Every teacher wants the best for their students - but it’s not always an easy task, especially when they’re coming to class without the right equipment.

We know that turning up to school with correct supplies makes teaching and learning a lot easier. It means less time searching through cupboards for a spare ruler, more time getting stuff done.

With this in mind, we asked 500 teachers for the lowdown on school stationery for the Staples Equipped to Learn. What cost are inadequate school supplies having on both education and their pockets? Our report covers key areas such as how much teachers are spending of their own money on school supplies, the effects of poor school supplies on pupils’ attainment levels and what can be done to improve things in the future.

Knowing the effects of being ill-equipped gives teachers, parents and pupils the power to make a change. That’s why we created this report - to highlight the pressure on teachers, encourage parents and kids to take responsibility for their own supplies, and improve learning environments around the country.
It’s imperative that children have the correct stationery at the start of the new school term, so they can hit the ground running from day one. Although schools may provide some pieces of equipment (for example, scissors), the main responsibility falls on parents to ensure their kids have a stocked pencil case. Teachers who took part in our survey stressed this importance, with almost 75% stating that their school required pupils to bring their own supplies.

However, Staples Equipped to Learn has revealed that close to three-quarters of children are turning up to school without the correct materials – that’s 23 of every 30 students, which make up the average class size. There is no correlation between age and not being properly equipped, with the problem occurring across the board.

Of the teachers who educate kids aged between five and six, 71% revealed that their pupils didn’t have the correct stationery, or regularly forget it. Moving into high school, 81.7% of those who teach 11-12 years old said their pupils are under-stocked, but perhaps most startlingly is how many A-Level students don’t have the right supplies – 82.7% of teachers say their senior students attend classes without the necessary equipment.
THE COST OF EQUIPMENT FOR TEACHERS
The cost of equipment for teachers

From time-to-time, teachers will have to make exceptions and purchase stationery for their classrooms – perhaps for a specific project, or to ensure there are some spares just in case someone forgets theirs. But the majority of teachers (62%) revealed that they feel pressured to keep their classroom stocked by buying stationery with their own money.

Of the 500 teachers we spoke to, 30% spend on average between £41 and £80 on stationery per term – with three terms a year, that total could reach near to £250 every academic year. Furthermore, a fifth of participants pay out £81 to £100 every term and 10% spend over £100.

However, the Staples Equipped to Learn also found that teachers buying stationery is relevant to the age group taught. Those who teach young primary school students feel most pressured to purchase supplies (75%), with this feeling of responsibility dropping when teaching children aged 12 to 13 (53%) and over-18s (38%).

For a class with students aged between seven and eight, more than a third (36.5%) of the teachers we surveyed would spend up to £80 on supplies, but for a class of 15 to 16-year-olds, the average costs would be £21 to £40.
THE EFFECT OF NOT BEING EQUIPPED
The effect of not being equipped

To be able to fully participate in classroom activities and practice the skills and knowledge they have been taught, a child needs to have all relevant stationery at their disposal.

If not, they could seriously run the risk of falling behind. When we asked our 500 teachers whether they felt not having the correct supplies had a detrimental effect on a student’s academic progress, the results were rather interesting.

**Over a third (39%)** felt that lacking the right equipment in one lesson would only have an effect on that class. On the other hand, a similar number (37.8%) felt this would **seriously affect the child’s attainment levels** in the long term. We can see that having the equipment to hand is imperative to ensure the child is learning at the same rate as the rest of their peers.

---

### When a student regularly turns up to a lesson without the correct school supplies how do you think this affects their academic attainment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It has a long term detrimental effect on their attainment level</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has a short term effect on that lesson, but it doesn’t impact long term</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes no difference to their ability to learn and retain information</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARENTS ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL SUPPLIES
Parents attitudes to school supplies

Although teachers can educate students on the importance of coming to class with the right equipment, many believe that it’s a parent’s responsibility to ensure this actually happens.

Almost half of teachers (46%) felt parents were passive when it came to shopping for supplies – they understood it was important, but it wasn't their main priority. Almost a quarter of those surveyed (23.12%) felt parents were full engaged and would often ask for advice, but 6% stated parents believed the duty of buying correct equipment fell with the school and teachers.

*Generally speaking, how would you characterise parents’ attitudes to ensuring their kids have all the school supplies and other equipment they need for the new school year?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged: they’re actively interested, and will sometimes ask for advice</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive: generally they make sure their child has what they need</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinterested: They don’t really mind if their child hasn’t got what they need</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressed: It’s a real pressure for parents to find the time and/or money</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentful: They think the school should provide everything</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents attitudes to school supplies

When we asked the teachers to prioritise five solutions on exactly who should be responsible for ensuring pupils have all the relevant supplies, 63% believed the students themselves should be given more accountability – yet over half felt the parents should be charged with ensuring their child has everything they need for school. Interestingly, 30% claimed the reliance on materials bought by the teachers should be removed – perhaps to reduce the pressure on staff to buy additional stationery.

Well over half of the teachers we surveyed, however, believe there is too much pressure on parents to purchase all of the correct stationery for school.

Multiple Choice - What do you think would help change this?

- Higher levels of disposable income for families: 154 entries
- Encouraging parents to take more of an interest in their child’s schooling: 223 entries
- Encouraging children to take responsibility for remembering their own equipment: 239 entries
- Discouraging reliance on the school’s own supplies: 112 entries
- Other: 6 entries

Don't you believe there is more pressure on parents to spend more on supplies than there has been in the past?

- Yes: 31.98% of 519 answers
- No: 58.96% of 519 answers
- Don’t Know: 9.06% of 519 answers
The Staples Equipped to Learn report has raised a number of significant issues when it comes to pupils having the right supplies for school. Most teachers believe their students are coming to class without the right equipment, leaving teachers feeling pressured to purchase extra equipment to ensure the child attains the same level of education as their classmates. According to the report, teachers believe that parents are not engaged enough with the idea of their child having a fully-stocked pencil case, therefore may not worry about buying all the necessary items.

The impact of a child's education can also be damaged by not having the right stationery, according to the teachers we surveyed. More than a third (37.76%) of teachers believe that it can have a detrimental effect on the child's long-term academic future, so the need for proper supplies is crucial.

Findings from the report show that teachers believe students should be motivated into taking responsibility for their own stationery. Parents, too, should be encouraged to play a more active role in their child's school equipment. Over 50% of teachers also felt the pressures on parents to buy all of the correct equipment was too high.

Having the right stationery is hugely important for any child, so they truly realise their academic potential. However, the pressure for supplying the correct equipment shouldn't just be on teaching staff, but parents and children alike must work together to ensure the pupils have everything they need for the school term ahead.