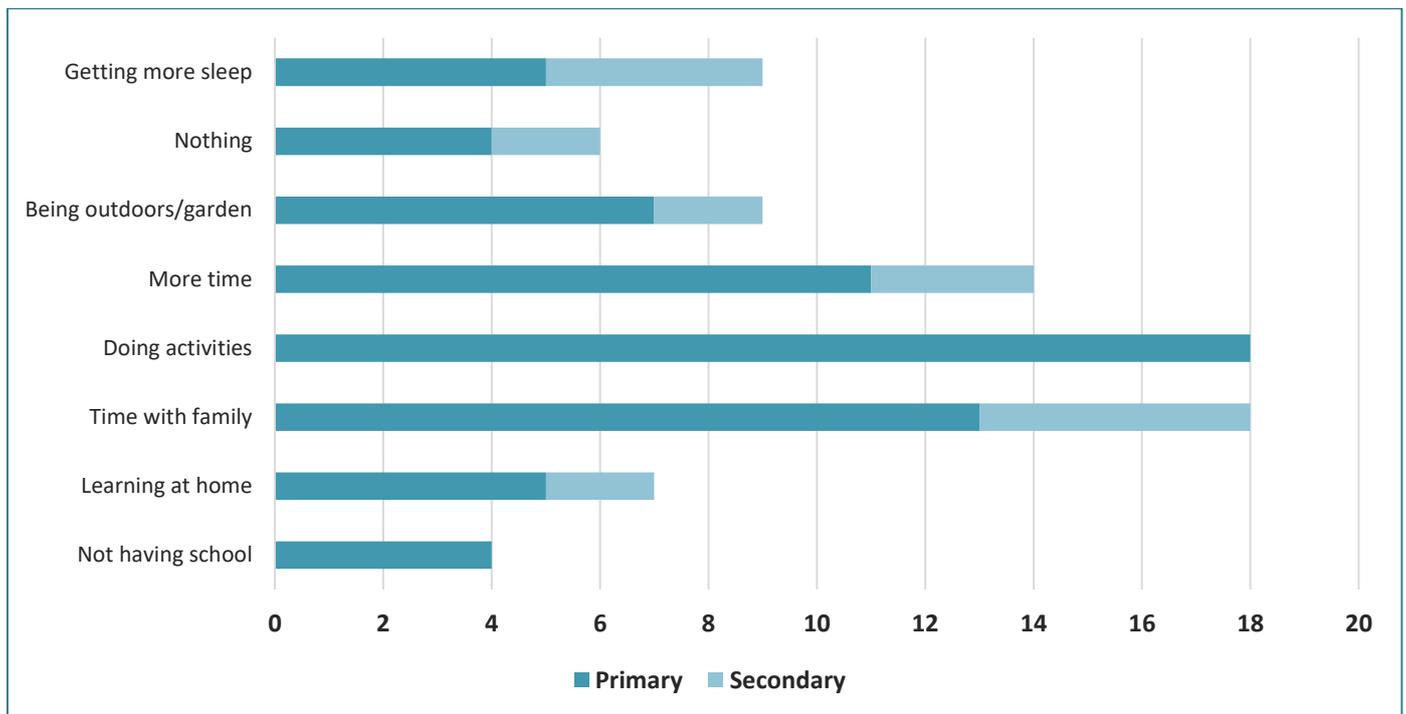
Twenty-three students reported they were keeping in touch with their friends by phone, through either phone calls or text messages.

An interesting response was that for eight students, their only means of keeping in touch with friends was through taking part in online learning sessions. Presumably, when online school finished for the summer these students will no longer be able to keep in touch with their friends.

Eight students reported that they were already not keeping in touch with their friends. It was unclear from the responses whether this was due to not having the tools to be able to do so, or because they did not want to.

## 4.6 Question 6:

### What are you enjoying?



Nine students reported they were enjoying getting more sleep as a result of the school closures and Covid-19 restrictions.

Six students reported there was nothing they were enjoying about the current situation.

Nine students mentioned enjoying being able to go for walks outside or be in their garden as something they were enjoying, with some students mentioning the nice weather as something that had made staying home more enjoyable.

Fourteen students reported they were enjoying having more time, this was a recurring theme through several questions on the survey for many of the students.

Eighteen students reported they were enjoying being able to do activities while they were at home. The activities they mentioned included baking, cooking, cycling, drawing, writing, art, reading, playing online games, and watching TV. Some students reported taking up new activities during the lockdown also.

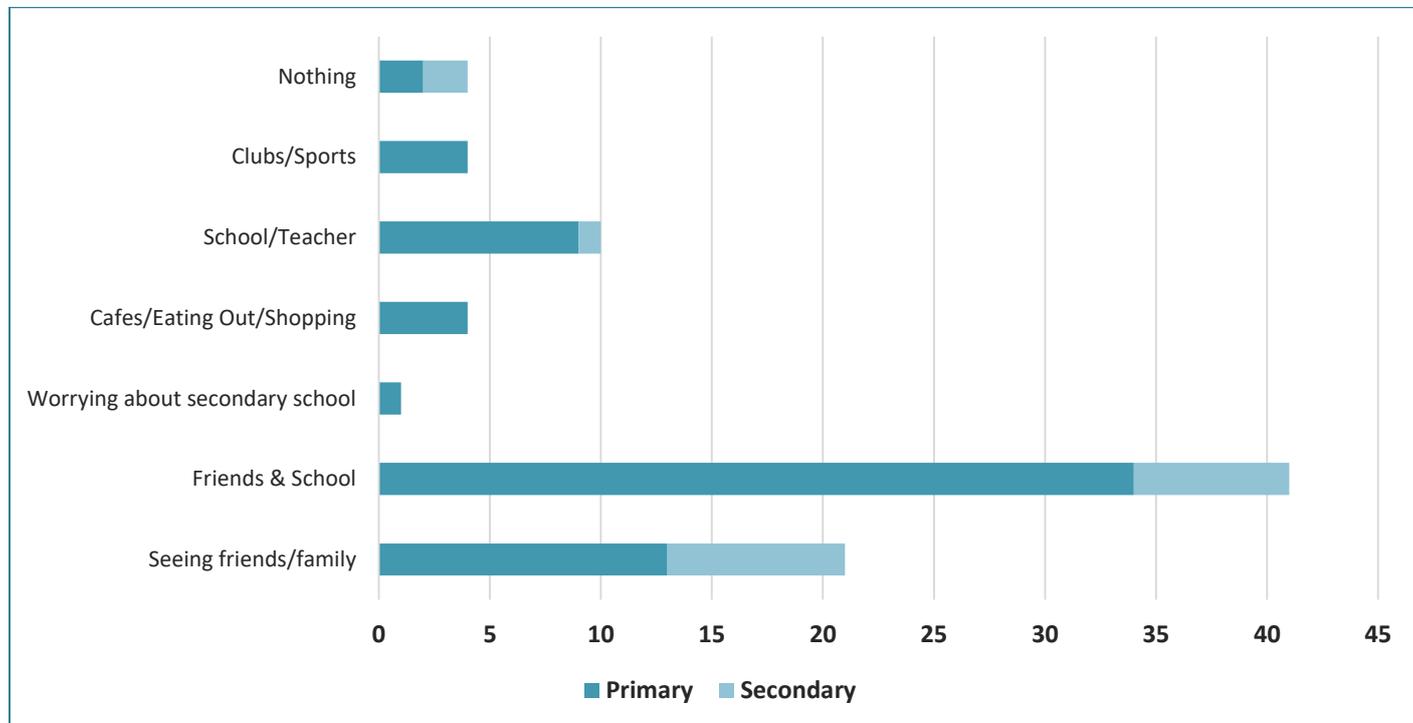
Eighteen students mentioned having more time to spend with their families as something they were enjoying about the Covid-19 restrictions. This was again a theme throughout the survey responses. Students mentioned taking part in activities with their families such as cooking together, going walking together and playing games together. Students also mentioned enjoying having more time to talk to their families than they usually would.

Seven students reported they were enjoying learning online, mentioning being able to work from bed, while in pyjamas and at their own pace as elements they were enjoying.

Four students reported that not having to go to school had been an enjoyable experience during the lockdown.

## 4.7 Question 7:

### What are you missing?



Four students reported they were missing their clubs and mentioned yoga, swimming, basketball and football clubs in their replies.

Ten students reported missing their school, with several saying they also missed their teacher. Two students mentioned missing their favourite subject also, which was art in both cases.

Four students reported missing being able to visit cafés, eat out or go shopping during the lockdown. Some of the responses expressed a worry about not knowing when they would be able to do these activities again.

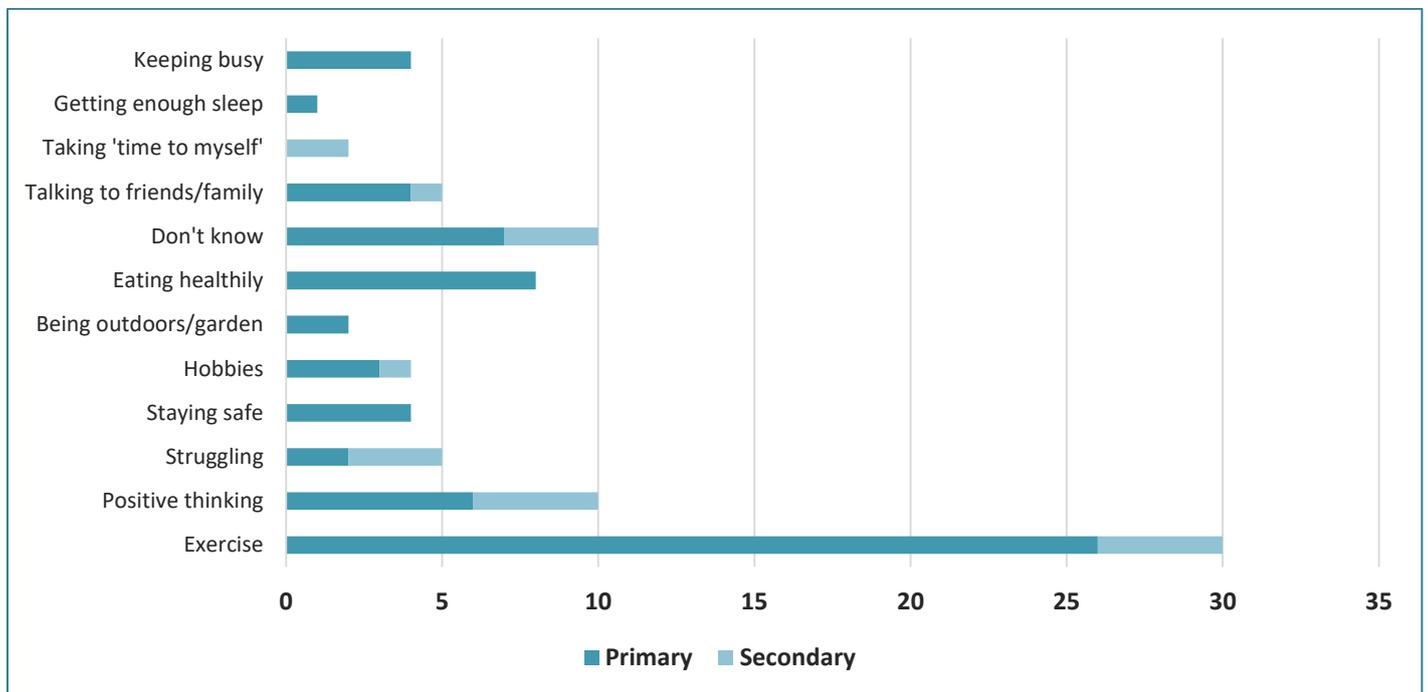
One student reported feeling worried about starting secondary school after all of the time off from school. It is expected the transition to secondary school may be more difficult for some students this year due to the impact of school closures and missing their traditional rites of passage, such as graduating from primary school and getting to say goodbye to their classmates in person.

Forty-one students reported missing their friends and school.

A further twenty-one students reported missing their friends, and their extended families. Some students mentioned missing friends and families who were living overseas.

## 4.8 Question 8:

### How are you looking after your mental health?



Four students responded that keeping busy had been how they had been looking after their mental health during the lockdown. There was no elaboration in any of the responses on how the students were keeping busy.

One student responded they were minding their mental health through getting enough sleep.

Two students responded they had been looking after their mental health by making sure they had time to themselves when they could.

Five students responded that speaking to friends or family when they were finding it hard was how they were looking after their mental health. Some of these responses mentioned older siblings had been a source of support during the lockdown for their younger siblings.

Ten students reported they were not doing anything specific, or did not know, when asked how they were looking after their mental health.

Eight students were looking after their mental health through eating healthily, and some also mentioned becoming more involved in preparing healthy meals with their families during the lockdown.

Two students were looking after their mental health by spending time outdoors or in their garden when they could.

Four students referred to their hobbies as a way of looking after their mental health. These responses mentioned reading comics and books, listening to music, and learning to play an instrument as their hobbies that had helped them during the lockdown.

Four students referred to staying indoors and following the Covid-19 rules, including washing their hands regularly, as a way of looking after their mental health.

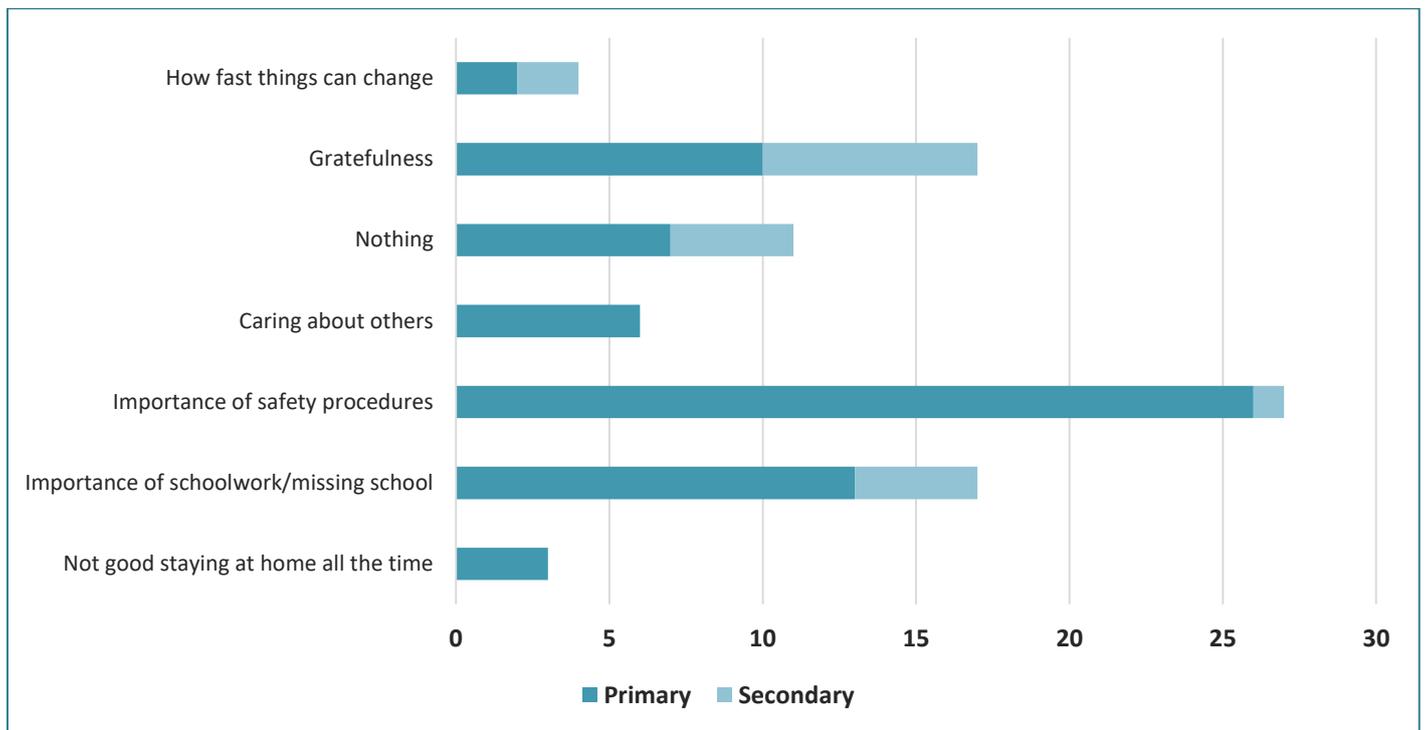
Five students mentioned they felt they were struggling with their mental health during the lockdown. One student reported not coping as well as they had thought they would, while another reported dealing with an illness during the lockdown and how this had negatively impacted their mental health.

Ten students referred to positive thinking as a way of looking after their mental health. Some students mentioned using apps such as Headspace to help them stay grounded.

Thirty students reported that exercise was how they had been looking after their mental health. Many forms of exercise were mentioned by respondents including cycling, dancing, yoga, walking and football.

## 4.9 Question 9:

### What have you learnt from this?



Four students reported that what they had learnt from this experience was how quickly things can change. Some of the students also mentioned feeling a need to be prepared in case a similar situation were to happen again in the future.

Seventeen students reported that they had learnt to be more grateful as a result of this experience. Students mentioned feeling a need to cherish every moment, and not take things for granted as they moved forward from this experience. Some students specifically mentioned being grateful for their family and/or their friends also.

Eleven students reported that there was nothing they had learnt from this experience. This response was in most cases linked to students who had reported struggling with learning online.

Four students reported they had learnt to be caring towards others during this experience. The responses mentioned being more patient and kind towards others.

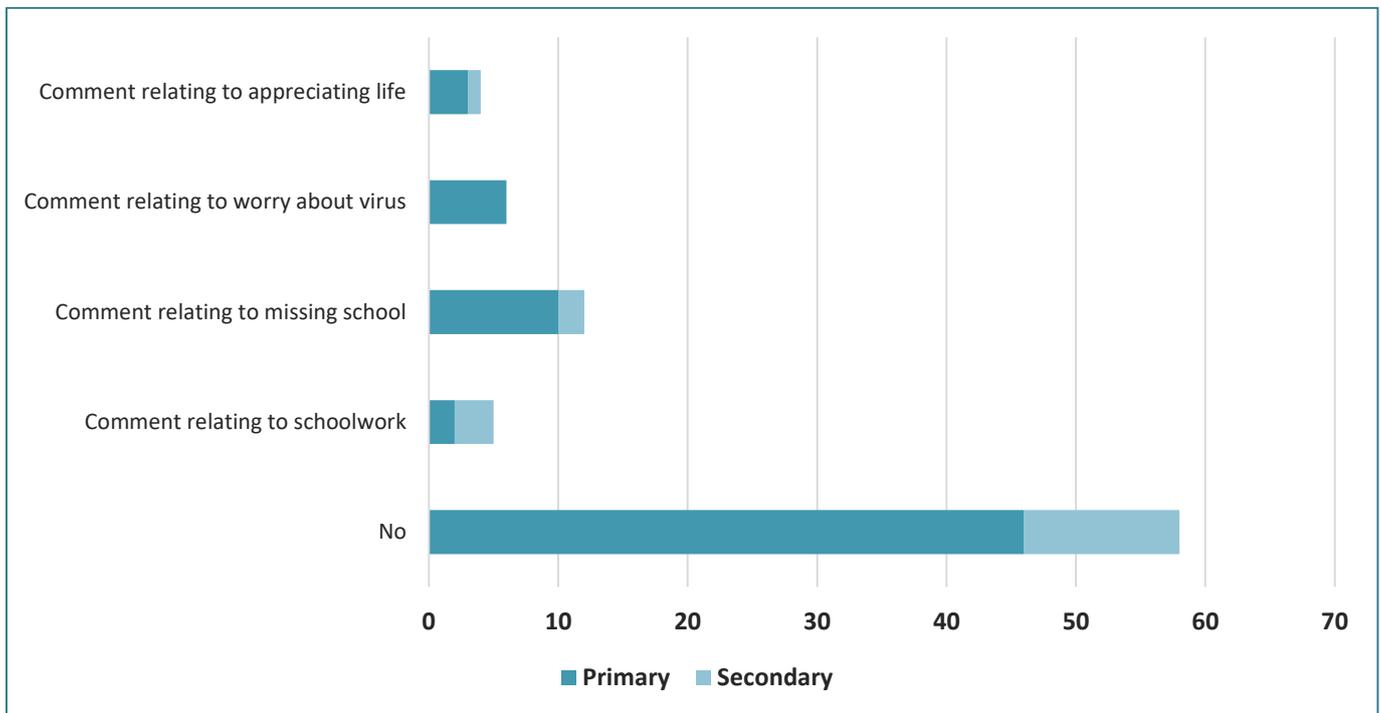
Twenty-seven students reported that they had learnt how important following the safety procedures is during this experience. Some students reported feeling unsettled or angry when they saw other people not following the safety guidelines, with some responses asking for more to be done to stop people breaking the rules. Some students mentioned feeling worried about themselves or someone close to them becoming ill with the virus.

Seventeen students felt they had learned how important school was from this experience. Students reported they felt they now understood how important school work was. Others reported missing the school environment, and being excited about returning to school and being able to see their teachers, principals and classmates again.

Three students reported that what they had learnt from this experience was that although they thought it would be fun to be at home all the time, this was actually not the case, and they had learned that it was not good for people to be at home all of the time.

## 4.10 Question 10:

### Is there anything else you would like to add?



The majority of students did not have anything to add when completing the survey, however for the students who did provide additional comments, four key themes emerged.

The first were comments surrounding schoolwork. These responses mentioned realisations about the importance of schoolwork, and also how difficult it had been for some students completing work from home without the help of their teachers.

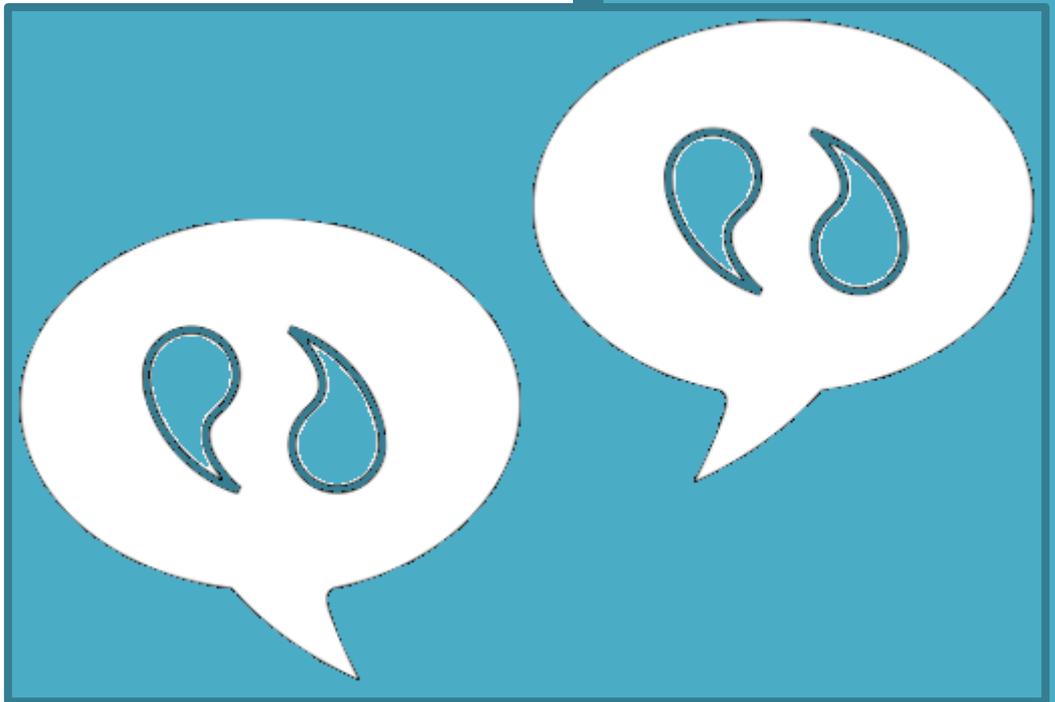
The second were comments relating to missing school. Many comments mentioned feeling excited about being able to return to school, and also worries about when this would happen. Many students expressed they had missed school more than they initially thought they would and would be very happy when things returned to normal. Students mentioned missing the fun parts of school, their classmates, teachers and principals.

The third theme was around worries relating to the virus. Some students expressed they were still worried about themselves or their friends or family members catching the virus. Other comments referred to the

importance of everyone following the rules in order to keep everyone safe. Some comments stressed the importance of following the rules as this was the quickest way to have everything return to normal.

The final theme that emerged from the additional comments related to appreciating life. Some students expressed they wanted to try new experiences when things returned to normal. Other comments mentioned being grateful for family members and friends and the importance of cherishing every moment and making the most of our time.

# Student Quotes



I do P.E with joe every day.

That I am not alone, I should be courageous and hopeful. I know that many people love me and I am sorry to miss them.

I miss everything that I used to do and I can't wait for everything to go back to normal.

I hope we get back to school soon

That family and friends matter more then things

Make sure u spend time with the ppl u love and care about because u don't know if u can't c them again

I Learnt to be patient, kind, grateful

I am missing my school, my friends and my teacher, and the principal.

my mam is not sure to help me with maths sometimes

I feel like now that the school is closed down I won't learn enough and I will fall behind in education

I really love the epic account that sir signed us up to. It's really fun and entertaining. I've been reading loads of comics on it. I like all the drawing tutorials that sir sends us too

We excercise alot my mam and brother always ask am I ok

I'd like if I could continue to do all my work on my laptop even when the school opens again

I'm disappointed because I don't get to see my friends, and also it is my last year in primary school and I won't get to do a graduation, and see everyone on the final day.

I miss doing art and seeing my friends

It is good because you can make your own routine.

I have learned to do my homework before doing fun stuff as it will leave me free for the day.

I am still concerned about the front line staff. I am also curious about the earth and climate change

I am missing my friends and my teacher a lot

It's not good staying at home even if I like it

I'm missing a lot of learning and for us in 6th we're not that prepared for secondary.

We need to be prepared for this type of situation as long we think of "we" and not "me" we should do this together and not alone a whole load of people are suffering and we should be sorry for them since it's not their fault and also we should be grateful that we have everything we need to take care of ourselves while a good few people don't have the stuff they need!

stressing a lot about  
the leaving cert

Connection problems, finding  
motivation to do work, no routine,  
chaotic homes and no calm to do  
homework in

Seeing my friends in school  
and doing work at school - it's  
easier to do work in a school  
environment than at home

It's very challenging but I  
try to do a little bit of  
yoga or dancing to keep  
me grounded

Appreciate the little things  
in life and also there is  
nothing quite like freedom

I'm missing my friends. They  
stayed with me for the whole  
school day but now I don't talk to most  
of them. I'm missing my work  
experience and school trips.

That things can all  
just change very  
quickly

Never take the memories  
I have for granted and to  
treasure every moment.