



OECS STUDENT CENSUS

Students' Perceptions of Education Transformation

COUNTRY REPORT

MONTSERRAT

Prepared by

Ministry of Education, Government of Montserrat

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In collaboration with

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1. Executive Summary

Between the final term of the 2025 school year and the extended January 2026 window, 555 students in Montserrat — spanning Kindergarten to Form 5, across all three primary schools and the secondary school — told the Ministry of Education what school is actually like for them. This report presents what they said.

The headline finding is simple and uncomfortable. Montserrat's children begin their schooling deeply engaged and end it disengaged. Almost every child in Kindergarten to Grade 2 (95.6%) says they like school. By Forms 4–5, fewer than four in ten (39.4%) say the same. This is not a gradual softening; it is a cliff, and it falls between Grade 6 and Form 1.

At a glance

- 555 students responded K–2: 136· Grades 3–6: 185· Forms 1–3: 140· Forms 4–5: 94
- All four schools on island participated; digital administration; no connectivity failures.
- School enjoyment falls from 95.6% (K–2) to 39.4% (Forms 4–5).
- Only 41.6% of Grades 3–6 students agree that students treat each other well.
- Only 42.6% of Forms 4–5 students feel they belong and are respected at school.
- Daily breakfast falls from 96.3% (K–2) to 41.5% (Forms 4–5).
- Family belief in education is near-universal at every age (96–98%).

Key trends emerging from the data

Engagement collapses at the primary–secondary transition. The drop from 83.2% (Grades 3–6) to 40.7% (Forms 1–3) in students who enjoy school is the single largest movement in the dataset. It coincides with sharp falls in perceived teacher support (90.8% → 65.7%) and academic confidence (90.8% → 65.7%).

Peer relationships are the weakest link in the primary years. While 81.1% of Grades 3–6 students feel safe, only 41.6% agree that students treat each other well, with 43.8% actively disagreeing. Bullying, fighting and unkindness dominate the open-ended responses of 8– to 11-year-olds.

Adolescent girls report a markedly poorer experience than boys. In Forms 4–5, 59.5% of boys but only 28.8% of girls feel respected and that they belong. Half of boys (50.0%) enjoy school against 30.8% of girls. This gap is large enough to warrant its own line of inquiry.

Students are digitally confident but say school does not use it. 74.3% of Forms 1–3 students are confident with digital tools, yet only 51.1% of Forms 4–5 students agree their school helps them learn to use technology. Access at home is not the binding constraint; classroom use is.

Breakfast consumption declines steadily and steeply with age. By Forms 4–5, 54.3% of students say they do not eat breakfast daily, this is the only indicator in the census where the negative response is the majority.

Major strengths identified by students

- Family commitment to education is the most consistently positive finding in the census, at 96–98% across every grade band. Montserratian children feel in regards to their education that their families are behind them.

- Primary teachers are trusted. 92.6% of K–2 and 90.8% of Grades 3–6 students say their teacher helps them when they are confused.
- Early academic self-concept is strong. 90.8% of Grades 3–6 students believe they can do well in class.
- Only 36% of Secondary children enjoy Mathematics.
- Appetite for extracurricular life is near-universal: 97.8% of K–2 and 95.7% of Grades 3–6 students enjoy sports, music and art.

Key concerns raised by students

- Peer conflict and bullying, particularly in Grades 3–6 and Forms 1–3.
- Teacher–student relationships at secondary level: 29.8% of Forms 4–5 open responses on improving school referred to teacher quality, attitude, perceived favouritism or subject expertise, the single most cited theme.
- Restricted subject choice tied to streaming (“sets”), raised by 18.1% of Forms 4–5 respondents as the change they most want.
- Physical conditions: classroom heat and ventilation, bathroom facilities, and lunch arrangements, cited across both secondary bands.
- Nutrition: over half of Forms 4–5 students are not eating breakfast daily. Note, Montserrat has now introduced a breakfast program at Secondary school in February 2026.
- Rules perceived as arbitrary, uniform, hair and phone policy, raised by 20.2% of Forms 4–5 respondents, which is best read as a demand for voice rather than a demand for laxity.

Priority recommendations

#	Recommendation	Priority
1	Establish a structured Grade 6 → Form 1 transition programme addressing belonging, teacher relationships and academic confidence.	Immediate
2	Implement a whole-school positive peer culture and anti-bullying programme in all three primary schools.	Immediate
3	Commission a focused inquiry into the adolescent girls’ belonging gap at secondary level.	Immediate
4	Introduce a secondary school breakfast provision, targeted first at Forms 4–5.	High (Complete)
5	Review streaming and subject-choice policy so that set placement does not foreclose career-relevant subjects.	High
6	Deliver secondary teacher professional development in adolescent relational practice and teacher and student communication.	High
7	Move technology from access to instructional use where appropriate.	Medium
8	Address classroom ventilation and sanitation at the secondary school.	Medium
9	Establish a link between the Student Council and the Ministry.	Medium

Table 1: Priority recommendations arising from the Montserrat student census.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the OECS Student Census

The OECS Student Census is a regional initiative that places students at the centre of education transformation. Its purpose is to collect direct evidence from students about their experiences of school and learning, so that education policy decisions across the sub-region are informed by real data and by the lived experience of young people rather than by adult assumption alone.

For Montserrat, the census offered something the education system has rarely had: a complete, simultaneous, island-wide account of how students at every stage of schooling actually experience it. With a student population small enough to survey in full. On Montserrat we are not working from a sample. We are working from a census in the true sense of the word.

2.2 The importance of student voice

Education systems routinely measure what students produce — marks, pass rates, attendance. They much less often measure what students perceive. Yet perception is not a soft adjunct to performance; it is one of its determinants. A student who does not feel they belong, who does not believe their teacher will help them, or who has not eaten since the previous evening is not in a position to learn well regardless of the quality of the curriculum in front of them.

Listening also carries an obligation. Students who are asked for their views and then see nothing change learn a lesson about their own standing that is more durable than anything on the timetable. The findings in this report should therefore be read as commitments in waiting.

2.3 Connection to the OECS Education Sector Strategy

The census is directly aligned to the OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) and to the development of the refreshed ten-year strategy. The findings presented here speak to several OESS priority areas simultaneously — quality teaching and learning, student wellbeing and inclusion, digital transformation, and pathways to further education and work. Montserrat's data offers the region a particularly clean read on the primary-to-secondary transition, because the entire cohort passes through a single secondary institution.

2.4 Montserrat's role in supporting the initiative

The Government of Montserrat, through the Ministry of Education, supported the census as a full-participation exercise rather than a sampled one. The Minister of Education publicly endorsed the initiative through the national radio station and spoke directly to heads of schools. The administration window was extended into January 2026 to capture students who had been absent, ensuring that the resulting dataset reflects effectively the whole student body.

2.5 Areas covered

The census instrument, administered in four age-appropriate versions, covered:

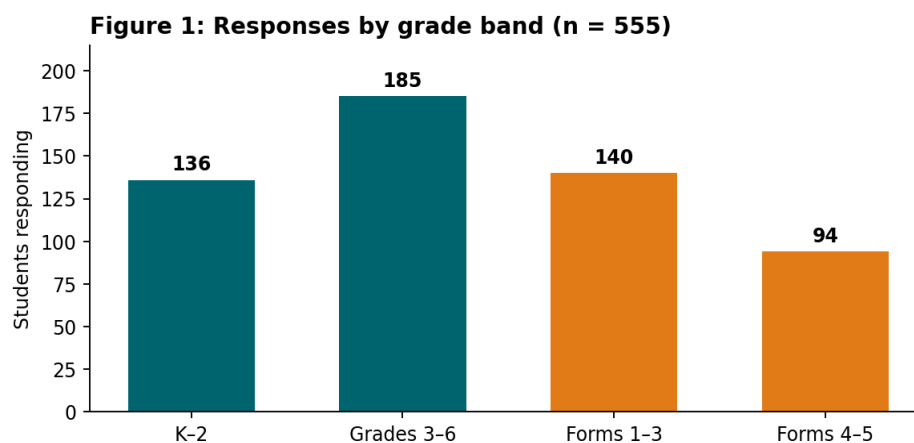
- Student wellbeing — safety, nutrition, emotional support
- School climate — enjoyment, belonging, peer relationships
- Classroom experience — teacher support, confidence, materials, exam preparedness

- Technology and digital learning — access at home, confidence, classroom use
- Student aspirations and engagement — future goals, family support, extracurricular life

3. Overview of the Student Census

3.1 Participation overview

The census was administered in all four schools on island: three primary schools (two government primary schools and one government-assisted private and church school) and the single government secondary school. A total of 555 valid student responses were received.

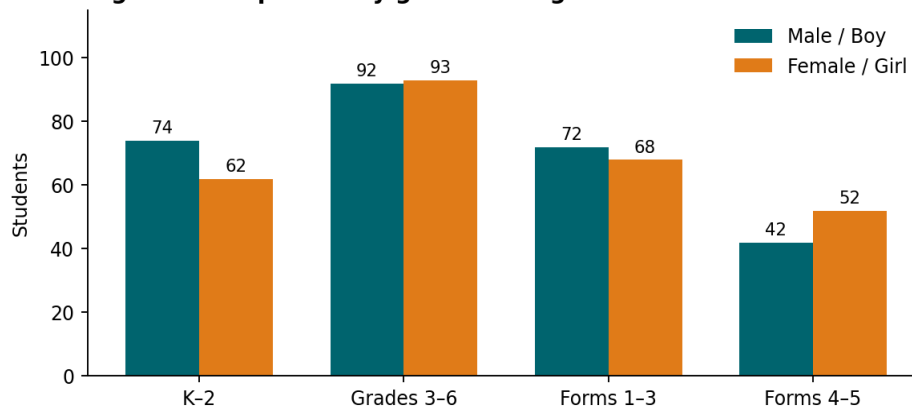


Grade band	Instrument version	Responses	Share of total
Kindergarten – Grade 2	K–2 (emoji response scale)	136	24.5%
Grades 3 – 6	Grades 3–6 (three-point scale)	185	33.3%
Forms 1 – 3	Forms 1–3 (five-point Likert)	140	25.2%
Forms 4 – 5	Forms 4–5 (five-point Likert)	94	16.9%
Total	—	555	100%

Table 2: Responses by grade band and instrument version.

Participation by gender

The gender balance is close to even across the census as a whole, with 280 male and 275 female respondents. The primary bands skew slightly male and Forms 4–5 slightly female.

Figure 2: Responses by gender and grade band

Grade band	Male / Boy	Female / Girl	Total
Kindergarten – Grade 2	74 (54.4%)	62 (45.6%)	136
Grades 3 – 6	92 (49.7%)	93 (50.3%)	185
Forms 1 – 3	72 (51.4%)	68 (48.6%)	140
Forms 4 – 5	42 (44.7%)	52 (55.3%)	94
Total	280 (50.5%)	275 (49.5%)	555

Table 3: Responses by gender and grade band.

Participation by grade and form level

Level	n	Level	n
Kindergarten	42	Form 1 (Grade 7)	47
Grade 1	49	Form 2 (Grade 8)	54
Grade 2	45	Form 3 (Grade 9)	39
Grade 3	49	Form 4 (Grade 11)	46
Grade 4	45	Form 5 (Grade 12)	48
Grade 5	50	—	—
Grade 6	41	—	—

Table 4: Responses by individual grade and form level.

Participation by school type and location

Respondents were asked to describe their school as public or private and as located in a city or town versus the countryside. These are student self-descriptions rather than administrative classifications, and should be read with that in mind — particularly the urban/rural split, where students at the same school have described their setting differently.

Grade band	Public	Private	City / Town	Countryside
Kindergarten – Grade 2	98 (72.1%)	38 (27.9%)	77 (56.6%)	59 (43.4%)
Grades 3 – 6	132 (71.4%)	53 (28.6%)	103 (55.7%)	82 (44.3%)

Grade band	Public	Private	City / Town	Countryside
Forms 1 – 3	136 (97.1%)	4 (2.9%)	96 (68.6%)	44 (31.4%)
Forms 4 – 5	93 (98.9%)	1 (1.1%)	69 (73.4%)	25 (26.6%)
Total	459 (82.7%)	96 (17.3%)	345 (62.2%)	210 (37.8%)

Table 5: Self-reported school type and location. The private-school counts at secondary level ($n = 4$ (F 1-3) and $n = 1$ (F 4-5)) are too small to support disaggregated analysis and are not reported separately in Section 5.

3.2 Census administration

Digital administration approach

All surveys were conducted digitally, using computers and laptops in school under teacher and enumerator supervision. No paper instruments were used. Administering the census on devices already familiar to students removed transcription error and allowed responses to be collected in a single, consistent format across all four grade bands.

Use of the AI-enabled survey platform

The census was delivered through the OECS AI-enabled survey platform, which hosted the four age-differentiated instrument versions, applied age-appropriate response scales (an emoji-based scale for Kindergarten to Grade 2, a three-point scale for Grades 3–6, and a five-point Likert scale at secondary level), and captured open-ended responses in students' own words. Responses were confidential and used only for planning purposes.

Support provided to schools and enumerators

The Minister of Education provided direct support to all schools, sharing her endorsement of the project on the local radio station and speaking directly with heads of schools. This visible ministerial backing is a substantial part of why Montserrat achieved effectively complete coverage. School leadership then coordinated scheduling, device availability and supervision within each institution.

3.3 Limitations

The following limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings.

Limitation	Status in Montserrat
Incomplete coverage	None. All four schools on island participated and effectively the whole student body responded.
Connectivity challenges	None reported. Digital administration proceeded without interruption.
Student absenteeism	Addressed. The administration window was extended into January, allowing absent students to be captured. A small number of students who left school and did not return were accounted for in the reconciliation.
Variation in participation rates	None material. Participation was broadly even across schools and grade levels.
Non-comparable scales across bands	Material. K–2 used a three-point emoji scale, Grades 3–6 a three-point verbal scale, and secondary a five-point Likert scale. Cross-band comparisons in this report combine “agree” and “strongly agree” into a single positive category, which is a reasonable but not exact equivalence.

Limitation	Status in Montserrat
Self-reported school characteristics	Minor. School type and urban/rural location were reported by students and vary within schools.
Single secondary school	Structural. Because Montserrat has one secondary school, all secondary findings describe that institution. This gives unusual clarity but means no internal comparison is possible.

Table 6: Limitations affecting interpretation of findings.

4. Methodology and Data Overview

4.1 Analytical approach

Analysis combined quantitative treatment of the closed items with thematic analysis of the open-ended responses. Four datasets — one per grade band — were analysed separately and then compared, since the instruments differ in wording and response scale.

For every closed item, responses were classified into three categories: positive (“Yes”, “Agree”, “Strongly Agree”), negative (“No”, “Disagree”, “Strongly Disagree”) and uncertain (“Don’t know”). Percentages are calculated on valid responses to each item. Where this report states, for example, that 39.4% of Forms 4–5 students enjoy going to school, that figure combines “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

The “don’t know” category is treated as substantive rather than missing. At secondary level it is large — 30.0% of Forms 1–3 and 31.9% of Forms 4–5 students selected it when asked whether they enjoy school. A student who cannot say whether they enjoy school is telling us something meaningful, and this report reads sustained uncertainty as a signal of disengagement rather than as an absence of data.

4.2 AI-assisted analysis process

AI-assisted tooling was used for three tasks: computation of frequency distributions and disaggregations across all items and sub-groups; first-pass thematic coding of the 2,220 open-ended responses using keyword and semantic pattern matching; and drafting support for the narrative sections of this report.

AI was not used to interpret findings unsupervised. Every quantitative figure in this report was computed directly from the raw response files. Every theme reported in Section 6 was reviewed against the underlying responses by the national team before inclusion.

4.3 Validation and review procedures

- All percentages were recomputed from the source CSV files and cross-checked against raw frequency counts.
- Thematic codes generated in the first pass were manually reviewed, with false positives removed and under-detected themes added.
- Open-ended responses naming individual members of staff were excluded from quotation. Where such responses inform a theme, they are reported only in aggregate. No individual teacher, student or family is identifiable anywhere in this report.
- Sub-group cells below $n = 10$ are reported as indicative only or suppressed entirely.
- The draft was reviewed by the Ministry of Education national team prior to submission to the OECS Commission.

4.4 Disaggregation

Findings were disaggregated by gender, grade band and individual grade level, self-reported school type, and self-reported urban/rural location. Disaggregation by district or parish was not undertaken: with four schools on an island of Montserrat’s size, parish-level reporting would risk identifying individual students and would carry little analytical value.

4.5 Contextual data

Language spoken at home

English is spoken at home by the overwhelming majority of students, but a meaningful minority live in multilingual households — a figure that rises with age, consistent with migration patterns.

Grade band	English spoken	English only	Creole / Patois	Spanish	French
K – 2 (n=136)	95.6%	75.0%	18.4%	9.6%	6.6%
Grades 3–6 (n=185)	94.6%	71.9%	15.7%	10.3%	8.1%
Forms 1–3 (n=140)	94.3%	54.3%	25.7%	17.9%	10.0%
Forms 4–5 (n=94)	92.6%	43.6%	35.1%	19.1%	9.6%

Table 7: Languages spoken at home. Categories are not mutually exclusive; students could select more than one.

This has a direct instructional implication. By Forms 4–5, fewer than half of students (43.6%) live in an English-only household, and just over one in three report Creole or Patois in the home. Roughly one in five secondary students has Spanish at home. Language support and culturally responsive literacy practice are not peripheral concerns in Montserrat’s secondary school.

Transportation to school

Primary students predominantly travel by car; secondary students predominantly by bus. Bus reliance rises from 28.7% in K–2 to 62.8% in Forms 1–3, meaning that bus scheduling directly affects secondary punctuality, breakfast timing and after-school participation.

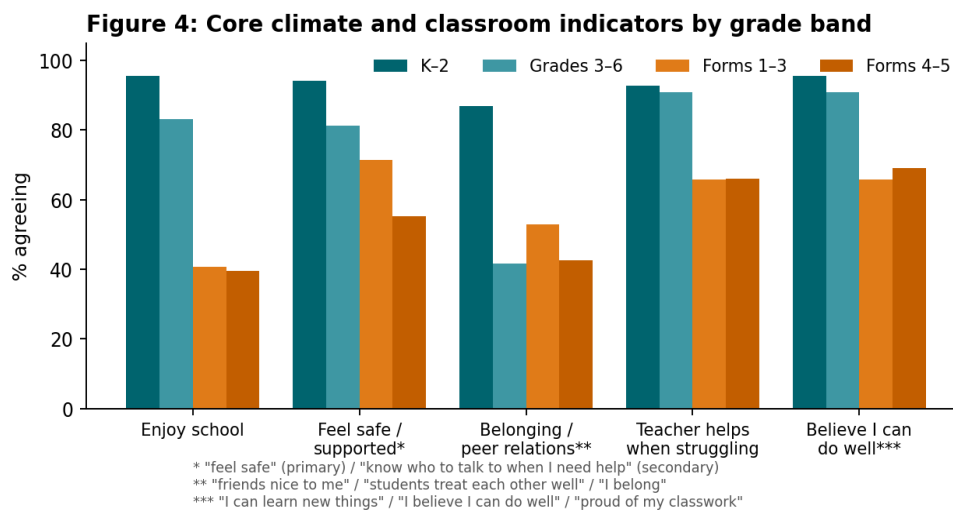
Highest level of education in the household

Level	Grades 3–6	Forms 1–3	Forms 4–5
College / University	38.9%	50.0%	67.0%
Secondary	26.5%	15.7%	14.9%
Vocational / technical	1.6%	3.6%	2.1%
Primary	16.2%	4.3%	0.0%
No formal education	0.5%	2.1%	3.2%
Don’t know	16.2%	24.3%	12.8%

Table 8: Highest level of education completed by anyone in the household, as reported by students. The high “don’t know” rate in Forms 1–3 should be treated as a limitation of student self-report rather than a finding about households.

5. Key Findings

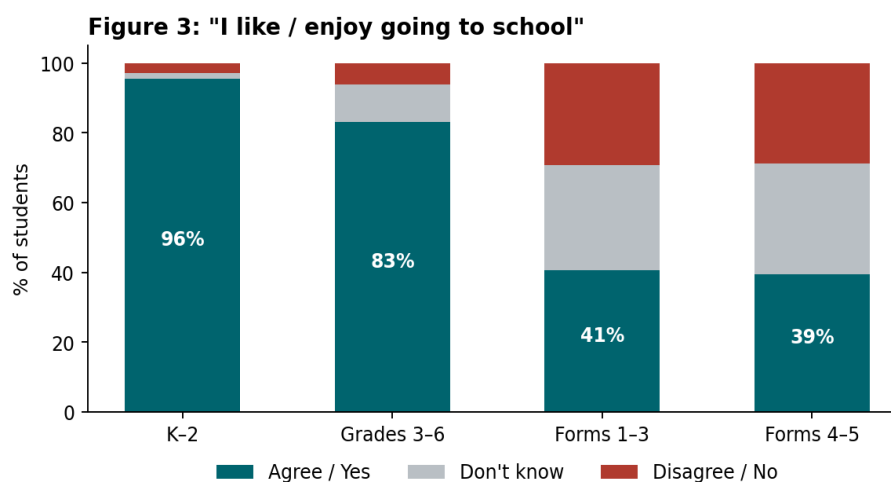
This section presents findings against the four research areas of the census. Throughout, the dominant analytical story is the relationship between age and experience: on almost every indicator, Montserratian students report a progressively poorer experience of school the longer they remain in it.



5.1 Students' Perspectives on School Climate

Enjoyment of school

Enjoyment of school is the clearest and most consequential finding in the Montserrat census.



Grade band	Positive	Negative	Don't know
Kindergarten – Grade 2	95.6%	2.9%	1.5%
Grades 3 – 6	83.2%	5.9%	10.8%
Forms 1 – 3	40.7%	29.3%	30.0%
Forms 4 – 5	39.4%	28.7%	31.9%

Table 9: "I like school" (K-2, Grades 3-6) / "I enjoy going to school" (secondary).

Two features of this pattern deserve emphasis. First, the fall is concentrated at a single point — between Grades 3–6 and Forms 1–3, enjoyment more than halves. It does not decline steadily year on year; it drops at the transition and then flattens. Second, the students who leave the positive category do not move mainly into disagreement. They move into uncertainty. Nearly a third of secondary students say they do not know whether they enjoy school, a response that suggests neither active dislike nor engagement but something closer to detachment.

A degree of decline in reported school enjoyment through adolescence is well documented internationally and is not unique to Montserrat. The magnitude here, a fall of 42.5 percentage points between primary and secondary, is nonetheless large enough that it should not be attributed to normal adolescent development alone.

Feelings of safety and access to support

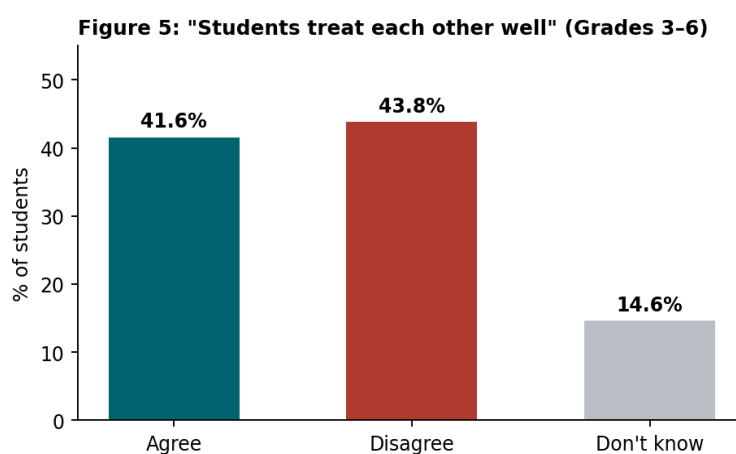
Physical safety is not the primary concern at primary level: 94.1% of K–2 and 81.1% of Grades 3–6 students feel safe at school. At secondary level the equivalent construct shifts to whether students know where to turn for help, and here the picture weakens with age: 71.4% of Forms 1–3 students know who to talk to when they need help, falling to 55.3% of Forms 4–5 students who agree there are people at school they can go to.

The implication is that as students get older and their problems get more serious, their perceived access to adult support gets worse. Almost one in four Forms 4–5 students (22.3%) actively disagrees that there is someone at school they can go to, and a further 22.3% does not know.

Inclusivity, belonging and peer relationships

This is the weakest area in the entire Montserrat census, and it is weak at both ends of the system for different reasons.

In Grades 3–6, only 41.6% of students agree that students treat each other well — while 43.8% disagree. This is the only item in the primary datasets where the negative response exceeds the positive.



The open-ended responses for this band confirm and explain the pattern. Bullying, fighting and unkindness appear in 10.3% of responses to “the one thing I would change”, and safety and behaviour themes together appear in 16.2%. Among 8 to 11 year-olds, asked what would make their school better, the most common answer is not resources or activities, it is that the other children would be kinder.

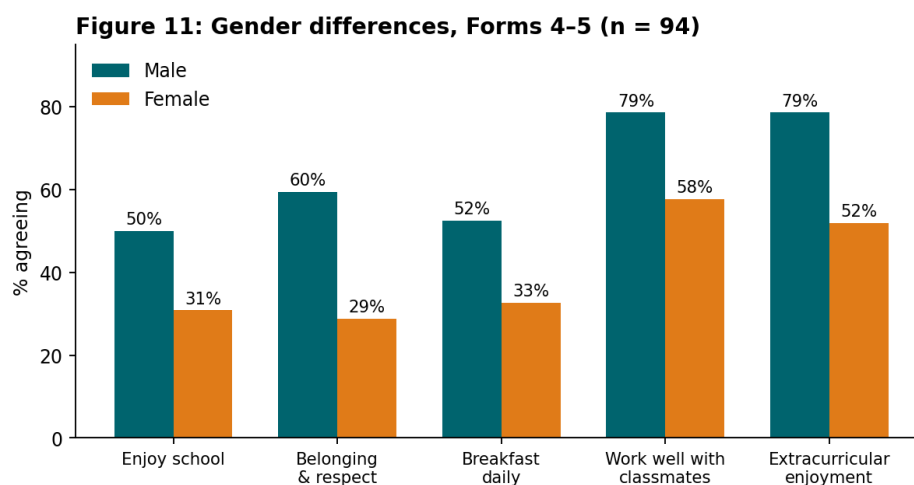
At secondary level, belonging is similarly fragile but for different reasons. Only 52.9% of Forms 1–3 and 42.6% of Forms 4–5 students feel they belong and are respected at school. In Forms 4–5, 33.0% actively disagree.

The adolescent girls' belonging gap

In Forms 4–5, the gender difference on belonging is the largest single sub-group difference in the census:

- Feel respected and that they belong — boys 59.5%, girls 28.8% (gap of 30.7 points)
- Enjoy going to school — boys 50.0%, girls 30.8% (gap of 19.2 points)
- Work well with classmates — boys 78.6%, girls 57.7% (gap of 20.9 points)
- Enjoy activities outside class — boys 78.6%, girls 51.9% (gap of 26.7 points)
- Eat breakfast daily — boys 52.4%, girls 32.7% (gap of 19.7 points)

With 42 male and 52 female respondents, these cells are small and the individual differences carry wide confidence intervals. The consistency of direction across five independent items is nonetheless notable and warrants direct follow-up rather than dismissal.



5.2 Students' Perspectives on Classroom Experience

Teacher support

Teacher support follows the same age pattern as every other indicator, but from a high base. Primary teachers in Montserrat are trusted: 92.6% of K–2 students say their teacher helps them when they need it, and 90.8% of Grades 3–6 students say their teacher helps when they are confused.

At secondary level this falls to 65.7% (Forms 1–3) and 66.0% (Forms 4–5). Around one in five secondary students (18.6% and 20.2%) actively disagrees that teachers help them when they struggle.

The open-ended data gives this figure texture. Teacher quality, attitude and manner is the most frequently raised theme when Forms 4–5 students are asked what one thing they would change, appearing in 29.8% of responses. Students write about perceived favouritism, about the tone in which they are addressed, and about wanting subject specialists in areas where they are struggling. A number of responses name individual members of staff; those are excluded from quotation here but are part of the aggregate.

These are student perceptions, collected without right of reply, and they should not be read as an appraisal of any individual teacher. What they do establish is that a substantial minority of Montserrat's secondary students do not currently experience their teachers as being on their side. That is an actionable system finding regardless of how any individual case would be judged.

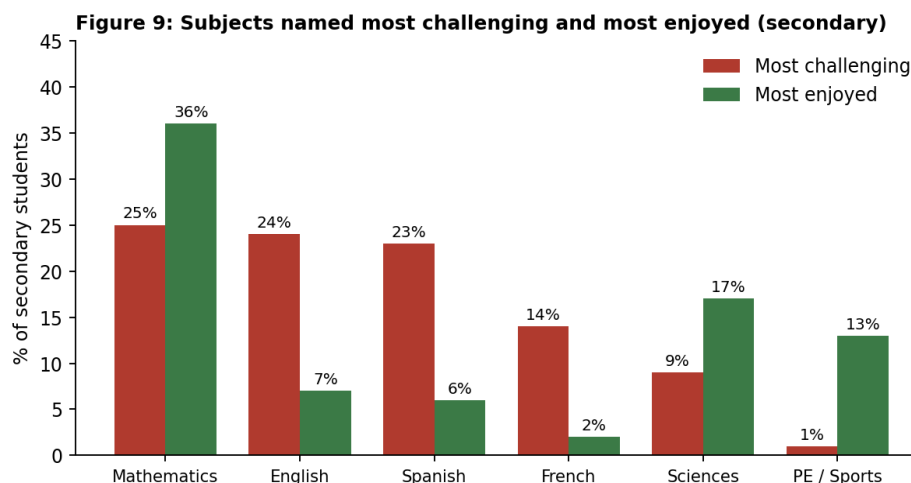
Academic self-concept and confidence

Indicator	K–2	Grades 3–6	Forms 1–3	Forms 4–5
Believe they can learn / do well / proud of work	95.6%	90.8%	65.7%	69.1%
Classes prepare me well for exams	—	—	50.7%	55.3%
Learning skills relevant to future goals / career	—	—	70.7%	48.9%

Table 10: Academic confidence and preparedness indicators.

Two findings here are of direct policy concern. Only half of Forms 1–3 students (50.7%) and 55.3% of Forms 4–5 students agree that their classes prepare them well for examinations, including CSEC/CXC. And confidence that school is building career-relevant skills falls sharply from 70.7% in Forms 1–3 to 48.9% in Forms 4–5 — that is, it falls fastest precisely as students approach the point where those skills would be tested in the world.

Subjects: challenge, enjoyment and perceived strength



The data in Figure 9 is calculated using the total secondary cohort which explains why the compulsory subjects dominate. Note that PE/Sports and French are choices after Form 3. Of concern only 36% of students enjoy Mathematics and more alarming is the 7% of enjoyment seen in English.

Learning materials and resources

Access to the basic materials of learning is reasonable at primary level and declines at senior secondary: 81.1% of Grades 3–6 students have the books and supplies they need, 82.9% of Forms 1–3 students have what they need to learn, but this falls to 61.7% in Forms 4–5, where 25.5% actively disagree.

One disaggregation is notable. In Grades 3–6, 88.2% of girls but only 73.9% of boys report having all the books and supplies they need — a 14.3-point gap that runs in the opposite direction to most equity assumptions and is worth investigating at school level.

5.3 Students' Perspectives on Wellbeing and Support

Family support

Family commitment to education is the strongest and most consistent finding in the census. It does not decline with age, and it does not vary meaningfully by gender, school type or location.

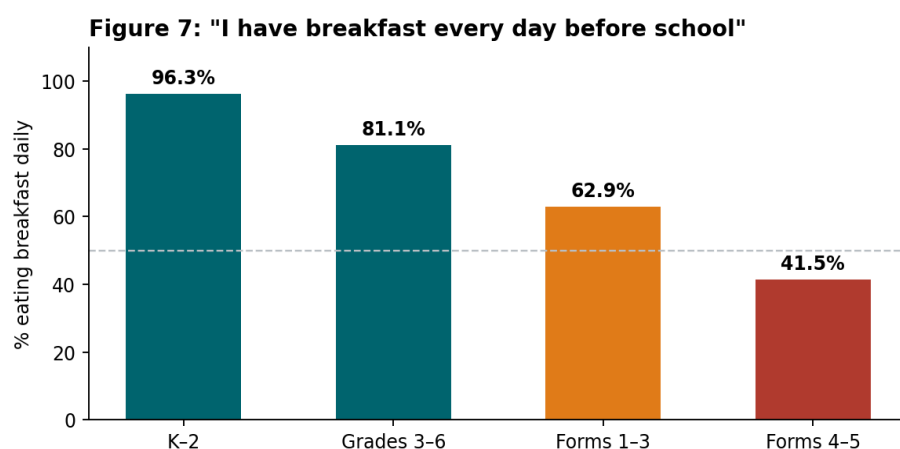
Indicator	K–2	Grades 3–6	Forms 1–3	Forms 4–5
My family tells me school / learning is important	95.6%	97.8%	96.4%	97.9%
My family helps me with school work / talks about my goals	—	91.4%	88.6%	79.8%

Table 11: Family support indicators.

This is a significant strategic asset. Where a system has weak family engagement, reform must first build it. Montserrat does not have that problem. Nearly every child in the country reports that their family tells them education matters. What declines with age is not belief but practical involvement, direct help with schoolwork and conversation about future goals falls from 91.4% to 79.8% between Grades 3–6 and Forms 4–5, which is the point at which subject choice, CSEC entry and post-school pathways are actually being decided.

Nutrition

Breakfast consumption shows one of the steepest declines in the census.



Grade band	Eat breakfast daily	Do not	Don't know
Kindergarten – Grade 2	96.3%	3.7%	0.0%
Grades 3 – 6	81.1%	13.5%	5.4%
Forms 1 – 3	62.9%	24.3%	12.9%
Forms 4 – 5	41.5%	54.3%	4.3%

Table 12: "I have breakfast every day before school."

This is the only indicator in the entire census where the negative response is the majority. More than half of Montserrat's Forms 4–5 students, the cohort sitting CSEC, are not eating breakfast daily. Among girls in Forms 4–5, only 32.7% eat breakfast every day.

Some of this is behavioural rather than economic: adolescents in many settings skip breakfast by choice, and bus schedules compress the morning. But the size of the effect, its concentration in the examination years,

and the gender pattern together make this a wellbeing issue with direct academic consequences. A student who has not eaten cannot concentrate through a three-hour examination paper.

Extracurricular participation

Appetite for activity beyond the classroom is high and remains high, though it too declines: 97.8% of K–2, 95.7% of Grades 3–6, 72.9% of Forms 1–3 and 63.8% of Forms 4–5 students say they enjoy sports, music or art.

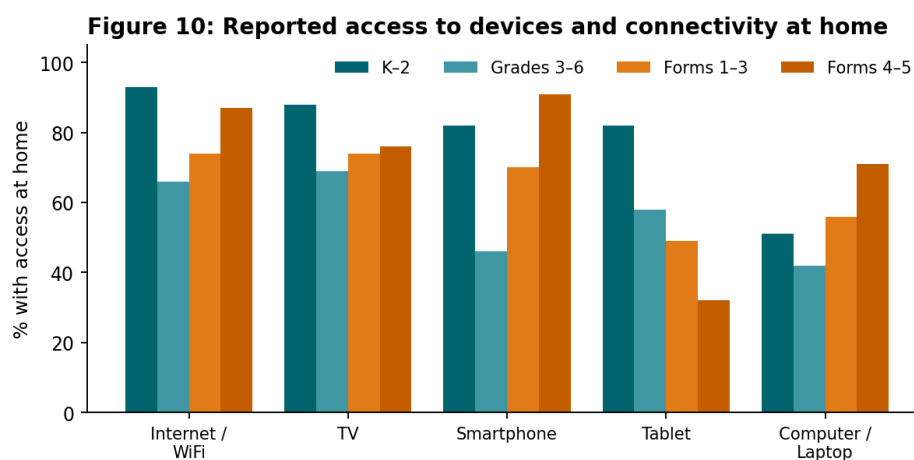
Reported actual participation is considerably lower than stated enjoyment. Among Forms 1–3 students, 22.9% report participating in no clubs or activities outside class; in Forms 4–5 this rises to 27.7%. Sports dominate current participation (60.0% and 55.3% respectively), with uniformed organisations, Cadets, Girl Guides, forming a meaningful second tier.

When asked what new activities they would like, students across every band named the same things. Football is the most requested at secondary level, followed closely by coding, technology and gaming clubs, swimming, netball and volleyball, dance, and art and craft. In Grades 3–6, art and craft leads (11%), followed by football (8%) and coding or technology (5%).

5.4 Students' Perspectives on Technology and Digital Learning

Access at home

Home access to devices and connectivity is broadly good, though uneven, and the profile shifts with age from shared household devices toward personal smartphones.



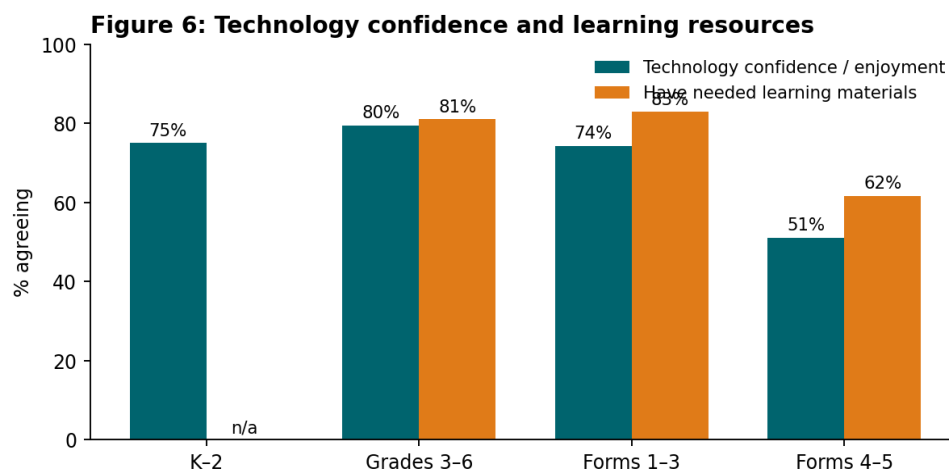
Grade band	Internet	Computer / Laptop	Tablet	Smartphone	TV
Kindergarten – Grade 2	93%	51%	82%	82%	88%
Grades 3 – 6	66%	42%	58%	46%	69%
Forms 1 – 3	74%	56%	49%	70%	74%
Forms 4 – 5	87%	71%	32%	91%	76%

Table 13: Reported access to devices and connectivity at home. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Two observations follow. First, roughly one in four to one in three students in Grades 3–6 and Forms 1–3 does not report household internet access, which sets a hard limit on any homework or revision strategy that assumes connectivity. Second, the fall in computer and laptop access in the middle years, 42% in Grades 3–6

against 71% in Forms 4–5, means the students least likely to have a keyboard at home are the ones building foundational digital skills.

Confidence and classroom use



Indicator	K-2	Grades 3-6	Forms 1-3	Forms 4-5
Enjoy / confident using technology to learn	75.0%	79.5%	74.3%	—
School helps me learn to use technology for learning and life	—	—	—	51.1%

Table 14: Technology confidence and school provision. Note that the Forms 4–5 item asks about school provision rather than personal confidence and is therefore not directly comparable.

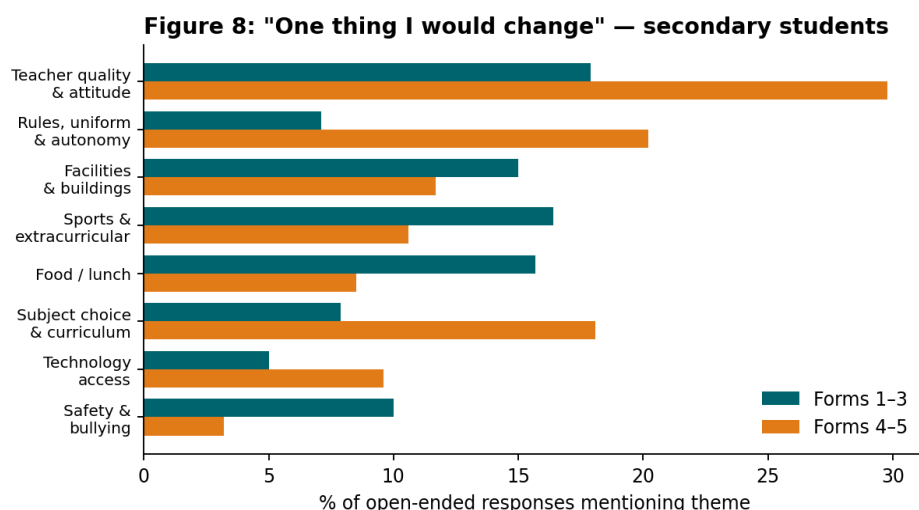
The central digital finding in Montserrat is a mismatch between student capability and school use. 74.3% of Forms 1–3 students are confident using digital tools in their classes, and 48.6% are strongly confident, the highest “strongly agree” proportion of any item in that dataset. Yet only 51.1% of Forms 4–5 students agree that their school helps them learn to use technology for learning and life, with 38.3% disagreeing.

This is echoed unmistakably in the open responses. Technology appears in 16.4% of Forms 1–3 answers about what would make class more enjoyable and in 17.9% of answers about what helps them do well. Secondary students ask for laptop access during lessons, for work on devices rather than exclusively in exercise books, and for the computer room to be available when they need it rather than when it is scheduled.

One nuance is worth recording. In K–2, 22.1% of children say they do not like using computers and TV in class, the highest negative response in that band. Young children are asking for more physical, hands-on and play-based learning, not more screens. The digital strategy for Montserrat should be age-differentiated rather than uniform.

6. Student Voice: Qualitative Insights

The census collected 2,220 open-ended responses across the four instruments. All quotations below are reproduced anonymously and, where necessary, with names of individuals removed. Spelling and grammar are as students wrote them. Responses naming individual members of staff have been excluded from quotation entirely, though they are reflected in the thematic counts.



6.1 What the youngest students say (Kindergarten – Grade 2)

Nearly half of K–2 students (49.3%) said they would change nothing about their school. When they did want something, they wanted to play, to move, and to learn through games.

“educational games, Big books, mathematics bingo” — Kindergarten – Grade 2 student

“Reading, games and things I can touch” — Kindergarten – Grade 2 student

“an interactive board, games and toys” — Kindergarten – Grade 2 student

“i would like there to be a playground” — Kindergarten – Grade 2 student

“I want the boys to be nice to me” — Kindergarten – Grade 2 student

Playground provision recurs often enough in this band to be treated as a specific, costed request rather than a generic wish. The theme of wanting classmates to be kinder also appears at this age, which places the peer-culture finding earlier in the system than the Grades 3–6 data alone would suggest.

6.2 What primary students say (Grades 3 – 6)

This band produced the census’s most striking qualitative pattern. Asked what one thing they would change about their school, more of these students wrote about how children treat each other than about anything else.

“that some students will not bully me. all children be nice to each other” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“I would change the way in which some students treat others.” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“Stop persons from fighting as often” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“To stop littering and don’t have the school dirty” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“make school yard safer to play” — Grades 3 – 6 student

Asked instead what helps them do well, the same students named books, teachers and family with remarkable consistency — learning materials appeared in 22.2% of responses and teachers in 14.6%.

“Library books, Help from my teacher” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“god and the help of my parents and teacher” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“extra help after school and in school” — Grades 3 – 6 student

And asked what would make class more enjoyable, one theme dominated at 33.5%: making learning active and playful.

“play games on the interactive white board and do computer at school” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“Having a supporting and loving teacher” — Grades 3 – 6 student

“educational games and field trips” — Grades 3 – 6 student

What primary students are asking for

Read together, the primary open responses describe a coherent and modest request:

- Kinder classmates and adults who intervene when behaviour goes wrong
- Active, game-based, hands-on learning rather than more worksheets
- Enough books and supplies to work with
- Somewhere safe and pleasant to play
- Extra help when they get stuck, in and after school

None of these require structural reform. Most are within the reach of school-level practice change.

6.3 What lower secondary students say (Forms 1 – 3)

The tone changes markedly at secondary level. Responses become longer, more specific and considerably more critical. Teacher relationships (17.9%), extracurricular provision (16.4%), food and lunch (15.7%) and physical facilities (15.0%) lead the themes.

“the way teachers respond to students, their choice of words are detrimental to the student’s education” — Forms 1 – 3 student

“I would like to increase the amount of teachers at the school and have ample replacements at the ready, I also wish that students could treat me and others better.” — Forms 1 – 3 student

“a fun place that make learning engaging ands fun” — Forms 1 – 3 student

“I would like for the government to fix the classrooms and the batheroom” — Forms 1 – 3 student

“have AC in every classroom” — Forms 1 – 3 student

“I WOULD MAKE SURE THAT BULLYING WOULD NOT HAPPEN, I WOULD ALSO MAKE SCHOOL A SAFER PLACE TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS” — Forms 1 – 3 student

“Being kind to one and another is one thing I would change about the school system” — Forms 1 – 3 student

Bullying appears explicitly in 7.9% of Forms 1–3 change responses, with several students giving it as their entire answer.

6.4 What senior secondary students say (Forms 4 – 5)

The oldest students in the census are the most articulate about what they want and the most direct about what is not working. Teacher quality and manner appear in 29.8% of their responses about changing school rules and autonomy in 20.2%; subject choice in 18.1%.

“that every student has the chance to pick their own subjects that they would like to do” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“I would change the fact that if you’re not in a specific set you should be able to choose the subjects that benefit our future.” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“having more options to choose more than 8 subjects so i can complete all the courses for my job” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“I would place more qualified teachers in the places that students are visibly struggling” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“Teachers attitudes towards helping students. there is a lot of favoritism” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“we r living in a new era so we must evolve our teaching style so everyone can fully understand” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“proper bathroom facilities in the girls bathroom” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“better management of the complaints” — Forms 4 – 5 student

“I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE EVERYONE MORE RESPECTFUL AND SIMPATHETIC” — Forms 4 – 5 student

The subject-choice theme deserves particular attention. Multiple Forms 4–5 students independently described a system in which placement in a lower set forecloses access to subjects they need for their intended career. Whether or not this reflects formal policy, it is how a significant number of senior students understand their own position, and it directly contradicts the census’s own finding that only 48.9% of them believe school is preparing them for the work they want to do.

The rules and autonomy theme, uniform, hair, phones, dress, is easy to dismiss as ordinary adolescent complaint, and some of it is. But the volume is high, and the language students use is consistently about expression and respect rather than about wanting rules abolished. Read alongside the finding that only 42.6% of Forms 4–5 students feel respected and that they belong, it is better understood as a symptom of the belonging deficit than as a separate issue.

6.5 Cross-cutting qualitative themes

Theme	Where it appears most	Character of the request
Peer culture and bullying	Grades 3–6; Forms 1–3	Students want adults to intervene and peers to be kind. Strongest at ages 8–14.
Teacher relationships	Forms 4–5 (29.8%); Forms 1–3 (17.9%)	About tone, fairness and perceived favouritism as much as about subject knowledge.
Active and enjoyable learning	All bands; Grades 3–6 (33.5%)	Games, practical work, field trips, hands-on materials. Consistent from Kindergarten to Form 5.
Extracurricular provision	All bands; Forms 4–5 (56.4%)	Highly specific: football, coding, swimming, netball, dance, art, cooking.
Physical conditions	Forms 1–3 (15.0%); Forms 4–5 (11.7%)	Heat and ventilation, bathrooms, water, building repair. Concrete and can be costed.

Theme	Where it appears most	Character of the request
Food and lunch	Forms 1–3 (15.7%)	Lunch duration, options, canteen provision, affordability.
Technology in lessons	Forms 1–3 (16.4%); Forms 4–5	Access to devices during class, not just in scheduled computer periods.
Subject choice and streaming	Forms 4–5 (18.1%)	Set placement perceived as blocking career-relevant subjects.
Voice and autonomy	Forms 4–5 (20.2%)	Uniform, hair, phones, complaint handling. Read as a demand for standing.

Table 15: Cross-cutting qualitative themes and where they are concentrated.

7. Emerging Themes and Implications

7.1 Theme one: the transition cliff

The dominant finding of the Montserrat census is that something happens between Grade 6 and Form 1 that costs the system a large proportion of its students' engagement, and that it is not recovered afterwards. Enjoyment falls 42.5 points, teacher support falls 25.1 points, and academic confidence falls 25.1 points across that single boundary.

Because Montserrat has one secondary school, this is an unusually tractable problem. There is no need to identify which institutions are struggling or to design a system-wide intervention across many sites. The transition happens at one point, into one building, for one cohort per year.

Implications for policy: the transition should be treated as a named programme with an owner, not as an administrative event. Implications for school improvement: the first term of Form 1 should be redesigned around belonging and relationship-building rather than around settling into subject timetables.

7.2 Theme two: peer culture as the primary-level equity issue

That fewer than half of Grades 3–6 students believe their classmates treat each other well is a serious finding on its own terms. It also has instructional consequences: collaborative learning, discussion-based mathematics and group inquiry all depend on children being willing to be wrong in front of each other. A classroom where 43.8% of children think their peers behave badly toward one another cannot easily sustain those practices.

Implications for curriculum and teacher development: social and emotional learning should not be an add-on assembly programme but embedded in how lessons are structured. Implications for student support: primary schools need a consistent, visible and child-understood process for reporting and resolving peer conflict.

7.3 Theme three: the adolescent girls' gap

The consistent direction of the gender differences in Forms 4–5, across belonging, enjoyment, collaboration, extracurricular participation and nutrition, is the census's most important unexplained finding. The sample is small and the census instrument was not designed to diagnose causes.

Implications: this requires a targeted follow-up, most appropriately through structured focus groups with senior girls, conducted by someone outside the school's line management. It should not wait for the next census cycle.

7.4 Theme four: digital capability without digital pedagogy

Montserrat's students are not digitally excluded in the way regional policy discussion often assumes. Home access is reasonable and rising with age; confidence at secondary level is high. What is missing is the systematic use of that capability in teaching. The gap between 74.3% digital confidence in Forms 1–3 and 51.1% agreement in Forms 4–5 that school builds technology skills is a pedagogy gap, not an infrastructure gap.

The counter-signal from K–2, where 22.1% of children say they do not enjoy screens in class, should prevent this being read as a mandate for uniform device rollout. What young children asked for was games, objects, movement and books.

Implications for the refreshed OESS: Montserrat's data supports a shift in regional digital strategy emphasis from access provision toward instructional integration and teacher digital pedagogy, with age-differentiated expectations.

7.5 Theme five: nutrition as an academic variable

The breakfast finding sits at the intersection of wellbeing and attainment. With 54.3% of Forms 4–5 students not eating breakfast daily, and only 32.7% of senior girls doing so, this is a plausible contributing factor to concentration and examination performance in exactly the cohort where the stakes are highest.

Implications/action: The suggested data gap at secondary level has been filled with the recent February 2026 commencement of breakfast provision at the Secondary school.

7.6 Theme six: family belief as an under-used asset

Near-universal family belief in the value of education (96–98% at every age) is a resource most systems would spend years trying to build. Montserrat has it already. What declines is practical involvement at exactly the ages where decisions with lifelong consequences are made.

Implications: family engagement strategy should shift from awareness-raising, which is unnecessary, toward equipping parents to support subject choice, CSEC preparation and post-school pathway decisions at Forms 3–5.

7.7 Theme seven: strengths worth protecting

It would be a misreading of this census to treat it as a document of failure. The census also identifies things that are working, and which are as important to name as the deficits:

- Primary teaching commands high trust, with over 90% of primary students confident their teacher will help them.
- Early childhood provision produces children who overwhelmingly like school 95.6% at K–2 is a genuinely strong figure.
- Physical safety at primary level is well established.
- Family commitment is universal and stable.

The task is not to rebuild the system. It is to carry the strengths of the primary years across the transition into the secondary years, where they currently do not survive.

8. Recommendations

Recommendations are grouped by domain. Each identifies a suggested action, the responsible stakeholders and a priority level. Priority levels are: Immediate (begin within the current academic year), High (within twelve months), Medium (within the next planning cycle).

8.1 School Climate and Wellbeing

Action	Responsible	Priority
Upgrade the established structured Grade 6 to Form 1 transition programme, including pre-transition visits, a redesigned first half-term at secondary focused on belonging, and named staff responsible for each incoming cohort.	Ministry of Education; primary heads; secondary principal	Immediate
Implement a consistent whole-school positive peer culture and anti-bullying programme across all three primary schools, with a child-understood reporting route and a visible resolution process.	Ministry of Education; primary heads	Immediate
Commission structured focus groups with senior secondary girls, facilitated independently of school line management, to investigate the belonging and participation gap identified in Forms 4–5.	Ministry of Education; EDMU support	Immediate
Review and publicise the pastoral support pathway at secondary level so that every student can name an adult they can approach.	Secondary principal; guidance staff	High

Table 16: School climate and wellbeing recommendations.

8.2 Teaching and Learning

Action	Responsible	Priority
Deliver professional development for secondary teachers in adolescent relational practice — questioning climate, feedback tone, and equitable attention — responding to the 29.8% of senior students citing teacher manner as their priority change.	Ministry of Education; EDMU	High
Review streaming and set placement policy so that a student's set does not automatically foreclose access to career-relevant subjects, and communicate the resulting policy clearly to students.	Ministry of Education; secondary principal	High
Audit CSEC preparation practice in response to only 55.3% of Forms 4–5 students agreeing their classes prepare them well for examinations.	Secondary principal; heads of department	High
Strengthen modern foreign language teaching starting at primary.	Secondary principal; language department	Medium
Embed active, game-based and practical learning approaches in primary practice, responding directly to the most common student request across all primary bands.	Ministry of Education; primary heads	Medium

Table 17: Teaching and learning recommendations.

8.3 Digital Education

Action	Responsible	Priority
Define a digital and AI Teaching/Learning policy.	Ministry of Education	Medium
Provide teacher professional development in digital pedagogy rather than digital operation, since student confidence already exceeds classroom use.	Ministry of Education; EDMU	Medium
Adopt an age-differentiated digital policy that protects hands-on, physical and play-based learning in Kindergarten to Grade 2, where 22.1% of children report not enjoying screen-based classroom activity.	Ministry of Education; primary heads	Medium

Table 18: Digital education recommendations.

8.4 Student Support Services

Action	Responsible	Priority
Establish a clear, published complaints and concerns process for students, with defined response timeframes.	Ministry of Education	High
Extend counselling and guidance capacity at all schools.	Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health	High
Provide targeted parent-facing support on subject choice, CSEC entry and post-school pathways at Secondary School, where practical family involvement declines to 79.8%.	Secondary principal; guidance staff	Medium
Review language support provision in light of 35.1% of Forms 4–5 students reporting Creole or Patois and 19.1% reporting Spanish in the home.	Ministry of Education; OECS EDMU	Medium

Table 19: Student support recommendations.

8.5 Inclusion and Equity

Action	Responsible	Priority
Address the physical environment concerns raised repeatedly by secondary students — classroom ventilation and heat, bathroom facilities (particularly girls' facilities), drinking water provision and building repair.	Ministry of Education; BUILTE	Medium
Investigate the 14.3-point gap between girls (88.2%) and boys (73.9%) in Grades 3–6 reporting adequate books and supplies.	Primary heads	Medium
Ensure learning materials provision at Forms 4–5, where only 61.7% report having what they need to learn.	Ministry of Education; secondary principal	High

Table 20: Inclusion and equity recommendations.

8.6 Student Engagement and Leadership

Action	Responsible	Priority
Expand extracurricular provision in direct response to student demand: football, coding and technology, swimming, netball and volleyball, dance, art and craft, and cooking. The gap between 63.8% who enjoy such activity and 27.7% who participate in none is the most immediately closable gap in this report.	Ministry of Education; school leadership; DCYSS	High
Establish a connection between the Student Council at secondary level with a formal reporting channel into Ministry planning, giving structural expression to the voice this census has collected.	Ministry of Education; secondary principal	Medium
Provide playground and safe play provision at primary level, a specific and repeated request across K–2 and Grades 3–6.	Ministry of Education; BUILTE	Medium
Publish a student-facing summary of this census and the actions taken in response, so that students see that their participation produced change.	Ministry of Education	Immediate

Table 21: Student engagement and leadership recommendations.

9. Conclusion

Montserrat asked its students what school is like, and its students answered, all of them, across every school and every year group on the island. That completeness is rare, and it gives this report an authority that sampled surveys cannot claim. What follows from it is not a set of impressions but a national account.

The account is mixed, and it should be read honestly in both directions. Montserrat's youngest children like school, feel safe in it, trust their teachers and believe they can learn. Their families, without exception worth noting, tell them education matters. By any international standard, that is a strong foundation.

The account is also clear that this foundation is not currently carried through to the end of schooling. By Forms 4–5, fewer than four in ten students enjoy school, fewer than half feel they belong, fewer than half believe school is preparing them for the work they want to do, and more than half are not eating breakfast. The system is not failing to start well. It is failing to sustain.

The good news in that framing is that the problem is bounded. It has a location, the transition into secondary and the years that follow, and because Montserrat has one secondary school, it has a single site. Interventions that would be diffuse and expensive in a larger system are specific and reachable.

Several of the actions students themselves proposed cost very little. Football and coding clubs. A kinder playground. Devices used in lessons rather than only in computer periods. Being able to name an adult to go to. Being told why a rule exists. The distance between what students asked for and what a small system can deliver is, in many cases, short.

There is also an obligation attached to this exercise. Five hundred and fifty-five students in Montserrat spent part of a school day telling their Ministry what they think. Some of them were blunt about it. If nothing visible follows, the census will have taught them something about the value of their own voice that no curriculum could undo. The recommendation in this report that matters most may be the simplest: publish what was heard, say what will change, and report back.

Montserrat's contribution to the regional evidence base is significant. Because the island can survey its entire student population in a single exercise, it offers the OECS an unusually clean view of the primary-to-secondary transition, a pattern likely present across the sub-region but harder to isolate where multiple schools and sampling designs blur it. The refreshed ten-year OECS Education Sector Strategy has, in this dataset, a well-defined problem to organise around.

Evidence-based decision-making is only worth the name when the evidence is allowed to be uncomfortable. This one is, in places. It is also, in places, genuinely encouraging. Both parts are true, and both should be acted on.

10. Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of all quantitative indicators

Indicator	K–2	Gr 3–6	F 1–3	F 4–5
School climate				
Like / enjoy school	95.6%	83.2%	40.7%	39.4%
Feel safe at school	94.1%	81.1%	—	—
Know who to go to for help	—	—	71.4%	55.3%
Peers treat each other well / friends are nice	86.8%	41.6%	—	—
Feel I belong / am respected	—	—	52.9%	42.6%
Classroom experience				
Teacher helps me when I struggle	92.6%	90.8%	65.7%	66.0%
Believe I can do well / proud of my work	95.6%	90.8%	65.7%	69.1%
Classes prepare me well for exams	—	—	50.7%	55.3%
Learning skills for my future goals / career	—	—	70.7%	48.9%
Work well with classmates	—	—	61.4%	67.0%
Have the materials I need to learn	—	81.1%	82.9%	61.7%
Technology				
Enjoy / confident using technology to learn	75.0%	79.5%	74.3%	—
School helps me learn to use technology	—	—	—	51.1%
Wellbeing and family				
Family says education is important	95.6%	97.8%	96.4%	97.9%
Family helps with work / talks about goals	—	91.4%	88.6%	79.8%
Eat breakfast every day	96.3%	81.1%	62.9%	41.5%
Enjoy sports, music and art	97.8%	95.7%	72.9%	63.8%

Table 22: Summary of positive-response percentages across all common indicators. Dashes indicate the item was not asked in that instrument version.

Appendix B: Methodology notes

- Positive response = "Yes" (K–2) or "Agree" / "Strongly Agree" (Grades 3–6, secondary). Negative = "No" or "Disagree" / "Strongly Disagree". Uncertain = "Don't know".
- Percentages are calculated on valid responses per item; item non-response was negligible across all four datasets.
- The three-point scales used in K–2 and Grades 3–6 and the five-point scale used at secondary are not strictly equivalent. Cross-band comparisons should be read as indicative of direction and magnitude rather than as exact measurements.

- Thematic percentages in Section 6 represent the proportion of valid open-ended responses to that item in which the theme was identified. Responses may carry more than one theme, so column totals exceed 100%.
- Sub-group cells below $n = 10$ are not reported. Private-school secondary respondents ($n = 4$ and $n = 1$) are excluded from all disaggregated analysis.

Appendix C: Survey instruments

Four instrument versions were administered: Kindergarten to Grade 2 (11 closed items on a three-point emoji scale, 3 open-ended items); Grades 3 to 6 (11 closed items on a three-point verbal scale, 4 open-ended items); Forms 1 to 3 (14 closed items on a five-point Likert scale, 7 open-ended items); Forms 4 to 5 (14 closed items on a five-point Likert scale, 7 open-ended items). Full instruments are available from the OECS Commission.

Appendix D: Figures

- Figure 1: Responses by grade band
- Figure 2: Responses by gender and grade band
- Figure 3: "I like / enjoy going to school"
- Figure 4: Core climate and classroom indicators by grade band
- Figure 5: "Students treat each other well" (Grades 3–6)
- Figure 6: Technology confidence and learning resources
- Figure 7: "I have breakfast every day before school"
- Figure 8: "One thing I would change" — secondary students
- Figure 9: Subjects named most challenging and most enjoyed
- Figure 10: Reported access to devices and connectivity at home
- Figure 11: Gender differences, Forms 4–5