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THE SCHOOL TRIP REALITY REPORT

Teachers' experiences of workload, affordability and access.

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The School Trip Reality Report 2026

Teachers' experiences of workload, affordability and access.

School trips improve pupils' outcomes. The challenge is making them easier to run (and easier for every pupil to access).

Executive summary

With the introduction of the new Ofsted Enrichment Framework, schools are under increasing pressure to provide a strong enrichment offer. At the same time, many teachers were telling us that it was becoming more and more difficult to plan such trips. We wanted to investigate this further and explore how we could provide further support for teachers planning school trips.

Between 22nd April 2026 and 29th June 2026, Halsbury Travel, IBT Travel and Skern Adventure ran a survey of their customers to learn more about the reality of school trip planning for teachers in 2026.

The findings were clear. 85% of respondents agreed that school trips improve pupils' outcomes, while 73% say they're getting harder to run each year. Workload, affordability and access explain the pressure.

Teachers aren't questioning the case for school trips. They're trying to protect those experiences while managing a substantial workload, pressure on family budgets and barriers to participation.

The role of school trip providers should therefore be to remove avoidable friction so more teachers can turn educational ambition into unforgettable trips. This report shows how those pressures combine, before moving towards practical solutions.

Who responded to the survey?

Sample feature	What the results report
Total respondents	94 customer contacts.
Role	86% identified as the trip/group leader
Phase	66% work in secondary education
School type	31% MAT, 23% academy, 19% independent, 19% local authority maintained
Geography	93% are based in England
Experience	67% are very experienced (have led 6-15 trips) or expert (have led 16+ trips)

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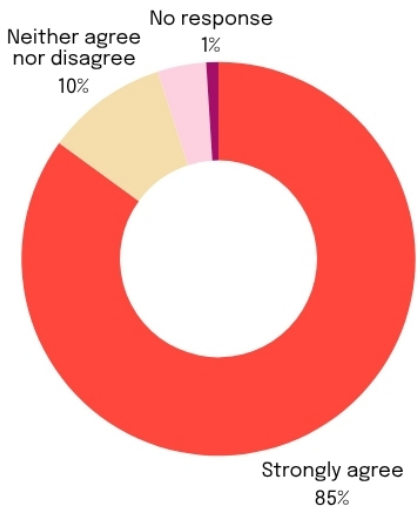
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Key insights

- **Teachers see the value in school trips:**
  - 85% of respondents said school trips improve pupils' outcomes.
  - 78% said they see school trips as a core part of their school's educational offer.
- **But they're getting harder to run with the majority of teachers afforded no formal planning time during the working day:**
  - 73% of respondents said they're getting harder to run each year.
  - 83% said they're not given any formal planning time for school trips during the working day.
  - 32% said they spend more than 40 hours planning a typical school trip.
  - 64% said they need external support to run trips safely and sustainably.
- **Affordability is also a concern**:
  - 81% said the cost-of-living pressure on families was having a big effect on trips.
  - 69% of respondents identified students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds beyond existing support as the category of pupils most at risk of missing out on school trips.
  - Parent affordability was the single biggest stress factor (selected by 21% of respondents), followed by staff capacity/workload (selected by 20%).
  - Risk assessments and paperwork were selected by 70% of respondents as the most time-consuming tasks.

The report findings

Trips improve pupil outcomes but are getting harder to run each year.



Teachers still believe in the power of school trips, with 85% of respondents saying that school trips improve pupils' outcomes. 78% of respondents also said that they see school trips as a core part of their school's educational offer. So, school trips are widely seen as educationally essential by teachers who responded to the survey.

The findings show that teachers continue to invest in school trips because they build pupils' confidence and resilience (70%), build cultural capital and widen horizons (67%) and bring the curriculum to life (50%). School trips can also improve wellbeing and relationships (40%). All of this supports a strong argument that educational visits contribute to personal development too (and therefore can be integral to a school's enrichment offering).

So, if school trips are so important for pupil outcomes, it's concerning to see that 73% of survey respondents say trips are becoming harder to run each year.

With 64% of respondents saying that external support is needed to run trips safely and sustainably, as leading school trip providers, we wanted to find out what's making trips harder to run, and what we can do to help protect the future of school trips.

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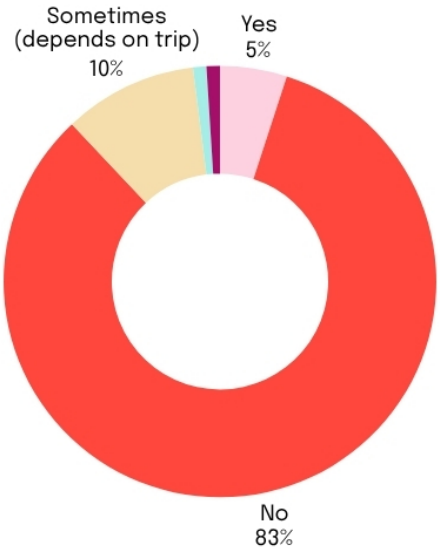
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The hidden planning week

Workload is a huge issue for teachers. 83% of survey respondents said they're given no formal planning time during the working day to plan school trips.

In your school, are trip leaders given any formal time allowance during the working day to plan a trip?



This is even more concerning when you consider just how much of their own time teachers are having to give up to plan school trips. 32% of respondents said they spend 40 hours or more planning a typical trip (that's an entire working week), with a further 41% saying they spend over 11 hours (and no respondent selected under five hours).

Staff workload/capacity was rated extremely challenging by 60% of respondents and was just behind parent affordability as the single biggest stress factor (20% versus 21%).

The most time-consuming tasks were identified as risk assessments and paperwork (70%), parent communications (59%), getting and comparing quotes (47%), collecting payments (47%) and collecting travel documents (47%).

So, one in three school trip leaders who responded to our survey spend at least a full working week planning a typical school trip, with more than eight in ten getting no formal planning time. That means for many pupils, the opportunity to participate in school trips rests solely on the goodwill of their teachers to give up their own time to plan these experiences.

One respondent put it plainly:

"The admin – chasing parents, etc. – is untenable in an already full-time job."

It seems clear that one of the areas where school tour providers can really help teachers is by reducing their workload and supporting them through the more admin-heavy parts of school trip planning. At Halsbury Travel, we're already working hard to reduce trip admin for teachers.

Earlier this year, we introduced our new customer Portal, My Trip Zone, which has been designed to shift manual passenger data collection and entry into one secure online portal (and away from email and spreadsheets). When it's time to collect passenger information (passport details, medical information and dietary requirements), teachers just need to send one secure link to parents, and they can input this data directly into the portal (there's even a passport scanning tool). According to early feedback from real teachers using the portal for their trips, it's already saving group leaders time and stress (and avoiding costly last-minute name changes).

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Affordability: both the total and the timetable matter

Parent affordability was identified by 21% of respondents to the survey as the single biggest stress factor relating to school trips, and 74% rated parent affordability as extremely challenging. 81% of respondents said the cost-of-living pressure on families was affecting trips a lot, and among respondents who said their trip programme may shrink in future, 95% selected the cost to parents as the reason why.

29% of respondents had to cancel or significantly change a planned trip in the last 24 months, with those who had identifying cost increases (59%) and insufficient pupil uptake (52%) as the top reasons.

Payment options were considered essential by 73% of respondents when choosing a tour operator, and 54% valued payment plans and affordability support. 40% of respondents said that better payment support for families would increase their confidence to run a school trip.

And the qualitative responses to the survey only helped to strengthen the point, with teachers repeatedly asking for realistic price ranges, clear inclusions, lower initial deposit payments and flexible instalments. All this shows that affordability isn't only about the final total. It's also about the timetable of when deposits are due, how quickly a family must find a large amount, whether places can be held and how transparently optional costs are explained.

That gives the school travel sector practical work to do. Clearer prices, more realistic ranges and better options should certainly help. Most importantly, payment plans that reflect family budgets and school processes are now an essential to ensure these experiences remain accessible to as many students as possible.

At Halsbury Travel, we have seen the cost of trips steadily rising over the last three academic years, with long-haul trips seeing the steepest rise (although this appears to have stabilised more recently). The median price per pupil increased by 11.7% between the 2023/24 and 2025/26 school years. In 2025/26, however, the year-on-year increase was 1.6%. This is where the expertise of school tour operators is so important, as a good tour operator can advise groups on the most cost-effective ways to run a tour (such as the best time to visit, the best transport options and any free visits that can support the learning objectives in place of more expensive activities).

> *"Whenever the cost of a school trip rises, we know that matters to families (and creates another difficult decision for teachers). There isn't one single reason behind those increases. A trip brings together transport, accommodation, meals, activities and people (and suppliers across that chain are facing higher food, staffing and operating costs). Transport has come under particular pressure. Conflict and disruption in the Middle East have pushed up global oil prices (which can feed through into the cost of coaches, ferries and flights). We work hard to negotiate competitive rates and plan ahead, but we can't shield schools from every increase. Our responsibility is to be transparent about what's changing, protect value wherever we can and help schools find practical ways to keep these important experiences within reach for as many pupils as possible."* **– Robin Parry, CEO**

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Our advice to teachers is always to book their trips as far in advance as possible (our average enquiry to trip departure time is 364 days). This helps the affordability of trips in two ways: more availability tends to mean lower prices (especially for accommodation and transport), and a longer lead time means families can spread the cost (ultimately making the trip more affordable).

Access: who do teachers believe is at risk of missing out?

69% of respondents to the survey identified pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds beyond existing support as the category of pupils most at risk of missing out on school trips. 57% selected pupils eligible for financial support such as Pupil Premium (ahead of 48% who selected pupils with behaviour needs, 32% who selected SEND pupils and 18% who selected pupils with medical needs). So, again, parent affordability is clearly at the forefront of teachers' minds when it comes to school trips.

These categories overlap somewhat (as the question allowed multiple answers), but the message is clear – the pupils who may benefit most from learning outside the classroom could also face the greatest barriers to taking part.

What would make trips easier to deliver?

Workload relief unsurprisingly seems high on teachers' wish lists, with 68% of respondents saying that reduced admin is a key factor in choosing to use a tour operator. 38% also cited reduced staff workload as a factor.

And when asked what practical support they'd value from a tour provider, approval packs came out on top (55%), followed by payment plans and affordability support (54%), and parent communication packs (46%).

This provides a clear brief for tour providers. Guide the process. Make the trip easier to approve and the price easier to understand. And make passenger information collection easier.

School tour operators can't remove every pressure (school staffing, timetable decisions and internal governance sit beyond our control). But they should work to remove repetition, reduce uncertainty and build the support they offer around the working reality of teachers.

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Demand is strained, but not extinguished

76% of respondents said their school is likely or extremely likely to run a UK residential in the next 12 months, and 66% said the same for an overseas educational trip. 61% also said their school was likely or extremely likely to run an outdoor or adventure residential in the next 12 months, with 50% saying the same for a ski trip.

And it seems that teachers still feel the support from tour providers is valuable, with 57% of respondents expecting no change in their use of tour operators, and 17% saying they expect to use external operators more.

All of this is consistent with what we're seeing at Halsbury Travel, with the average number of trips booked per school and the trip mix remaining stable over the previous two academic years. Destination preferences have also remained relatively consistent. Our top four destinations (France, Belgium, Spain and Italy) have also remained so throughout the last three academic years too, collectively accounting for around two-thirds (67%) of bookings over the past three school years.

	23/24	24/25	25/26	Three-year share
France	11%	15%	26%	**19%**
Belgium	15%	15%	10%	**13%**
Spain	10%	10%	17%	**13%**
Italy	24%	29%	17%	**22%**
Combined	**60%**	**70%**	**70%**	**67%**

External providers may become more important not because schools are losing their appetite for organising trips, but because safely delivering them is becoming harder to manage alone (schools may increasingly need providers because the environment around educational visits is becoming more complex – safeguarding standards are rising, staff capacity is stretched, approval processes require more evidence and international uncertainty creates additional risk).

Teachers still want pupils to encounter the wider world (and pupils still need those opportunities). School tour providers need to make the journey from idea to departure easier (so more of those trips can happen).

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How is Halsbury responding to the report's findings?

Halsbury Travel is already using these findings to examine where we can make planning simpler for teachers. This includes evaluating our quotes to see if we can make the options even clearer and providing trip approval-ready information.

We recently introduced **My Trip Zone**, our new customer portal, which has revolutionised how group leaders collect passenger information.

Where previously teachers had to collect in passports and manually record passenger information (assuming responsibility for the name on the passport matching what's been supplied to the airline, for example), now all they have to do is log in to My Trip Zone and send a link to a secure digital form. Parents then complete the passenger information (including passport details, which they can scan using their phone for greater accuracy). As well as reducing the amount of time teachers have to spend chasing parents for the information, this also reduces the likelihood of the group encountering any nasty surprises at the airport (when names supplied to the airline turn out not to match the passport).

We're also working closely with our customer forum (the 'Halsbury Education Community') to explore the realities of school trip planning for teachers, and to continually develop the support we provide teachers to make the process easier so that more young people can benefit from the educational and enrichment opportunities that school trips provide.

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