



Czech School  
Inspectorate

**THEMATIC REPORT**

---

# **Distance Learning in Basic and Upper Secondary Schools in the Czech Republic**

**Schools' Approaches, Shifts and Experience  
One Year Since the Outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

| March 2021

2020/2021



# **Distance Learning in Basic and Upper Secondary Schools in the Czech Republic**

*Schools' Approaches, Shifts and Experience  
One Year Since the Outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic*

## **Thematic Report**

---

Tomáš Pavlas

Tomáš Zatloukal

Ondřej Andrys

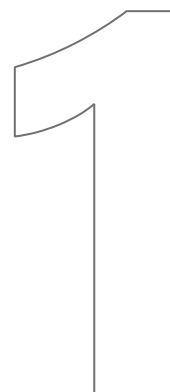
Ondřej Neumajer



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>INVOLVEMENT OF PUPILS IN DISTANCE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>INVOLVING AND SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN DISTANCE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN DISTANCE LEARNING .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>CHANGES IN THE ORGANISATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>EVALUATION IN THE PERIOD OF DISTANCE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>60</b>





# Introduction

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In the month of March 2021, it has been a year since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic. Apart from other areas, the pandemic has also had a very significant impact on education.

At the beginning of April 2020, following an absolutely extraordinary and unexpected situation caused by the ban on pupils being present in person in schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Czech School Inspectorate conducted an extraordinary thematic survey in the form of controlled telephone interviews with the principals of almost 5,000 basic schools (hereinafter also referred to as “BS”) and upper secondary schools (hereinafter also referred to as “USS”) the aim of which was to discuss the implementation of newly set distance learning from various perspectives, to help schools methodically, and to prepare documents for targeting methodological support provided by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The findings of this survey are summarised in the thematic report entitled *Distance Learning in Basic and Upper Secondary Schools in the Czech Republic* issued in May 2020, which is available on the Czech School Inspectorate’s website (direct link [here](#)).<sup>1</sup>

Following the survey, after the resumption of in-class learning at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, the Czech School Inspectorate continued to monitor the impact of the extraordinary measures on both the conditions and course of education directly in schools. The survey also included pupils’ and teachers’ experience and opinions. However, in mid-October 2020, following the outbreak of another wave of the pandemic and the re-imposition of the ban on pupils being present in schools, thematic activities were suspended and the Czech School Inspectorate prepared and issued (in November 2020) a thematic report reflecting the available results of its research, with many methodological recommendations and ideas for increasing the quality of distance learning. The thematic report entitled *Basic School Pupils’ and Teachers’ Experience with Distance Learning in the Second Half of the 2019/2020 School Year* is also available on the Czech School Inspectorate’s website (direct link [here](#)).

In the autumn period of the 2020/2021 school year, the Czech School Inspectorate offered all basic and upper secondary schools the option of methodological consultations on issues related to distance learning in order to help schools address the difficulties they encounter in distance learning. Interest in these methodological consultations was shown by hundreds of schools with which the Czech School Inspectorate discussed issues related to the preparation, organisation, focus and forms of distance learning, content priorities of distance learning, distance learning of pupils with special educational needs (hereinafter also referred to as “SEN”), or evaluation and the provision of feedback or communication with pupils and their legal representatives (hereinafter also referred to as “parents”); the discussion was conducted by telephone, through video calls or in the form of personal visits, as agreed with and required by the school principal. It is also from these activities that the Czech School Inspectorate has obtained a number of findings and information that can be taken into account in evaluating distance learning.

From January 2021, the Czech School Inspectorate continued to carry out thematic inspection activities in basic and upper secondary schools<sup>2</sup> commenced in September 2020, aimed at monitoring the effects of extraordinary measures on both the conditions and course of education in both in-class and distance learning. The aim of these thematic inspection activities is to find out how education in schools is provided in a situation where some pupils were or are present in person (1st and 2nd years of basic education were educated in the in-class mode for most of the monitored period) and most pupils remotely, to help schools evaluate the situation, to find out the approaches applied by schools after many months of experience with distance learning and after a number of methodological recommendations issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Czech School Inspectorate, and other institutions and organisations, to assess the course of both in-class and distance lessons with regard to their focus, content and efficiency, to provide methodologically focused feedback to schools, and, simultaneously, to prepare aggregated documents for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in order to target further methodological support. In addition to virtual observations in online lessons, these thematic inspection activities also include thematically focused interviews with school managements and teachers. The thematic inspection activities with this focus will be carried out until the end of the 2020/2021 school year.

The thematic report that has been presented reflects the findings of the Czech School Inspectorate from various forms of inspection activities and other activities of the authority focused on distance learning in basic and upper secondary schools and implemented **from September 2020 to the end of February 2021**, with an emphasis on the findings made **in January and February 2021** using a representative sample of **385 basic and upper secondary schools** based on **3,539 observed lessons** of synchronous (online) learning and **3,154 interviews** with teachers.

As an illustration, the text also provides **specific examples, procedures and experience of schools**. This information is given in **boxes in italics**.

<sup>1</sup> The abridged version of the report for international audience is available on the OECD website (direct link [here](#)).

<sup>2</sup> The thematic inspection activities were carried out in fully organised basic schools, in basic schools with only the 1st stage, in secondary general schools, and in both *Maturita* and non-*Maturita* fields of secondary technical/vocational schools (hereinafter also referred to as “STS”).





# 2

## Summary of main findings

## 2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

In March 2021, it has been a year since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic, which also had a significant impact on education. The Czech School Inspectorate has been monitoring and evaluating distance learning of pupils from various points of view since the spring of 2020, which allows it to assess shifts in the quality and effectiveness of key aspects of learning remotely.

With the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, among other things due to the existence of a number of methodological documents and suggestions for addressing this issue and also due to the enactment of the obligation to participate in distance learning, it was assumed that in the following period of distance learning there would be a significant reduction in the number of pupils with whom schools had failed to come into contact in the spring of 2020 so these pupils had remained completely out of education in the second half of the 2019/2020 school year. During the Czech School Inspectorate's thematic survey in April 2020, school principals estimated that there could have been about 10,000 such pupils at that time.<sup>3</sup> Although the schools visited by the Czech School Inspectorate as part of the thematic inspection activities in January and February 2021 actually declared a more significant reduction in the number of such pupils, other findings and sources of the Czech School Inspectorate show that this situation is still very unsatisfactory from a countrywide perspective and it is unlikely that there has been a significant and widespread reduction in the number of pupils completely out of education in the 2020/2021 school year. More detailed information will be available after the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports publishes the results of its questionnaire survey which also focused on this issue.

Conversely, the number of pupils who did not or do not attend online distance learning due to technical difficulties but who cooperate with the school and are provided by the school with educational materials and assignments in a different way has actually dropped from the estimated 250,000 in the spring of 2020 to about a fifth, thanks to a number of interventions implemented both at the end of the 2019/2020 school year and in the 2020/2021 school year. However, apart from pupils who cannot participate in online distance learning for technical reasons, there is still a group of pupils who participate in online distance learning irregularly or do not work sufficiently, mainly due to family problems, usually associated with low motivation to learn or with low family support. Most of them are older pupils whose education is demanding even in in-class learning. Unfortunately, this situation further widens the gap in education between pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged and socio-economically advantaged family backgrounds. However, the findings of the Czech School Inspectorate clearly show that where schools look for ways to educate pupils with respect to their very different conditions, they eventually succeed in many cases despite the unfavourable socio-economic backgrounds of such pupils, albeit not fully.

One of the key persons in the school for involving pupils in online distance learning is the class teacher, especially at the 2nd stage of basic schools and in upper secondary schools. For this reason, a positive finding is the increase in the involvement of class teachers in distance learning, especially at the 2nd stage of basic schools.

The effectiveness of education in such a demanding period as long-term distance learning is strongly linked to the degree of pedagogical leadership of teachers and the entire pedagogical process by the school principal. Compared to the period of spring 2020, when, according to the findings of the Czech School Inspectorate, about a third of school principals were definitely not successful in fulfilling their coordination and management role in providing distance learning, the situation has improved significantly in the 2020/2021 school year, and the Czech School Inspectorate has so far identified in its findings fewer than a tenth of school principals who fail to adequately manage the effective organisation and implementation of distance learning so as to be beneficial to pupils.

Continuous monitoring of distance learning in the past year confirms that the demands of distance learning are high for all pupils, even more so for pupils with special educational needs. Although, according to the findings of the Czech School Inspectorate, not all pupils with SEN are involved in online synchronous learning, a positive finding is the high level of using individual consultations or teaching assistants to support these pupils in their distance learning.

In the 2020/2021 school year, most schools spent the introductory weeks of in-class learning in September and early October preparing both pupils and teachers for the transition to online distance learning in case it occurred again in that school year. However, a small number of schools still expected the situation to improve so they did not switch to online distance learning until after a longer period, in some cases in November 2020, in some not even until January 2021; in rare cases, schools switched to online distance learning in February 2021, at the beginning of the second half of the year.

Thanks to financial intervention by the state, schools' technical and digital equipment has significantly improved. Practically, for most of the current part of the 2020/2021 school year, education has been implemented remotely, which has significantly contributed to the development of teachers' digital competences. Given that almost all schools have

<sup>3</sup> Some surveys carried out by non-profit organisations or higher education institutions have found an even higher number.

implemented online distance learning, a significant increase in digital competences is one of the very positive effects of the otherwise complicated pandemic situation.

Along with the increasing duration of distance learning, there has been a growth in the proportion of schools that made changes in educational content and that adequately reduced the subject matter set out in their school educational programmes given the possibilities of distance learning. Compared to the assumptions from the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, at the end of the first half of the year the proportion of teachers who reduced or would reduce the educational content based on experience with distance learning increased by more than a quarter. Maximum reductions were in the content of development-focused subjects and, as the case may be, some knowledge-focused subjects (such as geography, history, homeland studies, chemistry, etc.), less frequently in key subjects such as Czech Language, Mathematics and Foreign Language. Content reductions were least frequent in the *Maturita* fields of secondary technical schools.

The proportion of basic schools that organise online distance learning to the extent according to the in-class learning timetable has also decreased (from 14% to less than 10%). Transferring the in-class learning timetable to the distance form is unsustainable in the long term, which has been pointed out by the Czech School Inspectorate throughout the year in which distance learning has been implemented. Therefore, it should be perceived that the proportions of schools whose extent of synchronous learning has exceeded the limits set out in the Methodological Recommendation for Distance Learning issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are still high.

The findings of the Czech School Inspectorate have shown that the development of digital competences of both teachers and pupils is in most lessons at a sufficient level for online distance learning to be implemented. The schools that did not pay much attention to digital technologies and the development of teachers in working with them before the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 have generally gained on those that previously used the digital environment.

Unfortunately, most schools have little success in respecting the specifics of online distance learning and, in addition to synchronous online learning, do not make sufficient use of other distance learning opportunities, which is not very effective. For the following period, it will be necessary to solve a number of problems brought about by distance learning. One of them is the neglect of the social and psychological development of pupils, regardless of their age. Similarly alarming is the low proportion of lessons in which both the teacher and pupils have their cameras turned on and see each other or in which the cooperation of pupils is purposefully supported (even though it is now already supported by technologies).

The second area with some positive trends is evaluation, as many of the methods for evaluating pupils used in in-class learning are difficult to apply in online distance learning. In continuous evaluation, the proportion of teachers who changed the methods of pupil evaluation during the first half of the 2020/2021 school year has increased by more than 20%. In final evaluation, the principals of a larger proportion of schools have begun to use other methods of final evaluation in addition to the still most frequently used grading. Nevertheless, the area of evaluation and the provision of continuous feedback to pupils is still a major challenge for the future.

The proportion of schools that systematically communicate with pupils' parents about distance learning and adjust it to suit most participants is relatively low. In addition, a high proportion of teachers have been recorded (almost one fifth) who reduced communication with their colleagues compared to in-class learning.





# 3

## Involvement of pupils in distance learning

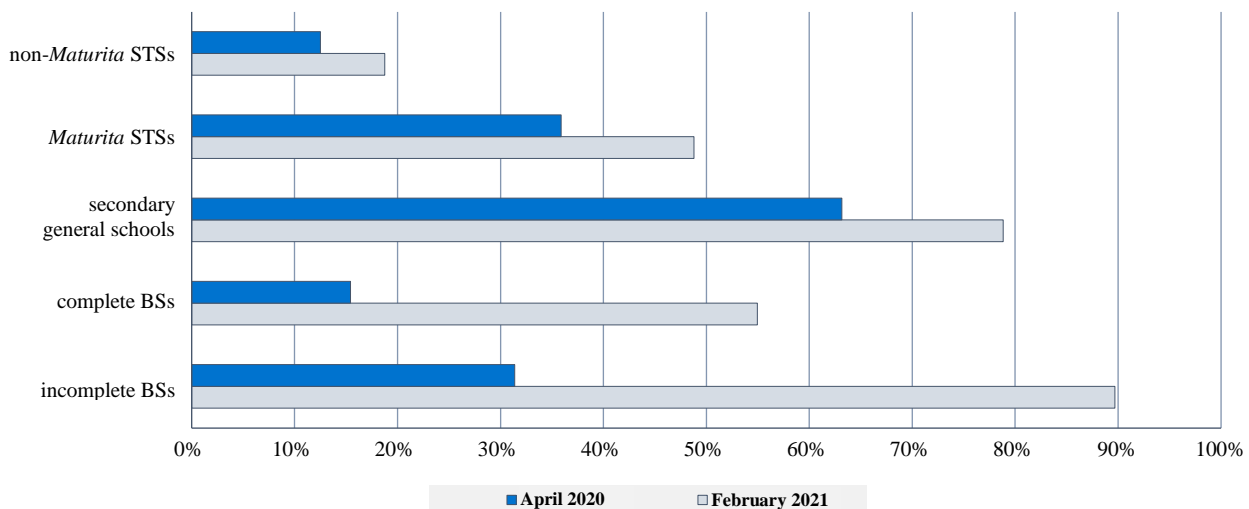
### 3 INVOLVEMENT OF PUPILS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

One of the most important topics of the distance learning period in the spring of 2020 was a relatively high proportion of pupils who were not involved in distance learning in any way, for various reasons, mainly due to lack of digital equipment or connection or due to insufficient motivation and support from their families,<sup>4</sup> as well as a high proportion of pupils who participated in distance learning, but only for receiving assignments and handing them over after completion, not through online lessons and similar forms of communication through digital technologies.<sup>5</sup>

One year after the outbreak of the pandemic, i.e. at the beginning of the second half of the 2020/2021 school year, it appears that the situation in terms of the number of pupils who are, for various reasons, completely out of education and who are not involved in education in any way is most likely not better than in the spring of 2020, even though the schools visited by the Czech School Inspectorate as part of the thematic inspection activities in January and February 2021 declared there was a positive change here as well. However, according to other sources and the findings of the Czech School Inspectorate, it seems that the number of such pupils varies depending on a number of different factors, including the success of the school's communication with their parents.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the level of pupils' uninvolved varies depending on the school's situation; while in some schools an uninvolved pupil is one who does not respond at all or does not collect assignments, whose parents are unable to visit school, etc., in other schools an uninvolved pupil is one who only participates in synchronous learning to a minimal extent, handing in assignments only exceptionally. For this reason, it is always necessary to take into account the actual situation in education, as well as the experience of teachers.

**CHART 1 | Comparison of the proportion of schools with the participation of almost all pupils in online distance learning (situation in schools visited by the Czech School Inspectorate in January and February 2021)**

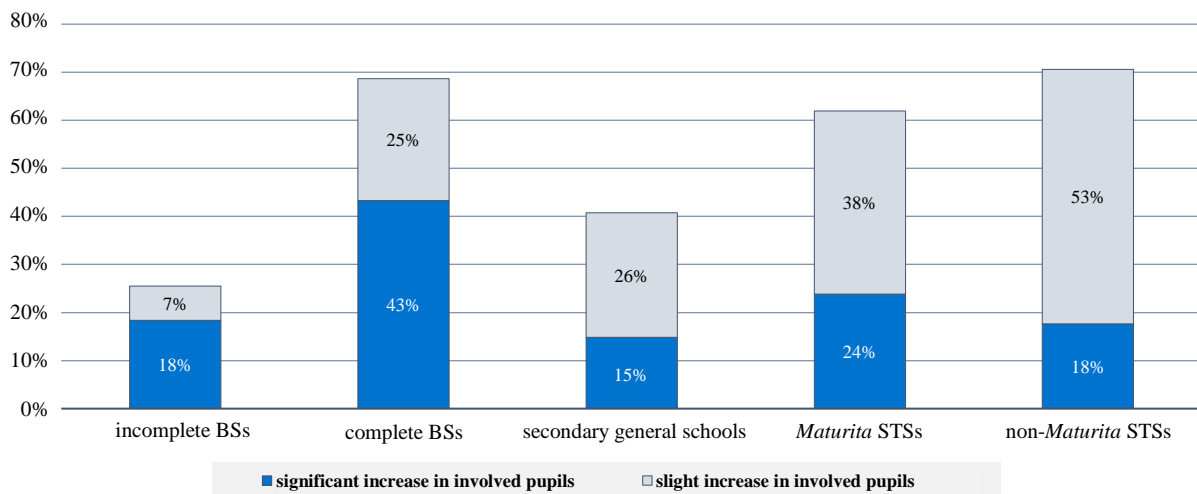


The change in the number of involved pupils is also evident from the evaluations by the principals of the visited schools – they relate their evaluations to the situation throughout the spring of 2020.

<sup>4</sup> In the spring of 2020, school principals estimated the number of such pupils at around 10,000.

<sup>5</sup> In the spring of 2020, school principals estimated the number of pupils involved in this way at approximately 250,000.

<sup>6</sup> More detailed information on the numbers and structure of such pupils will be available after the evaluation of the comprehensive questionnaire survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports during February 2021.

**CHART 2 | Proportion of schools where the number of pupils involved in distance learning increased compared to spring 2020 (situation in schools visited by the Czech School Inspectorate in January and February 2021)**

Distance learning has been mandatory by law since the 2020/2021 school year, which according to the principals of the schools visited by the Czech School Inspectorate in January and February 2021 in their cases significantly contributed to the decrease in the number of pupils without contact with school. What is also very important is the school's intensive communication with the parents of such pupils, and in the event that all the options available to the school fail, the choice of an extreme solution, i.e. involvement of the authority for social and legal protection of children. In this regard, the question remains to what extent schools, having exhausted all possibilities to make these pupils participate in distance learning, used the option to contact the authority for social and legal protection of children. The partial findings of the Czech School Inspectorate show that schools chose such a procedure only rarely. In addition, one of the main reasons for the successful involvement of those pupils who were not involved in the spring of 2020 is the lending of digital equipment for distance learning.<sup>7</sup>

*Change of learning from voluntary to compulsory, improvement in technical equipment in families (distance learning was expected).*

*The school lent equipment to several pupils, and the parents of several other pupils were persuaded to cooperate better with the school.*

*The introduction of compulsory distance learning and the patient work of teachers, who made many parents change their approach. As late as 8 February 2021, other pupils came to the school to borrow equipment.*

The targeted and focused effort of schools and their teachers to really involve all pupils in distance learning was also of great importance.

*The school had prepared pupils for the possibility of distance learning since September 2020. Pupils continuously completed assignments online to get used to the environment. The school continuously contacted legal representatives and pupils of full age in case of problems.*

However, the school management does not always know the reasons for higher pupil involvement in distance learning.

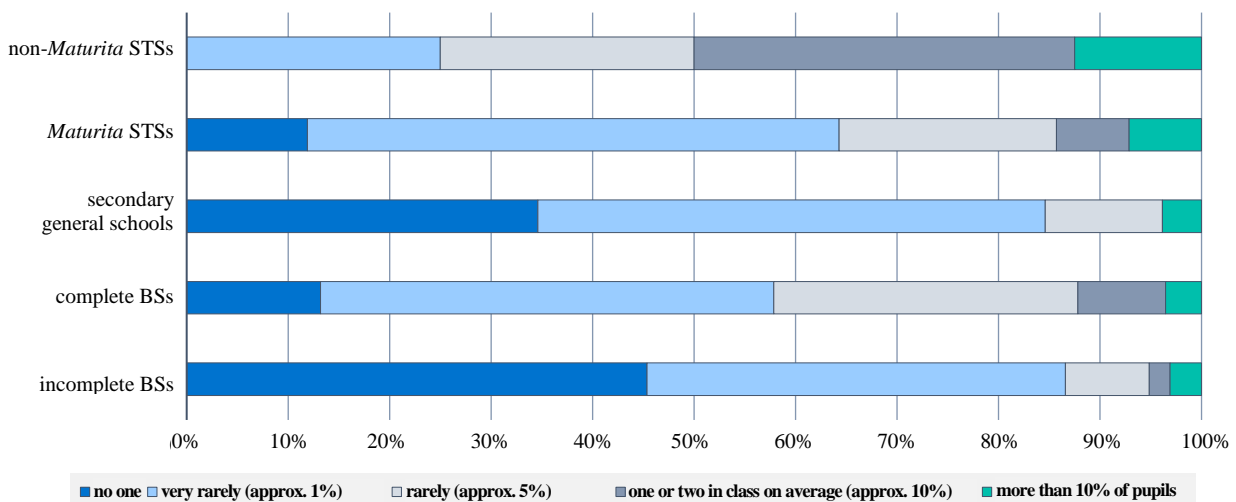
*It is hard to determine. We estimate that it was mainly due to an increase in the stability of the households' daily routine, improvement in the quality of their technical equipment and the fact of getting used to the learning rules that had been set.*

<sup>7</sup> As early as the spring of 2020, based on the results of a survey conducted by the Czech School Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports started working with the organisation Česko.Digital and the Ucimeonline.cz platform to address the lack of digital equipment in schools. Similarly, other non-profit organisations and foundations, as well as some statutory authorities of schools and some regions, became involved in resolving this situation. In the summer of 2020, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports provided schools with approximately CZK 1.3 billion for the purchase of digital equipment, with the possibility of lending it to those pupils who did not have their own equipment at home, etc. Similarly, equipment was also purchased by a number of families if they were able to do so.

The proportion of pupils who were lent digital equipment (by or through their school) was about 3.5% (the highest proportion was in incomplete BSs – approx. 5%, the lowest in non-*Maturita* fields of USSs – approx. 1.5%). Given the estimated number of pupils without digital equipment in the spring of 2020 (according to the then estimate of school principals, it was about 250,000 pupils), this proportion means lending digital equipment to one fifth of them (approx. 50,000 pupils); the remaining group of pupils was provided with digital equipment in a different way – it was mostly purchased by their parents or lent by other organisations without involving the school.

Although almost all pupils are involved in distance learning in some form, some do not participate in online learning.<sup>8</sup> One of the reasons is still deficiencies in their digital equipment or inadequate connection. The proportion of such pupils is around 3%, the worst situation being in non-*Maturita* fields of USSs. According to the Czech School Inspectorate’s spring survey, the principals of basic and upper secondary schools estimated the number of such pupils at about 250,000; at present it is about one fifth (approx. 50,000 pupils). In any case, mainly due to large-scale financial interventions that made it possible to retrofit schools with digital equipment and, if necessary, lend them such equipment, the extent of the impact of problems with digital equipment is much lower than in the spring of 2020.

**CHART 3 | Schools according to the proportion of pupils who do not participate in online synchronous learning due to problems with digital equipment (absence of connection, low quality of connection, lack of computers in the household, absence of computers, etc.)**

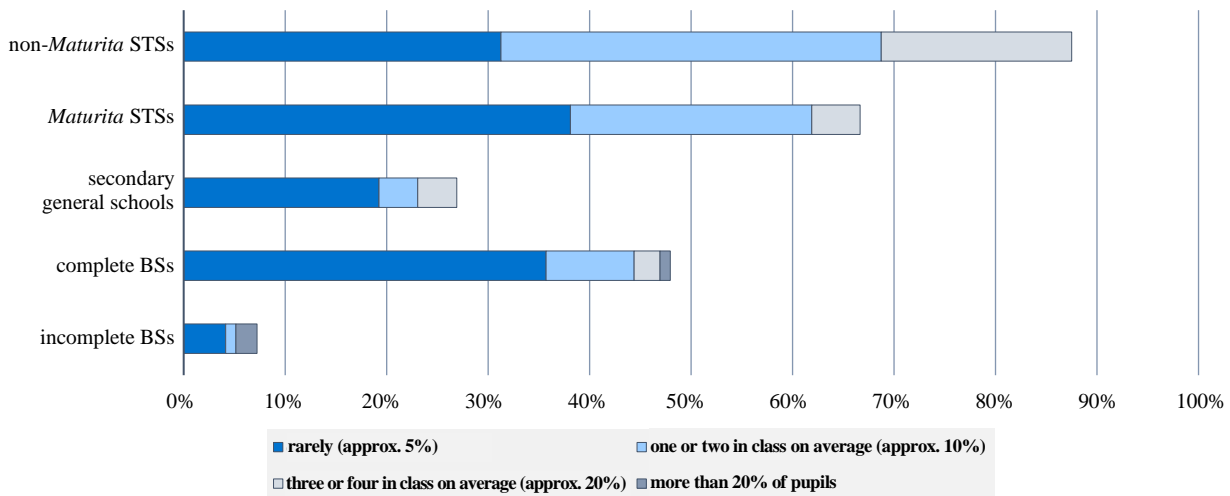


Another reason for some pupils not participating in online learning is their low motivation or the limited motivation of their parents combined with the limited support they provide to their children in learning. This negative trend is naturally more pronounced in schools with a higher proportion of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged family backgrounds.<sup>9</sup> The influence of the family background and socio-economic aspects on children’s learning is very strong in the Czech Republic, and reducing these influences and their impacts is one of the biggest challenges of the Czech education system in terms of increasing the effectiveness of education. This fact has been pointed out by the Czech School Inspectorate, as well as by a number of other organisations, institutions and individual experts, for a long time, and it is clear that with distance learning lasting a very long time these negative influences are even more pronounced.

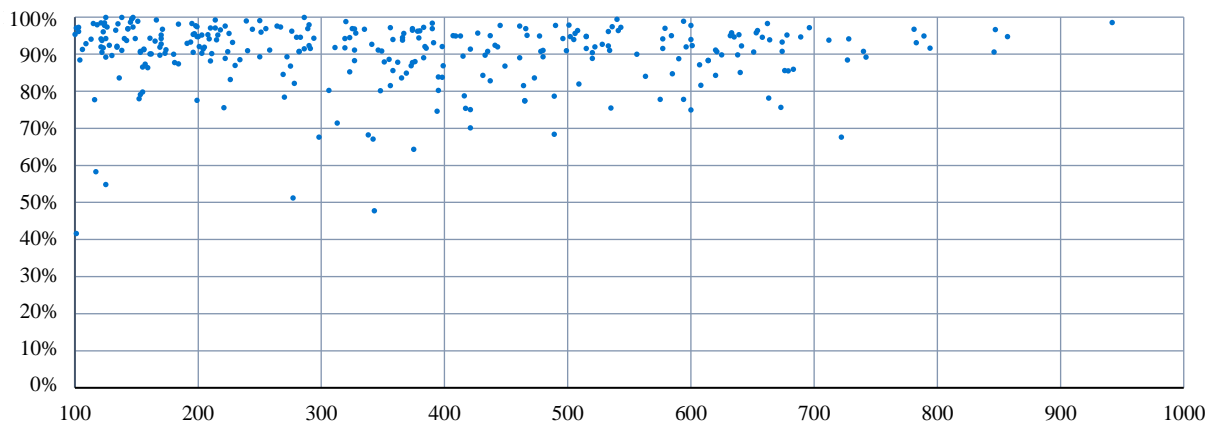
<sup>8</sup> It should be noted here that distance learning and online learning are not the same, because online lessons (synchronous learning) are only a subset of distance learning, which is a much broader complex of activities (consisting of both synchronous and asynchronous activities). Asynchronous activities can be implemented online, but activities without the use of digital technologies are also recommended.

<sup>9</sup> Families living in socially excluded locations, families with low educational achievement, families burdened with distrust, families with housing problems, but also, for example, families with a larger number of children and low incomes.



**CHART 4 | Schools by proportion of pupils who do not participate in online synchronous learning due to family problems or low motivation**

There are significant differences among schools in terms of pupil involvement in synchronous learning, although most schools manage to involve almost all pupils. There are schools with only 70% or lower pupil participation in synchronous learning. Their distribution is well illustrated by the chart below (which only maps basic schools with 100 or more pupils). Schools with lower pupil participation in synchronous learning are mainly located in the Ústí nad Labem Region and then in the Moravian-Silesian Region, Liberec Region and South Bohemian Region and in the territory of the Capital City of Prague.

**CHART 5 | Distribution of schools according to the number of pupils and participation in synchronous learning based on observations**

Pupil participation in online synchronous learning in both cases ranges from almost no electronic communication to occasional involvement in online synchronous learning in some educational fields (in the text, the simplified term “subject” is used for simplification), i.e. the cause in most cases is not the complete absence of digital equipment and internet connection. For this reason, especially for pupils in upper secondary schools who do not participate in online synchronous learning, the school information system (e.g. Bakaláři, Edookit, etc.) is used to transmit assignments and materials for asynchronous learning. The situation is well illustrated by findings from upper secondary schools.

*We communicate with pupils through the school information system, by telephone or through the media used by the pupil. We assign the same tasks as for the pupils who participate in the lessons. Learning materials are usually made available to pupils before the actual lessons. Submitted assignments are evaluated in writing (corrections of submitted assignments) or as part of an individual consultation in agreement with the pupil.*

*We have materials for pupils ready at school; everything is also stored in the Bakaláři system.*

A similar situation occurs with basic school pupils.

*We communicate via Google Classroom or e-mail, and if they don't respond, by phone. We talk to their parents. We offer personal consultations in the period when it is possible. We send selected assignments and study materials in written form. Alternatively, we offer them for collection at school in printed form.*

In basic schools, however, transmission by other than electronic means is more frequent.

*I print out the assignment for one pupil, hand it over once a week and provide consultations if she comes to the school in person. However, she has a problematic family background, and cooperation with her parents is difficult. The second pupil has consultations every day, and I can see she's been making great progress.*

Collecting assignments in the school also occurs in upper secondary schools, especially in non-Maturita fields.

*We communicate by phone. Everyone collects their assignment once a week, then has to return them on the designated day, and then they get them back corrected along with new ones. I usually evaluate their work in writing in the form of comments or by phone.*

In the case of paper submission of documents, it is often a regular weekly event.

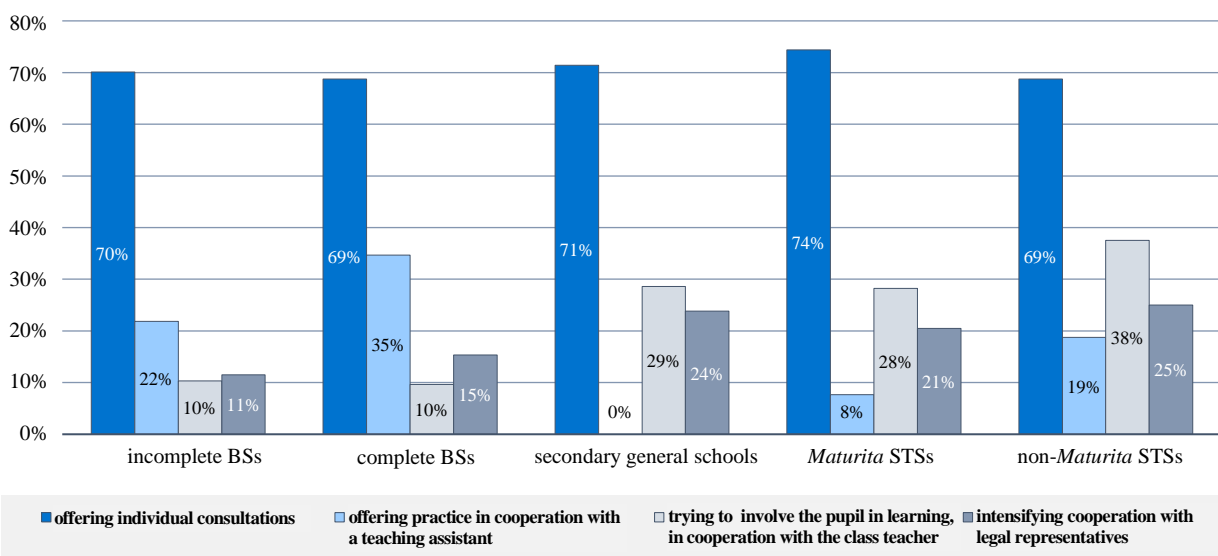
*The subject matter is always prepared for the pupil in printed form in the school. The pupil collects it every week. In terms of the content, it is the same subject matter and assignments as in synchronous learning. The pupil collects the evaluation of their work every week together with new subject matter.*

There are not always identical assignments, with individualisation being more common especially in basic schools.

*I work with pupils individually, assigning tasks that they are able to handle. I evaluate them in writing in the workbook or in other written form.*

To support pupils who do not achieve the desired outcomes, often due to problems with involvement in distance learning or, as the case may be, difficulties in managing the specifics of distance learning in the concept of the specific school, schools most often provide individual consultations, both online and in person. To support pupils, schools also use teaching assistants or, as the case may be, class teachers.

**CHART 6 | Forms of assistance provided to pupils with poor outcomes**



Individual consultations are a very suitable way for greater involvement of pupils who participate in distance learning insufficiently or do not fulfil the assigned tasks remotely, etc. In general, the support that best meets the needs and capabilities of the specific pupils and their parents is crucial.

*In agreement with parents, teachers carry out individual consultations at any time and in various forms (in cases where the pupils themselves want to) or determine tutoring (in cases where the pupils themselves don't initially want to, but the school considers it beneficial for the pupil's progress). Lending laptops, adjusting the timetable so that one PC in the family can be used by three siblings. Any pupil can be given support.*

Individual consultations at some schools also take the form of certain synchronous learning.

*Weaker pupils stay with the teacher in the online lesson when other pupils have independent work. We also use personal consultations at school.*

Sometimes cooperation with non-profit organisations is also used, which was relatively intense especially in the spring period of the previous school year.

*We also use cooperation with Cheiron, which helps us with the distribution of assignments or tutoring.*

In approximately 10% of basic schools, their management also said they used templates (through the Operational Programme Research, Development and Education) for tutoring.

*The school also offers tutoring and a reading and logics club – within templates.*

There is often a wide range of forms of support which the school adapts appropriately.

*We provide support to pupils with different mother tongues through individual online tutoring with the help of students and teachers on maternity leave who work with teachers. We have made changes in the use of templates in favour of tutoring, involving a school assistant for communication with pupils in Czech.*

Teaching assistants were used not only for the support provided to pupils with SEN, which is discussed in the following chapter, but also for the overall support for distance learning.

*Teaching assistants participate in online lessons during distance learning, help teachers organise lessons and attendance records, communicate with both pupils and legal representatives, and provide individual assistance to pupils with SEN.*

*Teaching assistants are used to support pupils who do not catch up in different ways.*

*The teaching assistant is involved in educational activities in the class, supporting not only pupils with SEN, but also others who need it at the moment. A natural positive interaction is built in the class between the teaching assistant and all pupils in the class.*

*Through online learning, the teaching assistant pays individual attention to pupils with a recognised need for support and to others who need the subject matter explained to them again or need to absorb the acquired knowledge better.*

*Teaching assistants are effectively involved in distance learning; under the guidance of teachers, they organise online individual learning and consultations at school not only for pupils in need of support.*

The specific examples of support provided by teaching assistants in the following illustrations are inspiring.

*The school assistant successfully helped to manage communication online (for example, with pupils who are ashamed of their different living conditions) – by communicating in pairs until the pupil gained confidence and engaged in online learning with other classmates.*

*Effective involvement of the teaching assistant in education (after a joint introduction, she disconnected along with one pupil to work independently for about 15 minutes).*

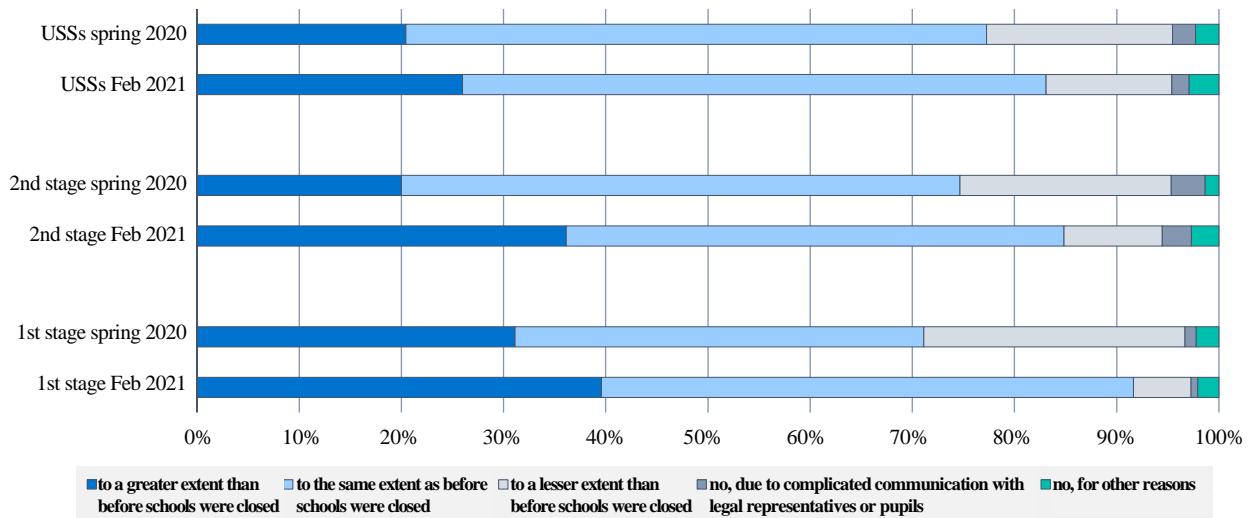
*For a time a group of weaker pupils from one village was visited in their homes by the teaching assistant to help them with learning.*

The importance of the class teacher is especially evident at the 2nd stage of basic schools and in upper secondary schools, where the class teacher is often a key intermediary for involving pupils in regular learning and an important person if there is any problem during distance learning.

It is a positive finding that since the spring of 2020 the proportion of class teachers who have succeeded in fulfilling their role to a greater extent has increased. Unfortunately, in upper secondary schools, where the role of the class

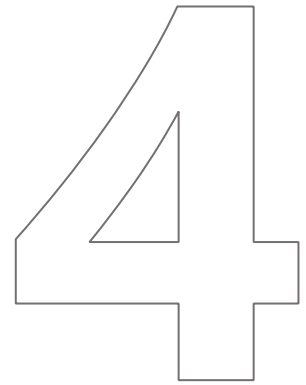
teacher can be a significant help to pupils in coping with difficulties in distance learning, the increase in the proportion was the lowest.

**CHART 7 | Changes in the successful fulfilment of the role of class teacher during distance learning**



Over the past year, the most significant change could be seen in pupils involvement in distance learning, but the approach of schools to its organisation has also changed. The number of pupils who avoid distance learning is many times smaller than in the spring period and corresponds to the number of pupils whose education is more complicated even during standard in-class learning. The continuous findings show that most schools tried to find effective ways to support all pupils and involve in the educational process even those pupils who had various problems with their participation.

Similarly, approach to the organisation of online distance learning has significantly improved, although examples from the opposite end of the spectrum can also be seen. Despite the recommendations from the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year for schools to prepare for online distance learning, the managements of some schools delayed its introduction during the autumn, believing that the pandemic situation would improve and that it would soon be possible to return to in-class learning and, therefore, it was not worth addressing the implementation of distance learning. These schools then did not accept or introduce distance learning, for example, until January 2021, when they found out that the pandemic situation was not developing well and that their original assumption would obviously not apply. For a small number of schools, the last impulse for the transition to online distance learning was that they might have been visited by the Czech School Inspectorate. Based on the sample of schools visited so far, it can be stated that there were about 2% of such schools in this sample.



# Involving and supporting pupils with special educational needs

## 4 INVOLVING AND SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The difficulty of involving pupils in distance learning is most pronounced for pupils with SEN, especially in the case of online synchronous learning. Their involvement in regular online learning was lower in the lessons visited online by the Czech School Inspectorate in January and February 2021 than in the case of other pupils without SEN. The level of involvement of pupils with SEN in regular online lessons was highest at the 2nd stage of basic schools and, conversely, lowest in non-*Maturita* fields of USSs.

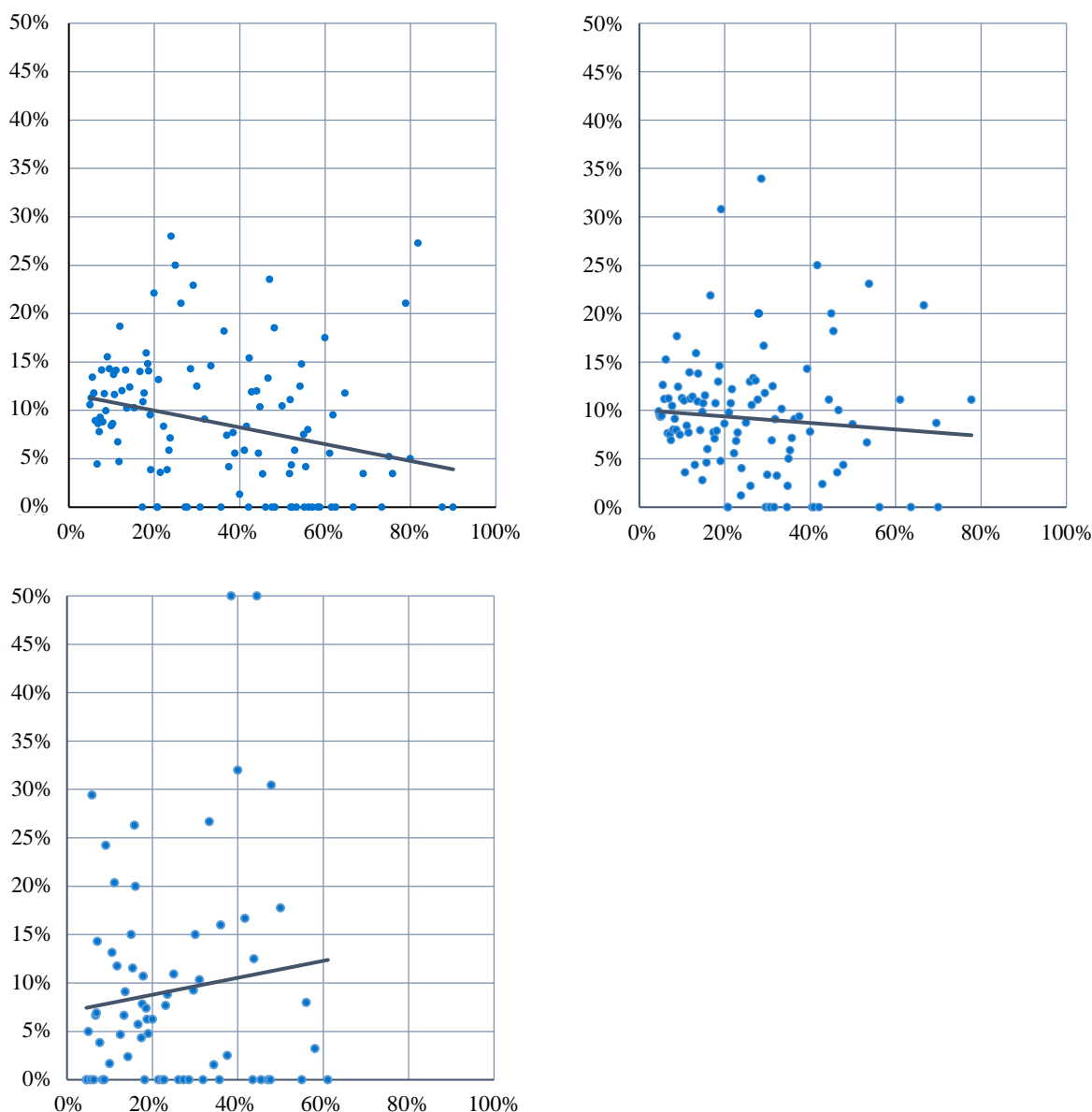
**TABLE 1 | Proportions of pupils with SEN involved in online synchronous learning**

	1st stage of BS	2nd stage of BS	secondary general school field	<i>Maturita</i> fields	non- <i>Maturita</i> fields
proportion of pupils with SEN belonging to classes in observed online lessons	10.8%	10.1%	2.5%	4.0%	8.9%
<b>proportion of (all) pupils who were actually present during observations in online lessons</b>	<b>88.2%</b>	<b>91.5%</b>	<b>92.8%</b>	<b>85.9%</b>	<b>79.6%</b>
<b>proportion of pupils with SEN who were actually present during observations in online lessons</b>	<b>87.7%</b>	<b>89.2%</b>	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>71.5%</b>
proportion of pupils with SEN who were supposed to be present but were not	12.3%	10.8%	12.1%	15.4%	28.5%

The proportions of pupils with SEN who did not participate in the observed online synchronous learning lessons obviously do not mean that these pupils with SEN remain outside distance learning in their schools, but only indicate the degree of their involvement in online synchronous learning. These pupils are involved in education in other ways by their schools, for example, through individual consultations, with the support of a teaching assistant, etc. Nevertheless, this situation should be perceived, because online synchronous learning is the dominant element of distance learning and is also the most effective.

The different approach to the education of pupils is also evident from the comparison of the absence level of pupils in synchronous learning and the proportion of pupils with SEN in a given class/group. While both at the 1st stage and partly also at the 2nd stage of BSs it applies that the higher the proportion of pupils with SEN in a given class or group, the lower the total absence, there is a clear inverse relationship in non-*Maturita* fields of USSs, i.e. the more pupils with SEN, the fewer pupils participate in learning overall.

**CHART 8 | Distribution of the proportion of pupils with SEN in the class/group and the proportion of absent pupils with SEN in synchronous learning, with a linear trend line (1st stage of BS, 2nd stage of BS and non-Maturita fields of USS)**



**Legend:** *x-axis* – distribution of the proportion of pupils with SEN in the class/group; *y-axis* – proportion of absent pupils with SEN in synchronous learning; **left** – 1st stage of BS; **right** – 2nd stage of BS; **bottom** – non-Maturita fields of USS)

Best practices for involving pupils with SEN include the use of group work in online synchronous learning. Schools either choose a separate group in which they also use the cooperation of a teaching assistant or, conversely, divide pupils with SEN evenly into groups.

*In asynchronous learning, content is shared via Microsoft Teams and, for pupils with SEN, it is provided in the form of group work with a teaching assistant.*

*In the online environment, we use rooms for groups of pupils, with a special group for pupils with SEN together with a teaching assistant.*

*When divided into groups, pupils are divided alphabetically, but pupils with SEN are divided into groups evenly.*

*From the point of view of implementing online work in groups, the even assignment of pupils with SEN to groups has proved successful.*

According to teachers, the teaching assistant, who more noticeably substitutes the teacher in education, is definitely a significant asset in the distance learning of pupils with SEN.

*One pupil with SEN has problems, so the teacher cooperates with the teaching assistant, who sends assignments. The assistant completes them with the pupil. The teacher then checks them and evaluates the pupil's work.*

*The teaching assistant provides online support for pupils with SEN based on information from the teacher.*

*All pupils participate in online learning and one pupil with SEN is taught separately in Mathematics with the teaching assistant in the after-school club, doing relatively well.*

*Every day, the teaching assistant communicates with the pupil with third-level support measures (by phone and through video calls), and individual consultations with the teaching assistant and the teacher have also been set up. The assistant also works with other pupils with SEN.*

In addition to the support and individual care of the teaching assistant, consultations at school or, for example, online tutoring are also organised for pupils.

*Regular consultations with teachers and teaching assistants are provided to pupils with different mother tongues, as well as to pupils with SEN.*

*The teacher works more intensively with pupils with SEN, for example, in the form of online tutoring.*

*Pupils with SEN are offered consultations, and special educational care subjects have also been implemented.*

*Online tutoring for four pupils with SEN has been introduced, at regular times and with an individual approach.*

*Consultation hours in school in person; pupils with SEN also work with the teaching assistant in person in the school.*

*Individual consultations; pupils with SEN at the 4th level of support have individual education with the help of a teaching assistant.*

The above examples are all from the 1st stage of BSs; at the 2nd stage of BSs, teachers much more often complain about the difficulties in distance learning of pupils with SEN.

*It is difficult for me to help pupils with SEN, as the allotted instruction time is short (only 30 minutes of online learning), especially for pupils who would need it.*

*Gap-fill exercises as independent homework have not worked with pupils with SEN, because they are not able to complete them without assistance.*

*Overall, distance learning for pupils with SEN has low effectiveness.*

However, schools much more often transfer educational responsibilities to parents.

*Greater involvement of parents in the preparation of pupils with SEN for learning has proved successful.*

*Pupils with SEN have problems with digital competences; for this reason, the school communicates intensively with families.*

*With regard to pupils with SEN, the outcomes improved if legal representatives were involved.*

Teaching assistants and individual consultations are also used at the 2nd stage of BSs.

*In cooperation with the teaching assistant, assistance in the form of individual education is offered (for example, for a pupil with SEN – sending problems and providing help in their calculation).*

*For a pupil with SEN who has minimal outcomes, the teacher prepares teaching materials which are delivered by the teaching assistant.*

*For a pupil with SEN, communication is provided by the teaching assistant, who mediates the transfer of assignments.*

*I use a teaching assistant for consultations for pupils with SEN.*

*I use tutoring with a teaching assistant for pupils with SEN.*

Although individual consultations are also used in non-*Maturita* fields of USSs, teachers are not very successful in involving pupils with SEN in distance learning at a sufficient level.

Unfortunately, involvement of pupils with SEN in distance learning has not improved evenly over the past year. At the 1st stage of BSs, schools are much more successful in setting the cooperation among the teaching assistant, teacher and specific pupil in long-term distance learning than at the 2nd stage, where many teachers still do not see cooperation



with the teaching assistant to plan teaching organisation as a standard and necessary procedure. Therefore, schools often transfer responsibility to parents in an undesirable way, which is certainly not a way that could be accepted. In upper secondary schools, communication with parents is often not even sufficiently used, and pupils with SEN are often given full responsibility for their learning, even though teachers are aware that many of them find it difficult without assistance.





# 5

## Using digital technologies in distance learning

## 5 USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Almost all of the basic and upper secondary schools that were visited implemented distance learning using digital technologies with a combination of online learning and other educational activities implemented offline. In this area, compared both to the spring period of the 2019/2020 school year and to the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, distance learning has significantly improved and shifted, which is undoubtedly due to the very well-prepared Methodological Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for Distance Learning issued in September 2020.<sup>10</sup>

However, in a few rare cases the Czech School Inspectorate has also identified opposite cases, where some schools did not start implementing online lessons until January 2021 or even until the second half of the 2020/2021 school year. Such isolated cases are usually caused by the poor quality of the school management and very poor work of the school principal, against which pressure is also exerted by pupils' parents. The role of the statutory authority of these schools and the degree of its interest in the quality of education they provide also raise questions. This may be illustrated by the following example.

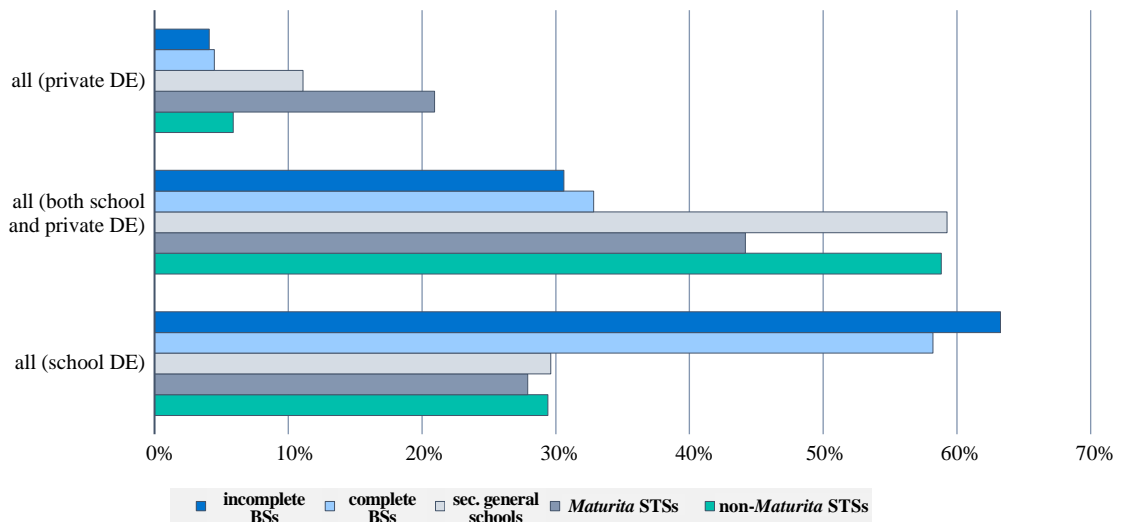
*On 12 January 2021, a parent petition was handed to the school with a request to start online learning immediately, especially for the main subjects: Mathematics, Czech Language, Physics and Foreign Languages. During the inspection, a very low proportion of synchronous online learning was found, only in Czech Language, Foreign Language and Chemistry; in Mathematics, online synchronous learning was not provided at all. Only English teachers have been teaching online since the autumn period, two teachers since the spring of the 2019/2020 school year. The German Language teacher started teaching in January, when she was equipped with a school laptop.*

A different situation occurred in some basic schools educating a higher proportion of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These schools then tried to implement distance learning in other forms.

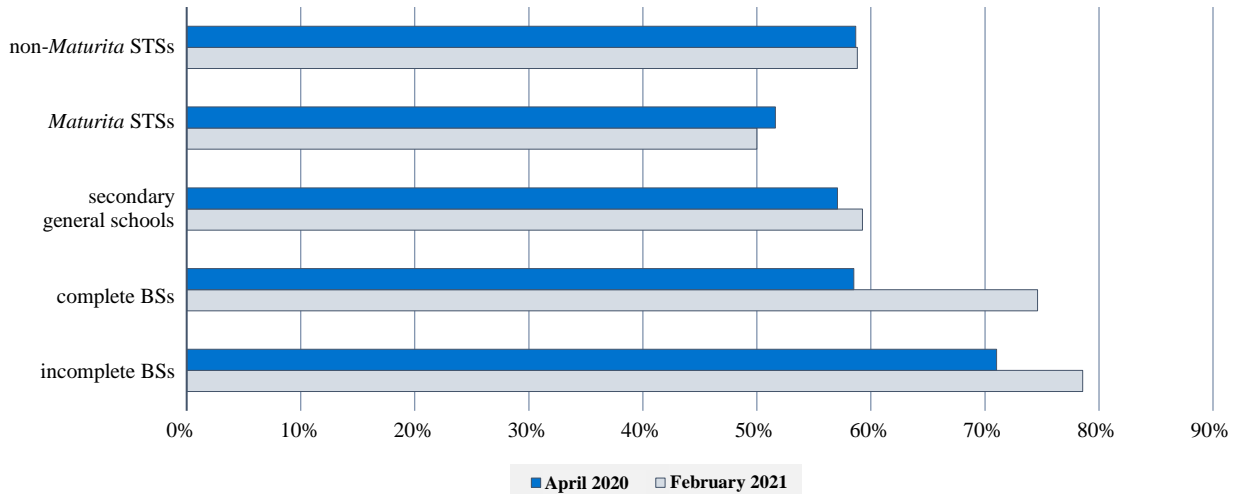
*Although it is difficult to implement online synchronous learning (due to the pupils' socio-economic backgrounds), all pupils, with one exception, are involved in learning in the form of written assignments, which they regularly collect at school and complete at home. The school also has a set schedule of daily individual consultations, and pupils are interested in them. The set system is functioning.*

Teachers usually use school digital equipment to implement the online part of distance learning. Almost all schools already have digital equipment to a sufficient extent, and although its technical parameters may vary, it is sufficient for implementing online distance learning at a basic level. The optimal condition is the equipment that allows teachers, if necessary, to implement online distance learning from home using school digital equipment, not their own. In basic schools, more than three quarters of the digital equipment is owned by the school. In upper secondary schools, less than three fifths of the digital equipment is owned by the school. The proportion of schools where digital equipment would not be available to at least most of the teachers is less than one per cent, with upper secondary schools predominating.

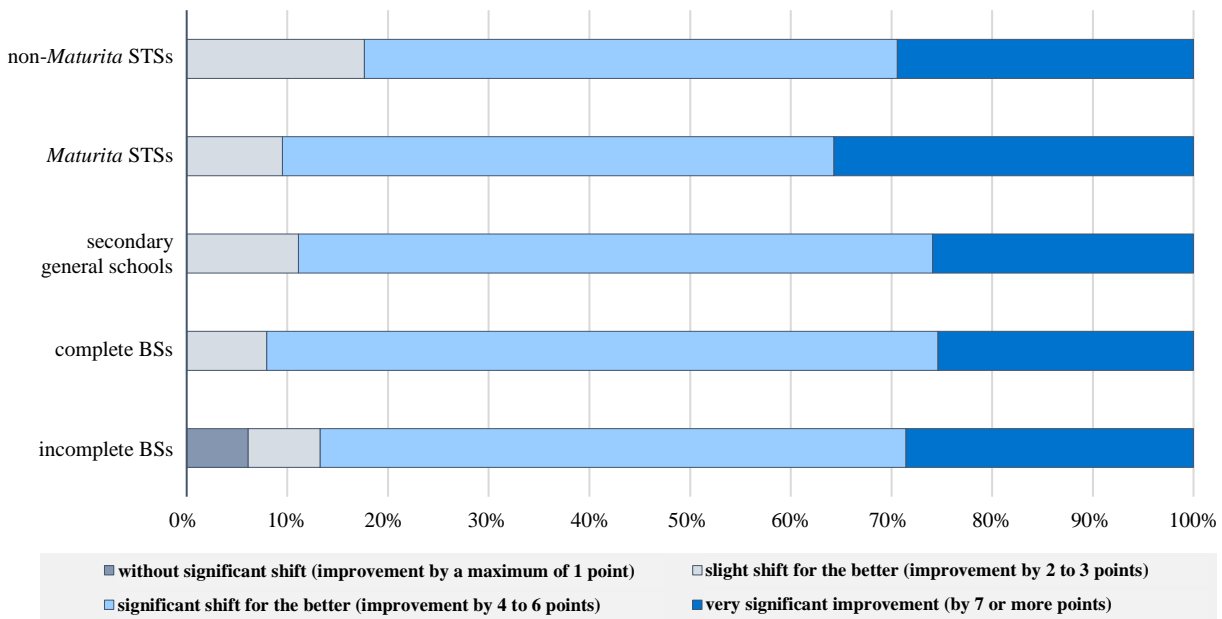
<sup>10</sup> The methodology and related documents are available at [www.edu.cz](http://www.edu.cz) (direct link [here](#)).

**CHART 9** | Schools according to the proportion of teachers with available digital equipment (DE) enabling online synchronous learning (multimedia computer with camera, microphone and internet connection) from home

The comparison of the situation in the use of digital technologies shows that the most significant shift has occurred in fully organised basic schools, which, compared to school principals' statements from April 2020, have more school digital equipment available this school year at the appropriate level to ensure synchronous learning from teachers' homes.

**CHART 10** | Changes in the proportion of teachers who had school digital equipment available for the implementation of online synchronous learning from home

Over the past year, there has also been a significant improvement in teachers' digital competences. Mastering the use of digital technologies in distance learning is an area where significant positive progress has been made. It was difficult for most school principals to comment on the quality of teachers' digital competences after the start of distance learning in the spring of 2020, because it was only during its implementation that they found out what demands were placed by distance learning on teachers in terms of using digital equipment. For this reason, they could only assess the shift of most school teachers on the nine-point scale with hindsight. With the exception of a small group of teachers from the 1st stage of BSs who apparently had not used digital technologies much before, there is a high degree of agreement across schools. Approximately 30% of the principals assessed the shift in the development of digital competences as a very significant improvement and 60% as a more significant shift to a better level.

**CHART 11** | Changes in the levels of teachers' digital competences compared to the situation before the start of distance learning in the spring of 2020 on a scale from 1 to 9

The successful development of digital competences was influenced by the support provided to teachers or, as the case may be, ensured or found by the teachers themselves. A sufficient amount of digital equipment and its quality were of fundamental importance.

*The school management provided us with digital equipment (laptops, graphics tablets).*

*What helped me was the purchase of better equipment that we use.*

*We received new technical equipment in December.*

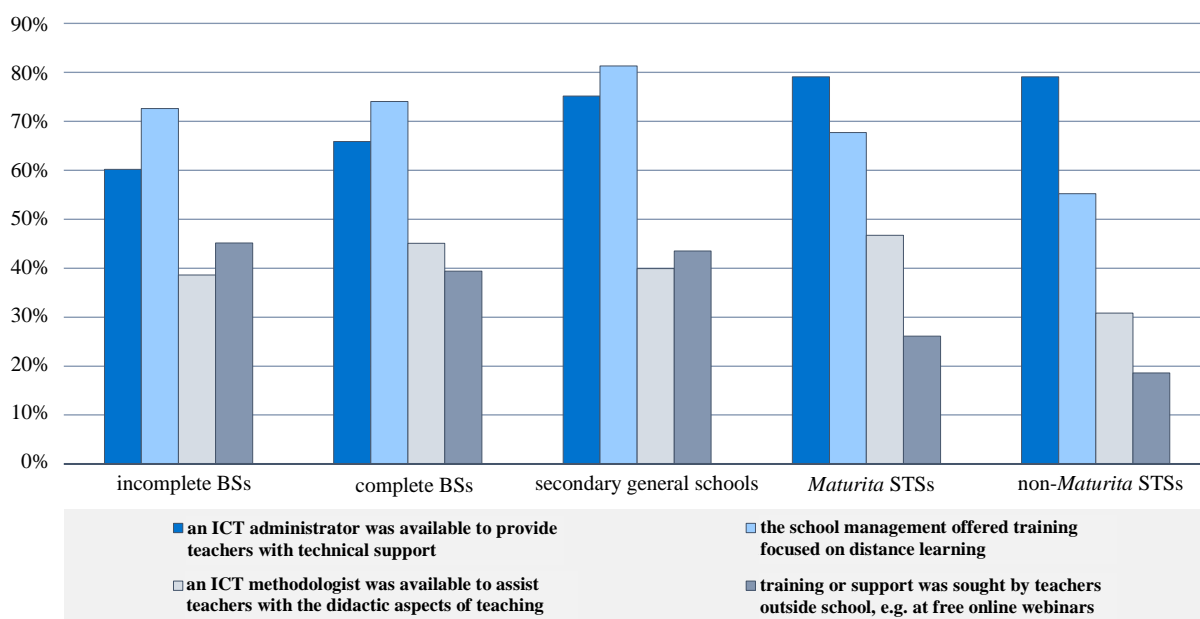
What persisted in some schools was the insufficient coordination role of the school principal. Support for teachers is crucial and its absence was a mistake in the spring, but the same mistakes after a year of distance learning are evidence of a fundamental failure in school management.<sup>11</sup>

*We have a very difficult situation with the ICT administrator (the situation with the school's computer equipment is sad, and there is little willingness on its part to support teachers). We have to help ourselves. Laptops are all different and often incompatible with each other.*

*During distance learning, I had to return a better computer, and I got a less powerful and older one. I'm not satisfied with the technical support. The school can only use services of a shared ICT coordinator, so the handling of requests through the deputy principal is inflexible.*

Most teachers stated that they could use ICT administrators and that the management offered them training focused on distance learning. Support provided by ICT administrators and methodologists was higher in upper secondary schools, as their role in basic schools was often performed by teachers.

<sup>11</sup> The Czech School Inspectorate drew attention to the lack of coordination on the part of about one third of school principals in the first period of distance learning in the spring of 2020 in the thematic report from May 2020. The coordination role of school principals is absolutely crucial for the successful mastering of distance learning.

**CHART 12** | Proportion of teachers according to support received for the implementation of distance learning

The following situation demonstrates appropriate cooperation and support.

*Friendly approach and help (training and continuous assistance provided to teachers) from the ICT teacher, who created clear manuals for distance learning for both pupils and teachers. With the consent of the pupils, lessons are recorded to be available to them for learning at home.*

A good working atmosphere in the teaching staff plays an important role in the support.

*I received support thanks to mutual training in the teaching staff. We tested online communication from the pupil's position (how the pupil sees and hears the teacher, how the pupil sees the presented materials, etc.). In addition, we share experience with our colleagues.*

*Compared to spring, it's great. We have excellent conditions and our ICT specialist is a professional.*

In basic schools, members of school management often played a key role in the support.

*The deputy sent us links to videos for distance learning on the internet. My colleagues and I help each other.*

*The management provided us with training for the Microsoft Teams platform. It also provided access to interactive textbooks. My school colleagues and I share experience.*

Some teachers also found support outside school, for example, on social networks.

*I use links from teacher groups. I attended Google Classroom training at the beginning of distance learning.*

*I use self-study, participate in groups on Facebook and talk to my colleagues. I use internet materials and information.*

*As part of the Erasmus project, I communicate about the problems of current distance learning with foreign teachers.*

However, other teachers rely more on themselves.

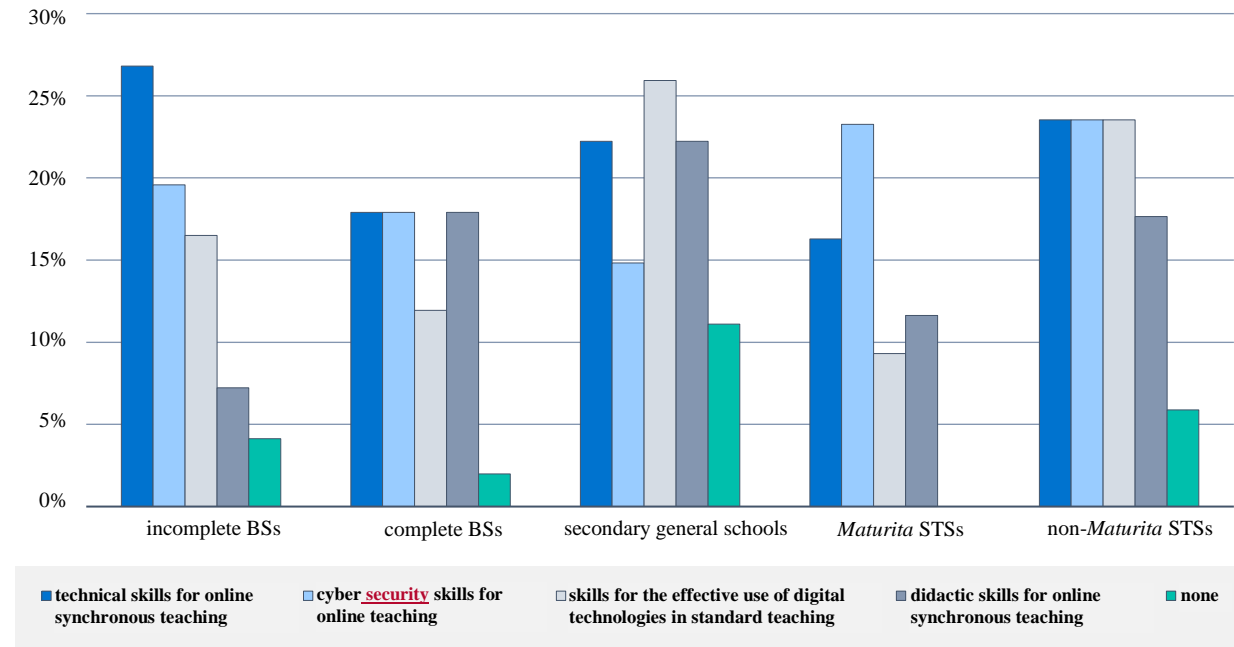
*I'm self-taught, using a trial-and-error method.*

*I try to go my own way in distance learning.*

Although there is a marked shift in the mastering of digital competences, school managements often expressed the need for further teacher training focused on these skills. In most schools, the educational needs were individually very different, depending on the situation of the individual teachers.

While in the spring of 2020 the focus on the basic mastering of digital technologies and technical mastering of video conferencing tools prevailed, the interest in controlling digital platforms for online distance learning has shifted to the – currently more prominent – didactic mastering of online distance learning.

**CHART 13** | Distance learning skills and digital competences that are most lacking in schools

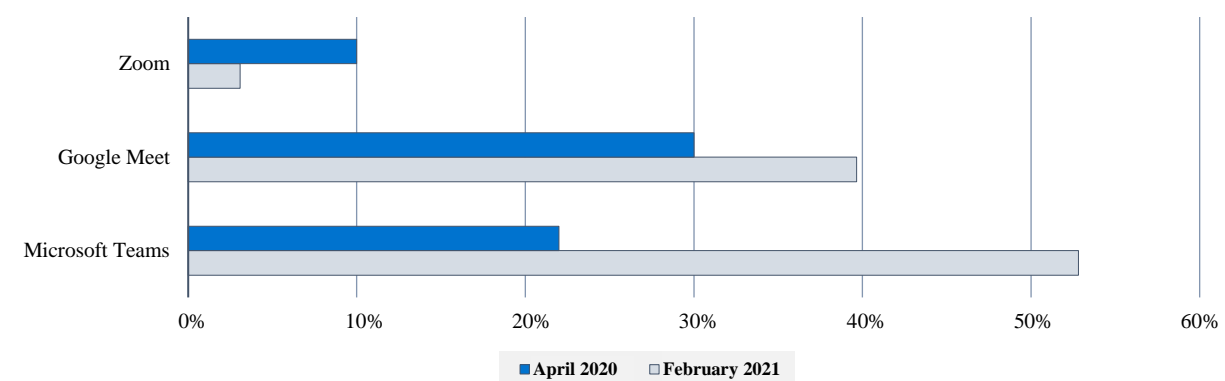


The importance of skills development is crucial, but if the school management underestimates it as in the following example, it affects the quality of distance learning.

*The teachers have insufficient skills to teach in Google Classroom. The school management no longer trains them; beginners, intermediate and more advanced users were each only provided with one training session in August and September 2020. However, not all the teachers participated in these training sessions and the school management did not further verify the quality of technical provision or use of Google tools during distance learning.*

The Czech School Inspectorate's observations in online synchronous learning show that – compared to the spring period of the 2019/2020 school year, when teachers tried different ways of teaching – there are two predominant video conferencing systems. Microsoft Teams is predominantly used, and communication tools from the spring, such as WhatsApp, Skype and Facebook Messenger, have either become completely marginal or have ceased to be used for distance learning entirely.

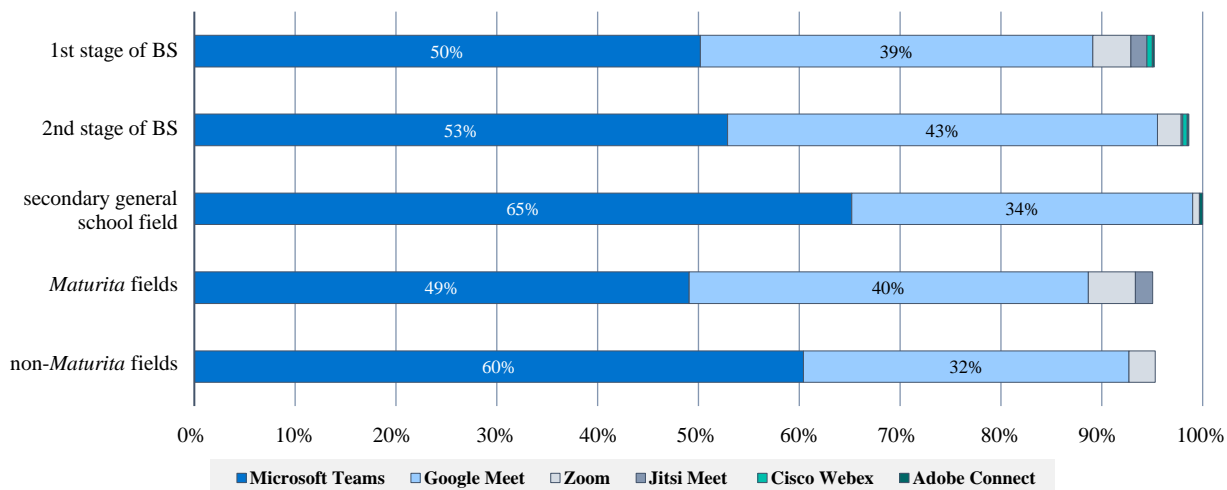
**CHART 14** | Comparison of the use of video conferencing systems at the beginning of distance learning and at present





In contrast to the situation from the spring of 2020, when a single school platform was only used by about 50% of schools, the same video conferencing system was recorded in all observed lessons in up to 90% of the schools. Such a shift must definitely be assessed as positive.

**CHART 15 | Video conferencing systems used in observed online synchronous learning**



Among other video conferencing systems, Skype appeared most frequently in basic schools and Discord in upper secondary schools. The systems that rarely appeared at the 1st stage of basic schools included WhatsApp, and in secondary technical schools even Facebook Messenger.

The specific situation at the 1st stage of basic schools, with pupils who have mostly not yet been taught ICT and have had to learn everything gradually, is characterised by a high level of difficulty for teachers, pupils and their parents. However, most of these pupils now manage everything at an acceptable level, although often thanks to the significant initial or ongoing help of their parents.

*There has been a significant improvement in the pupils' digital skills in the class.*

*Initially, more pupils had problems, but now there are no problems in learning.*

*There has been a positive shift in the use of digital technologies by the pupils in the class (they manage to take a picture, of a worksheet or a page in their workbook with their mobile phone, send it, etc.).*

*Initially, the pupils at the 1st stage of basic school had problems, but gradually there has been a great improvement.*

Teachers often had to provide support to parents until their children acquired the necessary skills.

*Pupils have managed everything. At the beginning, the principal and I went to the families and also taught the parents.*

*Initially, the cooperation of parents was necessary (especially in handing in assignments). Now pupils manage everything without any problems.*

The importance of the active approach of the school management is well illustrated by the following situation.

*Since the spring, the school has made a change in mutual communication – it now only uses Zoom and provides online consultations with teachers. Based on the interest (for example, problems in the family), the school provided equipment to the pupils, as well as “prepaid cards” (part of which was purchased with the assistance of the statutory authority). The school management responded to the interest of the legal representatives, also providing training for them to become acquainted with how to work with the school system.*

The use of digital technologies for online distance learning has changed significantly over the past year. On the one hand, the overall digital equipment has improved significantly, but the platforms and video conferencing tools used have also changed, including their unification at the level of the school and individual teachers. Similarly, teachers' digital competences have significantly increased; their intensive development was already shown by information from the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year.



# 6

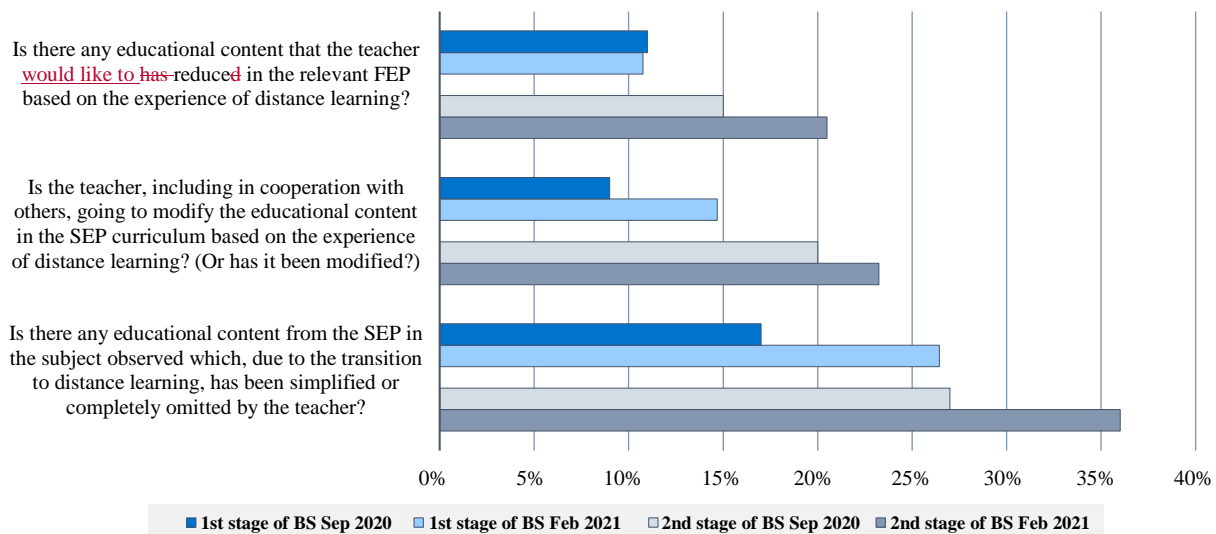
## Changes in educational content in distance learning

## 6 CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN DISTANCE LEARNING

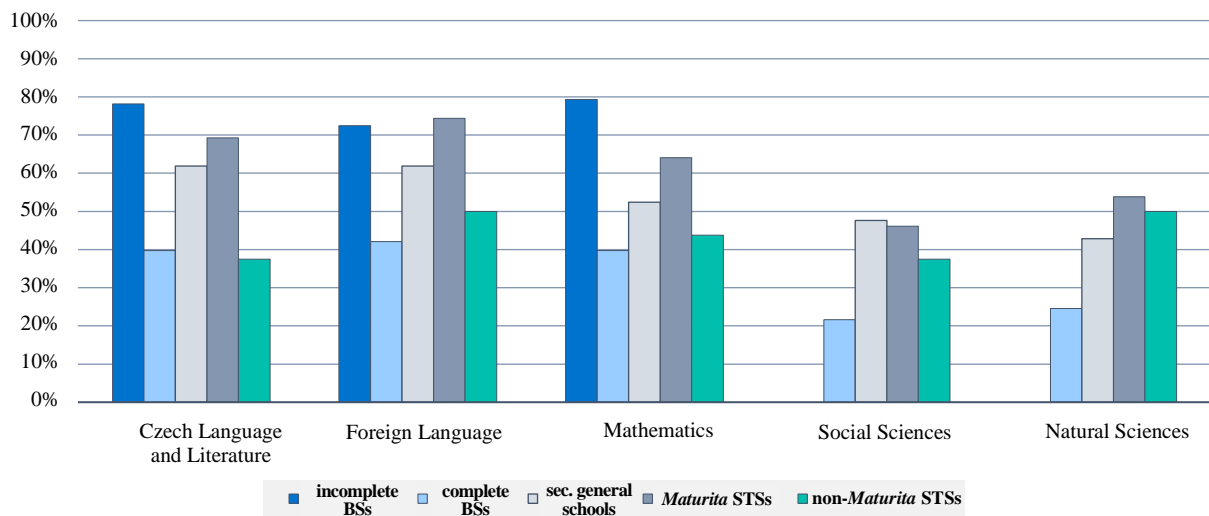
The complexity of distance learning and the lower efficiency of the learning process resulted in many recommendations aimed at reducing educational content to basic knowledge and skills and their careful practice. The Methodological Recommendation for Distance Learning, issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in September 2020, places emphasis in basic schools on Czech language, Mathematics and Foreign Language, and in upper secondary schools on profile subjects in relation to the content of the *Maturita* examination or the school-leaver's profile. On the contrary, the subjects whose content could be significantly reduced are development-focused subjects. Observations and interviews with the principals and teachers in the schools visited show that in most schools at least some of the above recommendations are used. Contrary to the assumption based on the situation at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, a longer period of distance learning was reflected in more frequent content reductions in most schools. For example, the content in development-focused educational fields was narrowed down to the necessary skills and knowledge or, as the case may be, reduced even more significantly in more than half of the schools, regardless of whether it was a basic or upper secondary school.

The development of the approach of schools and teachers to the reduction of educational content shows the influence of experience from earlier periods of distance learning, which was reflected in the greater willingness of schools and teachers to reduce educational content as needed. In September 2020, teachers stated less often that they had made or planned to make some reductions, while in February 2021 a much larger number reported such steps. Similarly, plans for reductions in the School Educational Programme (hereinafter also referred to as "SEP") or proposals for reductions in the relevant Framework Educational Programme (hereinafter also referred to as "FEP") were more frequent in February 2021 than at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year.

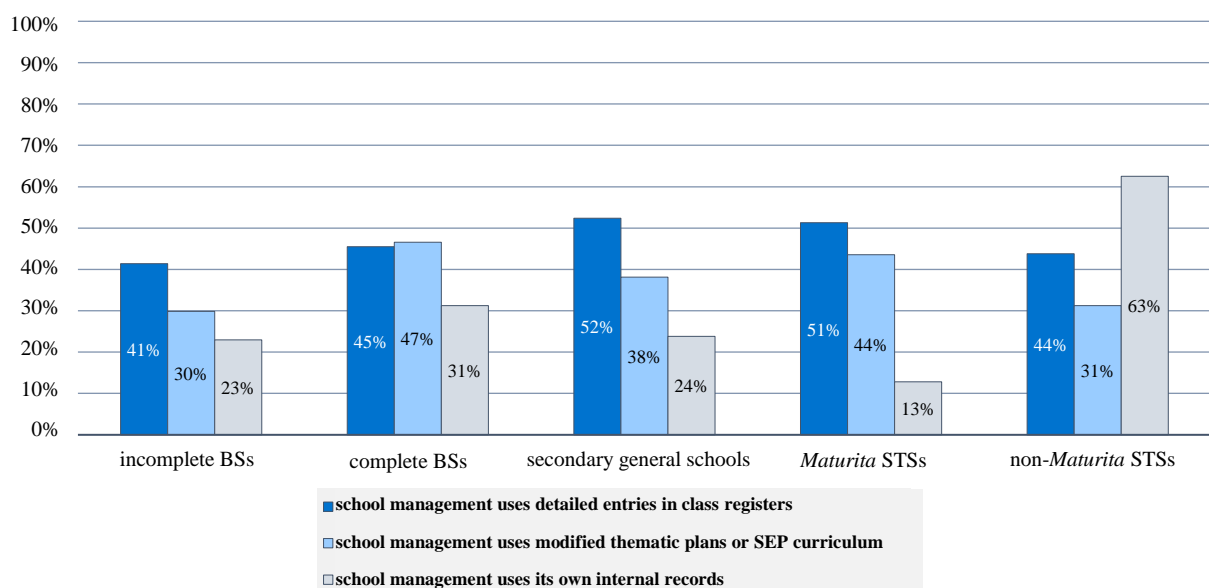
**CHART 16** | Comparison of the proportion of teachers who have made or will make content reductions (after the period of distance learning in the spring of 2020 and after a year of distance learning)



In incomplete basic schools, content reductions in knowledge-focused subjects occur to a lesser extent, mainly due to a certain strengthening of distance learning of these subjects at the expense of the remaining subjects, but also due to the more frequently used individualised work with educational content.

**CHART 17** | Proportion of schools that have not made content reductions in the 2020/2021 school year

The quality of the school management is reflected in the approach to content reductions. The recommended approach is to make changes based on cooperation between the school management and teachers or, as the case may be, with the use of subject committees. If content changes are made by teachers without cooperation with the school management, it shows the school management's resignation to perform curricular work, as well as inconsistency in the management of the educational process in the school by its principal. However, the basic precondition for interventions in educational content is continuous monitoring of how the expected educational content is being fulfilled in distance learning. With regard to monitoring, school managements most often used class registers, but these usually contain only brief information about the educational content (often the topic of the lesson, which can be repeated, so it is difficult to determine the extent to which pupils have managed to acquire the educational content; moreover, the class register without a schedule of topics is not a support for monitoring whether everything will be covered). More useful information can usually be found in the curriculum or in thematic plans. However, what can be particularly useful for the purpose of monitoring changes in educational content is the internal tools recommended to schools in the Recommendation for the Organisation of Education and Work with Educational Content in the 2020/2021 School Year, issued by the Czech School Inspectorate in August 2020 (available on the Czech School Inspectorate's website, direct link [here](#)).

**CHART 18** | Ways of monitoring changes in educational content due to distance learning by school management (at the beginning of the 2nd half of the 2020/2021 school year)

An example is the various overviews prepared by teachers for the school management. These can be aggregate overviews for a longer period of time.

*The management has an overview of the subject matter (in subjects and individual classes) that was not covered in the previous school year, including the date when the subject matter is planned to be covered and currently also an overview of uncovered subject matter for the 1st half of the 2020/2021 school year.*

*In September, all teachers prepared an overview of the subject matter that was not taught during the previous school year.*

*The management creates a summary of the records from all teachers of individual subjects and classes according to areas, which outputs have been completely fulfilled and which have been partially reduced, which contents have been transferred to the next year and, as the case may be, the subject matter that has been omitted.*

*The management receives regular reports from all teachers on the progress of learning according to the thematic plans and the SEP (also with regard to the previous school year); the subject committees drew up proposed changes for the adjustment of the thematic plans of subjects at the beginning of the school year and again at the moment distance learning was reintroduced.*

*The individual subject committees drew up a summary of changes in the thematic plans and adjustments to the extent of individual educational units for the half year. Everything was discussed with the school management and then at the educational board.*

Alternatively, continuous overviews can be used, which the school management also uses to monitor and evaluate the course of distance learning through observations.

*Teachers regularly inform the school management in writing every Friday about the subject matter covered.*

*The school management accurately records the covered subject matter in Word tables; it also has a detailed overview of the individual pupils' progress.*

*The management regularly monitors changes in the content of education at regular online meetings. The school principal also has an overview through observations and subsequent interviews with teachers.*

*Every month, teachers send an overview of the subject matter covered, a summary of the pupils' progress and an overall evaluation of distance learning.*

Or these can be overviews primarily used by the teachers themselves.

*Teachers keep their own records of adjustments to the extent of the subject matter.*

*Teachers submit to the management their own portfolios where they collect the teaching materials used and comment on the pupils' progress.*

The extent of changes directly influenced by the school management or subject committees corresponds to the observed changes in individual subjects. With regard to incomplete basic schools, content reductions have been less frequent for the above reasons, so the proportion of schools where content has been reduced based on the school management's decision is lower.

The specific content is the development of practical skills, especially in secondary vocational/technical schools. Of course, it is not possible to acquire most of the practical skills through distance learning, and their absence may significantly complicate the school-leaver's career in the future. For this reason, after the autumn transition to distance learning the managements of secondary technical schools, together with teachers, looked for ways to provide their pupils with at least some compensation for the acquisition of practical skills. For example, some of the monitored schools tried to make the most of the various support which was available to them and which can be used in online synchronous learning.

*In vocational practice and vocational training, the school uses, for example, professional electronic textbooks from allied schools which were created within the framework of European projects. It also uses materials received from companies where the pupils carry out vocational practice or vocational training. The school also obtains materials from guilds, such as the painters guild.*

Other upper secondary schools use in some educational fields the opportunity to carry out practical activities at home.

*The school tries to motivate the pupils to work independently in the home environment; teachers assign tasks focused on practical skills (teachers often upload videos with technological procedures and send photo documentation to pupils). After the assigned tasks (preparation of menus, festive tables, mixed drinks, cold dishes) are completed at home, pupils are invited to the school for an individual consultation and feedback from their teachers. The above procedures are discussed with the pupils' legal representatives in order to obtain their support.*

*Vocational training is tutored in one online lesson a day; in addition to theory, practical homework is assigned based on the relevant fields (joiners – making feeders; chefs – baking sweets; waiters – cutting noodles), and there are individual consultations.*

*Vocational training supervisors join twice a day online in the hairdresser field and once a day in the chef-waiter field and assign individual work (standardisation, procedures, using the opportunity to cook at home).*

A frequent way of dealing with the impossibility of carrying out vocational training is also to concentrate theoretical learning in the period of distance learning and, conversely, to set back theory at a time when practical activities can be performed. However, such a procedure presupposed and presupposes that pupils return, at least in small groups, to schools or vocational training workplaces.

*So far, the extent has not changed – in December, when pupils were in school, no theory was taught, but only teaching practice in blocks.*

*Currently, the school emphasises theoretical preparation; after returning to schools, attention will be focused more on practical skills.*

*Vocational training is carried out in the full range of 6 lessons. Of which about 1.5 lessons (90 minutes) are online synchronous learning; then individual work is assigned – a task for the next 4.5 lessons. Pupils handed over their work to the teacher at the end of the 6th lesson. The objective was mostly to complete the assigned task, make a written description and take a picture, or also send the completed task, etc.*

*As soon as it was possible, the school started individual education, because it has 30 teachers for vocational training, it is able to provide individual education for 30 pupils a day; such education is provided to each pupil about once a week.*

In the past year, it was clearly possible to observe changes in the approach to educational content. After the spring period of 2020, a significant group of schools expected relatively standard in-class learning for the new 2020/2021 school year, possibly interrupted by short breaks due to lockdown measures, etc. However, the long period of distance learning led the managements of many schools to reconsider their approach to content reductions and, with regard to the approach to educational content, many schools also used the available recommendations issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other institutions, including the Czech School Inspectorate. However, the biggest problem remains practical learning in some fields of vocational education, which can neither be reduced nor replaced with distance learning.







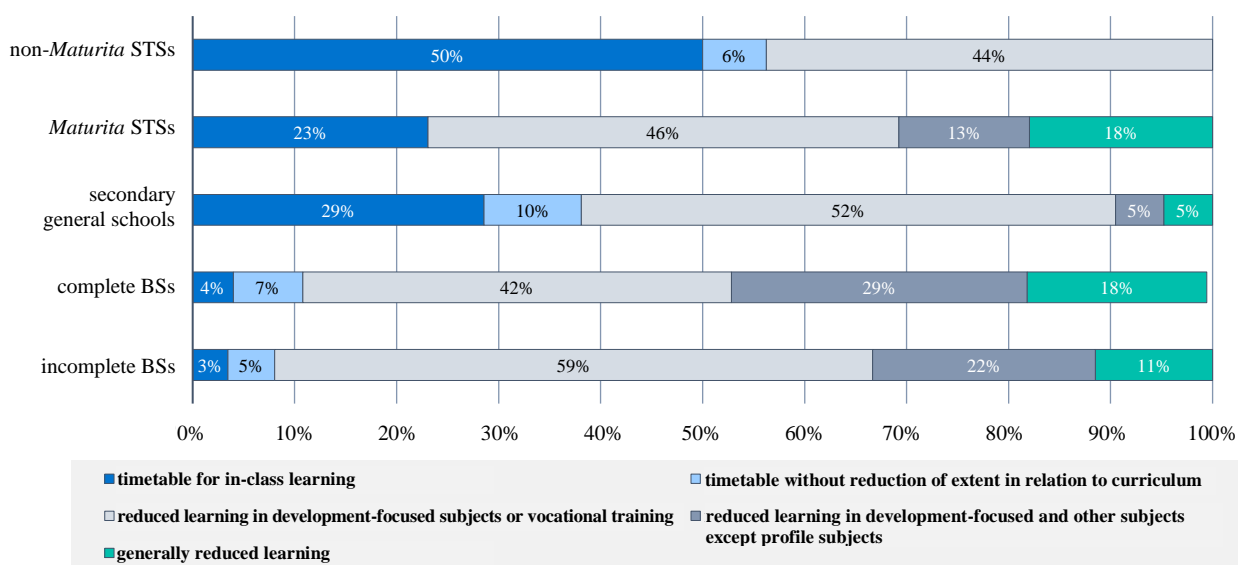
# Changes in the organisation of distance learning

## 7 CHANGES IN THE ORGANISATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING

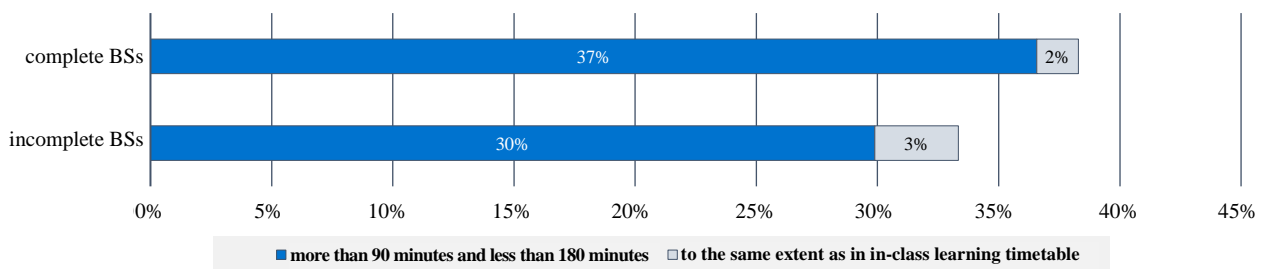
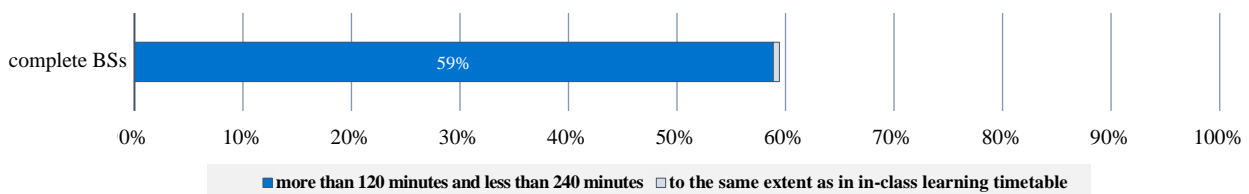
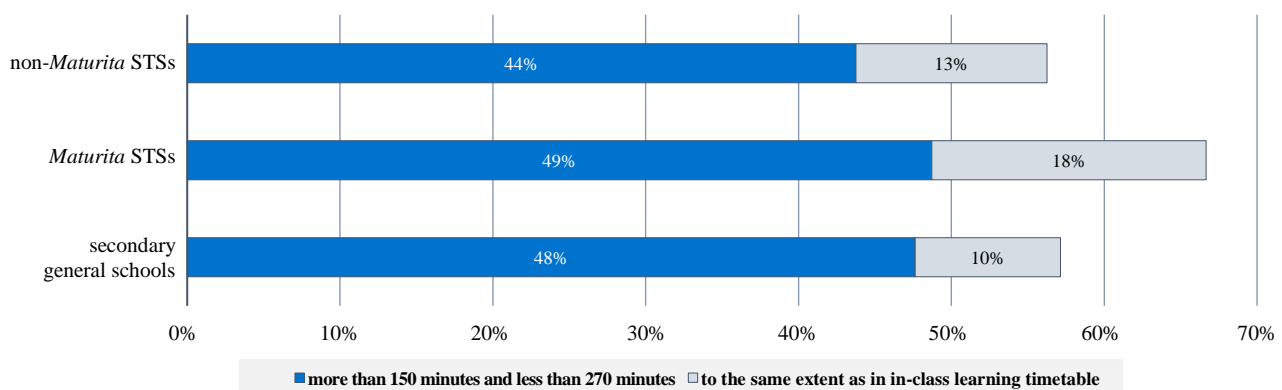
In accordance with the aforementioned methodological recommendation for distance learning issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the organisation of online distance learning can be seen as consisting of the “synchronous” part and the “asynchronous” part. Standard lessons of synchronous learning take place in a video conferencing system, where pupils and usually also the teacher sign in. In contrast, asynchronous learning consists in the fulfilment of educational duties by pupils at a time of their choice, without the teacher’s presence. As early as the spring of the previous school year some teachers found that synchronous learning is much more effective if it involves a smaller number of pupils and if its length corresponds to the pupils’ age or, more precisely, to their ability to pay attention. The aforementioned Methodological Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports also states a suitable extent of synchronous learning. For these reasons, but also for the reasons mentioned in the previous chapter, the timetable for online distance learning in the period after the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year was modified in many schools so as not to be a mere clone of the in-class learning timetable but to take into account the specific situation and possibilities of distance learning. In the spring period of the previous school year, regular learning took place every day in fewer than half of basic schools, while after a year of experience with distance learning, online distance learning takes place regularly in almost all schools on a regular basis every day.

In basic schools, reductions mostly applied to education in development-focused subjects, but often also in other subjects. On the other hand, in upper secondary schools, education based on the timetable was significantly represented, which, however, can hardly be effective. A common argument for maintaining the timetable so that pupils do not have to become accustomed to another timetable is understandable, but it in no way offsets the problems caused by online distance learning based on the timetable.

**CHART 19** | Proportion of schools according to the change in the representation of subjects in the distance learning timetable (a timetable without reduction of extent in relation to the curriculum means teaching all subjects in an arrangement other than that based on the in-class learning timetable)



Distance learning based on the timetable for in-class learning does not always mean only synchronous learning. It is often about 50% of synchronous learning, with the remaining learning being asynchronous. Nevertheless, the proportion of schools, especially upper secondary schools, teaching many lessons synchronously is high. For basic schools, there has been some reduction in the proportion of schools that teach without a reduction in subjects; in the spring period of the previous school year it was about 14%, while at present it is less than 10%.

**CHART 20** | Average daily extent of online synchronous learning at the 1st stage of BSs**CHART 21** | Average daily extent of online synchronous learning at the 2nd stage of BSs**CHART 22** | Average daily extent of online synchronous learning in USSs

Although a higher extent of synchronous learning is not forbidden, the extents stated in the Methodological Recommendation that was issued are considered to be the upper limits from an educational and psychological point of view. Perhaps the well-intentioned effort of both school managements and teachers to replace in-class learning with synchronous learning as much as possible resulted or still results in low learning effectiveness, a high degree of exhaustion, and mental problems among pupils and teachers, as well as entire families.

The main reason for the higher extent of synchronous learning was the decision of the school management in agreement with teachers. Schools often pointed to the experience with the spring period of the previous school year and the inadequacy of the lower extent of synchronous learning. In the case of basic schools, the decision in about a tenth of the schools was either influenced by the pressure from parents for a higher representation of synchronous learning, or at least by an agreement with parents on a higher extent.

The length of synchronous learning lessons in basic and upper secondary schools was most often around 45 minutes (most in 82% of lessons in secondary general schools and least in 63% of lessons in non-Maturita fields). Lessons of a shorter duration of about 35 minutes also had high representation (most in 26% of lessons in non-Maturita fields and least in 6% of lessons in secondary general schools). Lessons exceeding 45 minutes only occurred in a few per cent of cases (the length was often 90 minutes in upper secondary schools and 60 minutes in basic schools; there were also occasionally lessons lasting 3 or more hours). It was only at the 1st stage of BSs that lessons with a length of about 25 minutes had more significant representation.

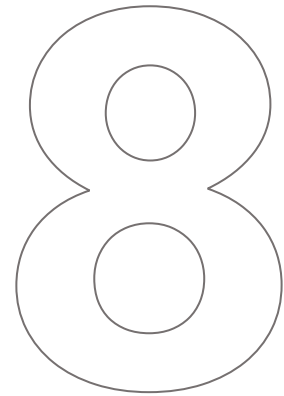
Neither the extent of synchronous learning nor the number of lessons automatically means ineffective implementation of online distance learning. Among the schools visited were also those that stated a longer extent of synchronous

learning, but its form differs from the standard described above. It is an alternation of direct synchronous learning, where the teacher teaches all pupils in a video conferencing system, and “synchronously controlled” asynchronous learning, where pupils work on assigned tasks and the teacher is available for consultation, feedback, etc. Distance learning of this type is especially suitable for pupils at the 1st stage of BSs, and its length can be a total of 3 to 4 lessons with breaks if the total length of synchronous learning for the average pupil does not exceed 60 minutes.

An interesting example of a 30-minute synchronous lesson and its connection with asynchronous learning is the following situation in one of the schools visited.

*Two teachers at the 1st stage teach as follows: learning is organised into groups, alternating 30-minute online learning lessons with 30 minutes of asynchronous independent pupil work; in teaching, they use teaching and feedback applications, which both make learning more interesting and allow the teachers to monitor the pupils' outcomes. Both set lesson goals in relation to what the pupil will be doing and provide formative feedback throughout the lesson.*

Distance learning is still a new experience for all participants – teachers, pupils and parents – and despite the gradual improvement in the way it is organised, which was reflected not only in the adjustments to the timetable, the length of synchronous learning, and the length and organisation of lessons, some schools still tend to replace in-class learning with synchronous learning in a ratio close to 1:1. Compared to the spring period of the previous school year, a number of schools have made a positive change in reducing the number of pupils in synchronous learning, shortening its length, etc. Unfortunately, especially in upper secondary schools, there is still a tendency to maximise the extent of synchronous learning.



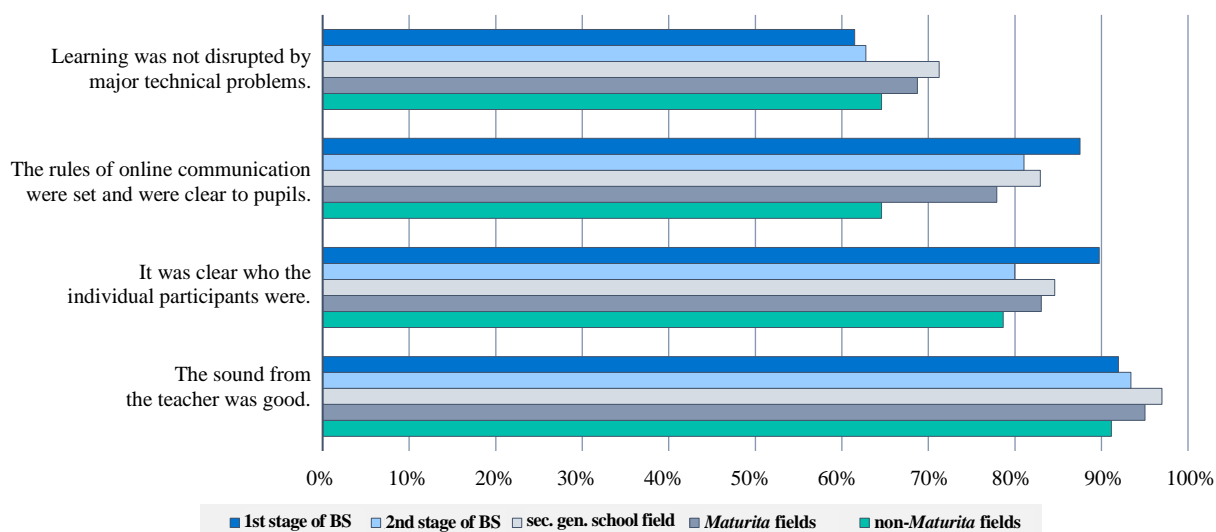
# Synchronous learning

## 8 SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

The implementation of distance learning presupposed the transformation of traditionally conceived learning in at least two areas. The first concerns the mastering of digital technologies and the specifics of online distance learning, and the second the consistent use of effective approaches to pupil learning.

A prerequisite for good synchronous learning is to ensure a secure online environment. In almost all online lessons visited, it was ensured that no one other than the pupils and the teachers could join (most in secondary general school lessons – 100% – and least in basic school lessons – 97%). Similarly, in most lessons, good transmission of the teacher’s sound was ensured during synchronous learning. What was more problematic in some lessons was the use of standard login names for pupils, especially when cameras are not used in learning. The weakest aspect of the technical mastering of teaching was the relatively high occurrence of technical problems on the part of both pupils and teachers.

**CHART 23** | Frequency of the signs of mastering digital technologies in synchronous learning



Overall, it is clear from the above that most teachers mastered digital technologies to be able to implement online synchronous learning at least at a basic level. In the schools whose teachers already had more developed digital competences in the spring of last year and used digital technologies for distance learning more, the aforementioned signs occurred in the lessons in a slightly higher frequency (around 5%) compared to the schools that were the least developed. This confirms a certain importance for schools to be ahead in digitising learning, which was mentioned in the Czech School Inspectorate’s thematic report reflecting on the period of distance learning in the spring of 2020, but also a high level of reaching the level of other schools in the context of the long period of online distance learning.

The approach to digital technologies is well-illustrated by the following opinion of one of the teachers.

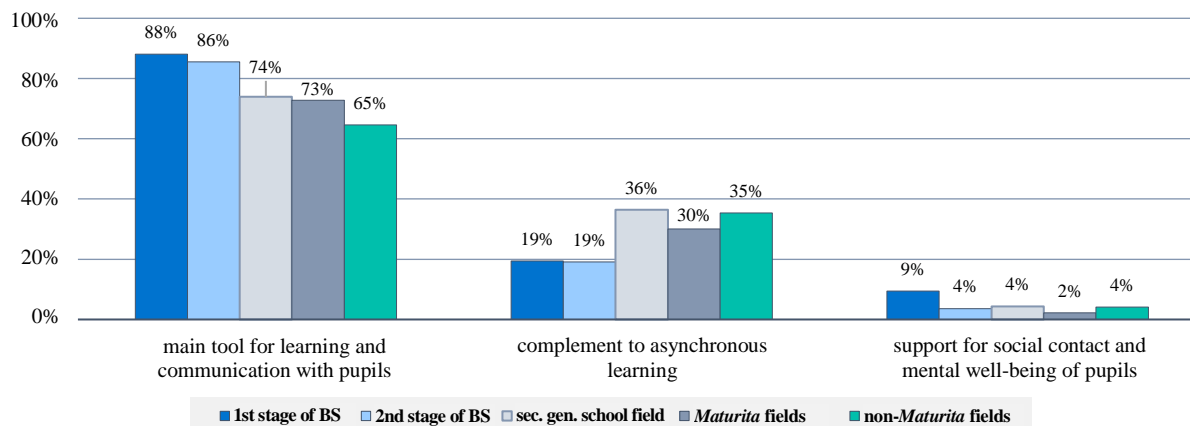
*We have excellent application tools – Edupage and MS Teams. Our school is well equipped and I have improved a lot in using these applications.*

One of the specifics of distance learning is the need for functional interconnection of synchronous and asynchronous learning and the support for social contacts, which are limited during the pandemic. When assessing distance learning in the spring of 2020, more than half of the pupils stated that what they missed the most was meeting their classmates. It is therefore clear that the longer distance learning lasts, the greater the pupils’ need to meet their classmates and the higher the proportion of the pupils for whom the absence of social contacts is one of the biggest disadvantages of distance learning.

The observed online learning shows an effort to interconnect synchronous and asynchronous learning, although to a much lesser extent than would be desirable. A negative finding in the context of the above is the very low occurrence of lessons that would purposefully support the social contact and mental well-being of pupils, at least to the extent that is possible remotely. Due to the aforementioned absence of the possibility to meet classmates, the small space devoted in lessons to support social contact and mental well-being of pupils is truly alarming. It indicates setting back pupils’ interests and their development in favour of covering the educational content, which is an approach that is understandable from a certain point of view, but certainly not suitable given the very long period of distance learning. The proportion of lessons with purposeful support for pupils’ social contact and mental well-being should be

represented in at least one quarter of lessons to ensure that distance learning has the nature of a more balanced education. From a long-term perspective, it is the low proportion of lessons with such objectives that has an effect on the higher incidence of mental health problems in pupils, as reported by psychologists and paediatricians in recent weeks. This can be at least partially compensated by regular class teacher lessons.

**CHART 24 | Ways of using video conferencing in synchronous learning**



However, some teachers are aware of the crucial importance of encouraging communication and the development of social skills and implement it in practice.

*Pupils connect before the lesson, and we talk about everything; also after the lesson we stay in contact for more than 5 minutes, thereby replacing personal contact.*

*Pupils' communication with teachers has improved. If they don't know something, they express it, they are able to ask for help, they often go to school for consultation hours.*

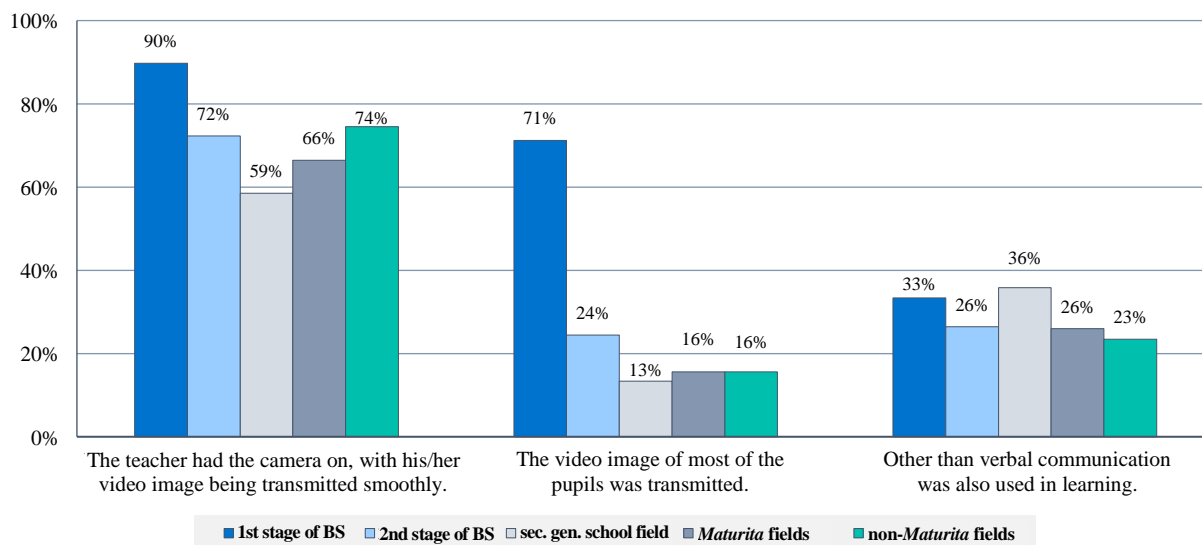
*Pupils have managed to lose their shyness in communicating in a virtual classroom, they are reasonably confident about speaking and ask to speak in the virtual classroom, they are not afraid of making mistakes, they are not afraid of saying how they feel.*

*Human approach, establishing social contacts, class teacher lessons once a week (pupils communicate what they did well and what they did not, their experience, etc.).*

The importance of communication for learning is well illustrated by the following example from education.

*Online lessons took place in a much more pleasant atmosphere, with teachers communicating with pupils not only about the subject matter, but also showing interest in their lives and opinions. These teachers were able to naturally lead pupils to think about the problem and find their own solution; they used visual aids – things that pupils commonly encounter in real life. They communicated with pupils throughout the lesson, inviting them to express dis/agreement with their own and others' statements and to justify their own views. They themselves took a back seat to be the "managers" of the educational process.*

Similarly, the support for nonverbal communication and visual contact is essential. It is therefore a very negative finding that in a large proportion of online classes many pupils had their cameras turned off. Similarly striking is the finding that the camera was not used by the teacher in more than 40% of the lessons in secondary general schools. In addition, it is clear that even secondary general school pupils use the camera in synchronous learning the least often. Visual contact is an essential part of communication for both teachers and pupils, and its absence significantly increases the demands on concentration and reduces the level of mental well-being necessary for effective learning.

**CHART 25** | Ways of using the camera and other means of nonverbal communication

The digital environment offers a wide range of tools in addition to video conferencing systems that can provide feedback to teachers. Alternatively, it is possible to use their visual outputs for didactic processing of content, etc.

**TABLE 2** | Digital tools used for feedback or visualisation of educational content by teachers observed

	1st stage of BS	2nd stage of BS	secondary general school field	Maturita fields	non-Maturita fields
shared notice boards and whiteboards ( <i>Padlet, Linoit, Jamboard, Whiteboard, etc.</i> )	33%	33%	46%	37%	22%
quiz and feedback applications ( <i>Kahoot!, Quizlet, Mentimeter, Socrative, Quizizz, etc.</i> )	28%	35%	39%	28%	24%
form creation applications ( <i>Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, FreeOnlineSurveys, etc.</i> )	31%	46%	48%	36%	24%
mind maps ( <i>MindMup, Coggle, MindMaps, Miro, Wordclouds, WordArt, AnswerGarden, etc.</i> )	7%	8%	9%	9%	4%

Although the technical mastering of distance learning is at a good level in most schools, the specifics of online distance learning are respected only partially. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, some teachers state that mastering the specifics of distance learning is something they manage well.

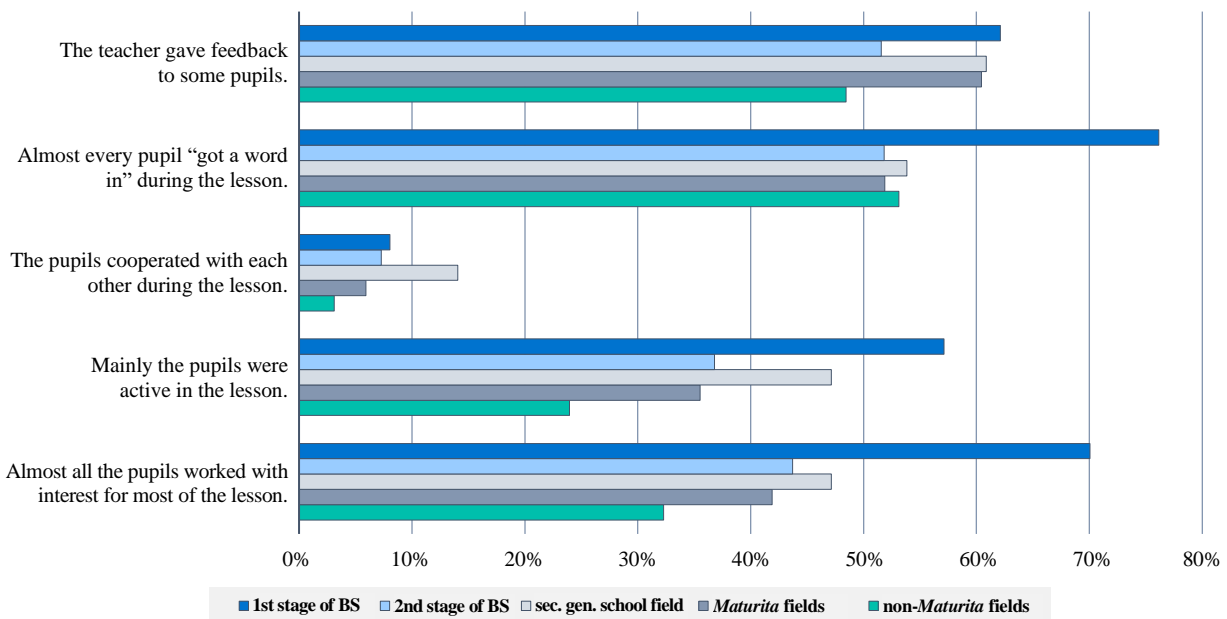
*Regular inclusion of interactive elements in online lessons, shared presentations, short practices of the subject matter through Kahoot!, the teacher regularly monitors application reports of how pupils participated in the activities, asking pupils about how they understand the subject matter.*

*Being with pupils often online, communicating, supporting them, giving them feedback – just being in touch with them.*

*Some tasks have proved useful, tasks are handed in more if we also use these systems: Umime to, Duolingo, etc. Also alternating tasks, making them interesting. We meet regularly at meetings.*

The second area is the adaptation of didactic methods to the special situation of online synchronous learning. The occurrence of the signs proving the possible activation of pupils in lessons differs from regular in-class learning. However, it is clear that it is often very difficult to involve pupils in learning and that the dominant organisational form of work is frontal instruction. Therefore, it is necessary to appreciate the lessons in which the pupils cooperated with each other or in which group work (on average 6%) or work in pairs (on average only 4%) was used, although it is clear that this was unfortunately the case only to a small extent. In this context, it should be noted that the current video conferencing tools already make it possible to use class division into groups. Given that, apart from synchronous learning, pupils have much less opportunity to work in groups, the proportion of the use of these organisational forms should be significantly higher due to pupils' significant need to meet their classmates.



**CHART 26** | Signs proving pupil involvement in learning

What is essential for the improvement of online distance learning is the support of the school management. In about half of the schools, the management stated that they regularly observed online synchronous learning. In addition, in one fifth of the schools, some teachers observe online synchronous learning for each other.

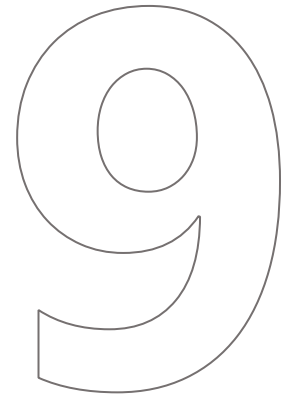
*Cooperation of the school management with methodological bodies in implementing distance learning. Numerous observations of synchronous learning by the school management, as well as teachers observing their colleagues' online teaching, took place, supplemented by regular sharing of their experience.*

The importance of sharing is illustrated by the following example.

*Continuous sharing of new skills and methods of distance learning between teachers and school management, their changes and adjustments based on feedback from both pupils and legal representatives.*

Schools have made significant progress in the technical mastering of synchronous learning, and the limits are based on technical parameters rather than shortcomings on the part of most teachers. As mentioned above, the situation of mastering the specifics of online synchronous learning is more complicated. The specifics of learning at the 1st stage of BSs are respected best due to the many roles that most teachers at the 1st stage of basic education usually perform (especially teachers of most subjects and the class teacher). One of the most serious problems seems to be the large number of lessons with learning without the cameras switched on, because such lessons increase the social and psychological problems that learning via the internet entails.



A large, hollow outline of the number 9, positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page. It is flanked by two horizontal grey bars: one on the left and one on the right, both extending from the left and right edges of the page respectively towards the number.

# 9

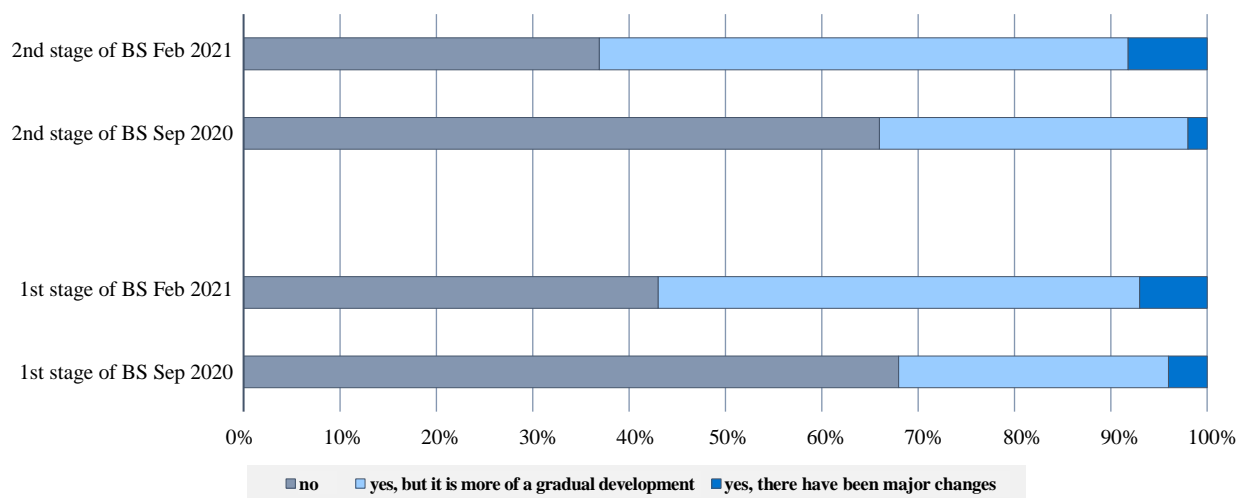
## Evaluation in the period of distance learning

## 9 EVALUATION IN THE PERIOD OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Providing feedback and evaluating the achieved outcomes proved to be key during distance learning. Most teachers included the use of traditional forms of evaluating outcomes among what they did not manage. Therefore, this area was dealt with by the Methodological Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports which has been mentioned several times. Due to evaluation problems, more than half of the teachers talk about gradual changes in their approach to evaluation, but unfortunately only 7% of them report more fundamental changes in their approach to pupil evaluation. Most often it is more lenient grading (in upper secondary schools, grading is stricter in a few cases), but continuous oral assessment is also used significantly more often.

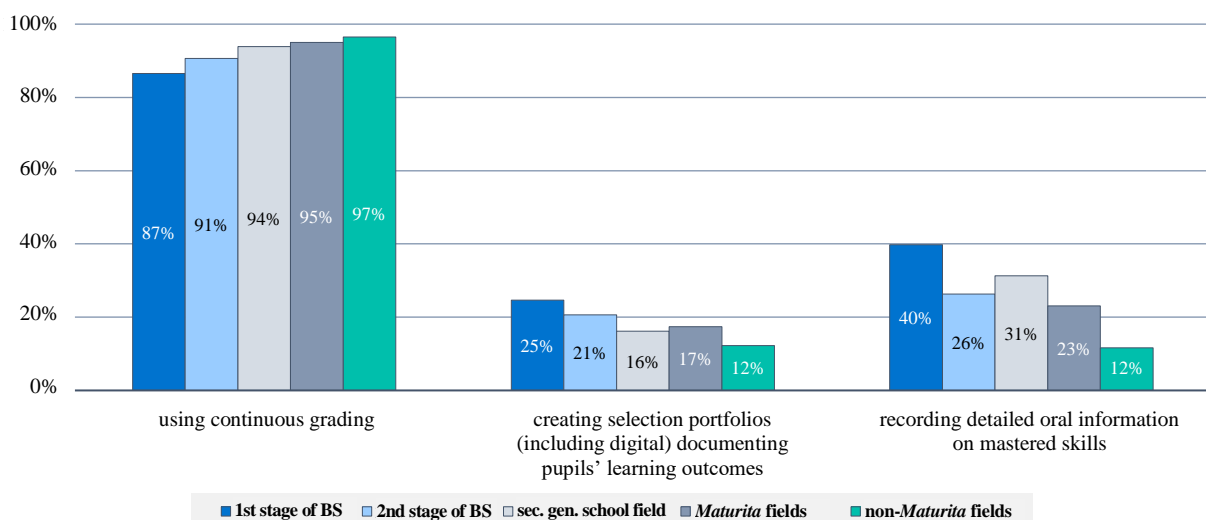
Compared to the situation at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, there is a noticeable increase in the proportion of teachers who, as a result of experience with distance learning, change the usual pupil evaluation methods.

**CHART 27** | Comparison of changes in current evaluation methods during learning with the beginning of the school year



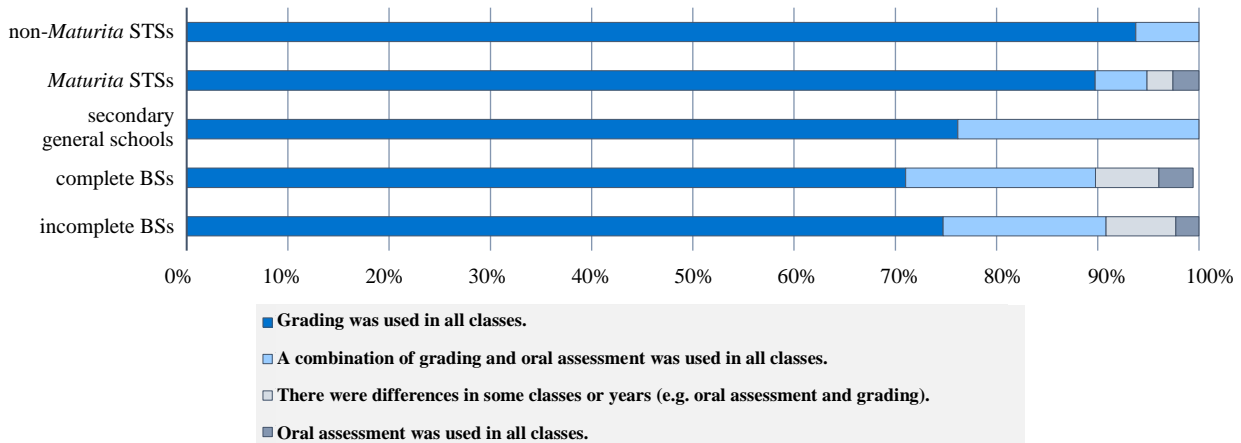
The preferred evaluation is indicated by the method of recording pupils' progress achieved in distance learning. A higher level of recording oral information on mastered skills and the use of selection portfolios are suitable prerequisites for formative evaluation and oral summative evaluation (for example, in regular monthly or quarterly evaluation of pupils).

**CHART 28** | Ways of recording pupils' achieved progress



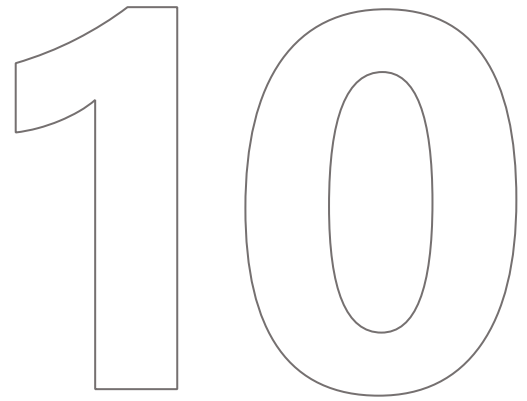
As a result of distance learning, there has also been a partial change in final evaluation. Although schools were recommended oral assessment or a combination of evaluation using grades supplemented by oral assessment<sup>12</sup> in the final grading for the first half of the 2020/2021 school year, grading clearly prevailed in school reports. 15% of basic schools and less than 10% of upper secondary schools changed their approach to final evaluation in the first half of the 2020/2021 school year. In basic schools, one third of the cases involved the introduction of combined or oral assessment in all classes; in the remaining cases, combined or oral assessment was only introduced in some classes or for some pupils. In upper secondary schools, it was mainly the introduction of combined assessment for some pupils (often failing). In the future, approximately 6% of other basic schools are considering the introduction of oral assessment.

**CHART 29** | Methods of final evaluation in the first half of the 2020/2021 school year



<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of January 2021, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, together with the Czech School Inspectorate, prepared a joint recommendation for schools for evaluation in school reports for the first half of the 2020/2021 school year. The recommendation is available on the Czech School Inspectorate's website (direct link [here](#)).



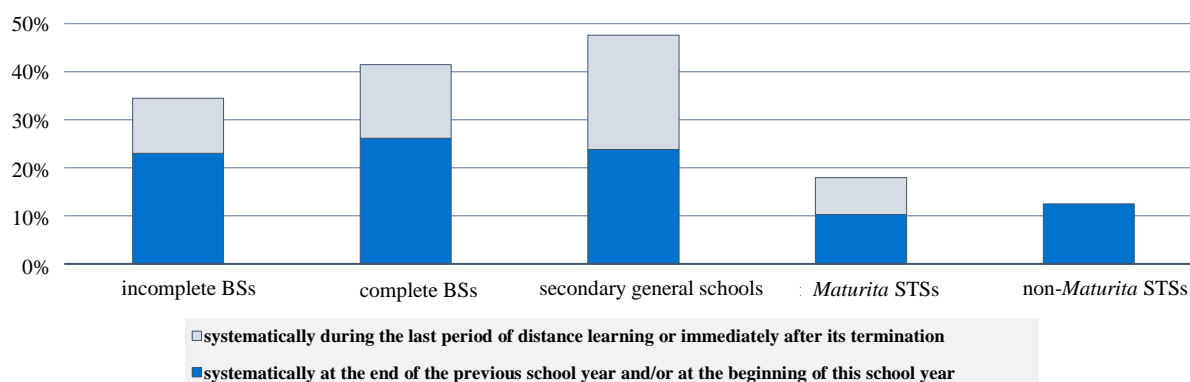
A large, hollow outline of the number '10' is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page. The '1' is a simple vertical bar with a small notch at the top left. The '0' is a large, rounded oval. The number is centered vertically between two horizontal grey bars that extend from the left and right edges of the page towards the center.

# Communication

## 10 COMMUNICATION

Since the start of distance learning in the spring of 2020, the importance of communication support has increased. Given that parents are the school's key partner in educating pupils, it was crucial whether it was possible to establish good communication or, as the case may be, whether it was possible to overcome obstacles and initiate and set up intensive communication with parents. Schools mostly rely on communication through online parents' evenings; in small schools, principals also use informal contacts within the community in the location of the school. Only a small proportion of schools systematically dealt with feedback from parents, which, of course, is not good. A frequent problem is the still low quality of communication between the school and parents, which then, for example, discourages the school management from using questionnaires or similar tools, due to fear of minimal response rate. There is a significant difference especially in upper secondary education, where even in secondary general schools systematic communication with parents is not common in half of schools, and in upper secondary schools with a predominance of non-*Maturita* fields the absence of communication with parents is particularly problematic due to many problems (proportion of irregularly involved pupils, quality of online distance learning, absence of practical training, etc.) which distance learning entails.

**CHART 30** | Proportion of schools finding out parents' satisfaction with distance learning



Communication with parents was reflected in the adjustment of the distance learning settings: distance learning was at least partially adjusted based on such communication by more than half of basic schools and secondary general schools, but only slightly by more than a fifth of secondary vocational/technical schools.

It was often a matter of adjusting the difficulty and support for pupils in learning.

*We adjusted the volume of assigned tasks, because parents complained about the excessive load and the number of assigned tasks.*

*The school included tutoring (Czech, English, Mathematics – carried out by class teachers or teaching assistants) and after-school activities (entertaining logic, reading club, communication in English). A special educational care subject has also been implemented.*

*Questionnaires for parents have contributed to a more efficient structure of online lessons and to their subject composition (the Humans and Their World subjects have been added).*

*Slight increase in the extent of synchronous learning in some classes. Introduction of class teacher lessons.*

*We have adjusted the levels of workload (up and down) from teachers in the individual subjects not only in content, but also in forms and ways of communication.*

*We have solved the problem with low demands from some colleagues.*

The changes also include adjustments to the organisation of distance learning to ensure that it better corresponds to the capabilities of pupils and their parents.

*Based on the suggestions of the parents of 1st stage pupils, the school adjusted the timetable in some classes so that the online learning of siblings in one family does not coincide (learning moved from 8–10 a.m. to 10–12 a.m.).*

Last but not least, parents often initiated changes in the extent of synchronous learning.



*The school mainly dealt with the length of time pupils spent on their PCs and the related developing addiction to PC games.*

*We changed the ratio of synchronous learning and asynchronous learning, set periodic assignment of tasks on a weekly basis, unified the Google Classroom and Zoom learning platforms in foreign languages, introduced online parents' evenings, and lent digital equipment to some individuals.*

*In October, we set the ratio of online synchronous and asynchronous learning at 50:50; after parents' evenings in November, we changed the ratio to 75:25 due to pressure from parents. Since January, we have been using the in-class learning timetable in online synchronous learning.*

What is crucial is the approach taken by the school management to parents and their children.

*At the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, two siblings (4th year and 5th year, boy with SEN) came who had problems attending school. After distance learning started, they did not have the equipment to connect online. So the school lent them a computer, and before the family set up the internet, the principal and the teacher came to teach both children directly in their home environment – for a month and a half. With their approach, they were also able to “break” children’s disinclination to school, and currently both siblings regularly join online classes.*

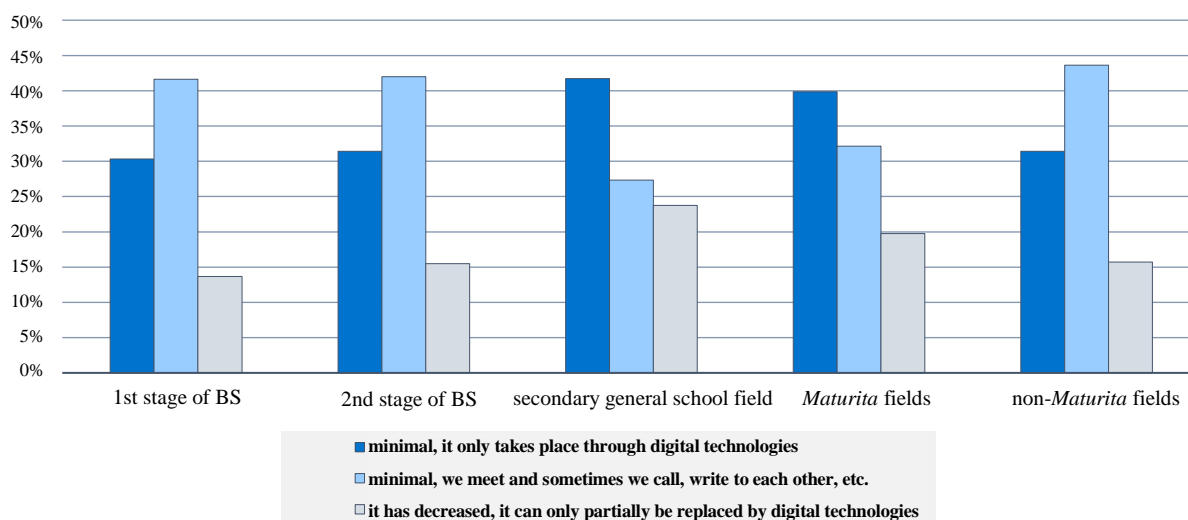
Where communication between the school and the family did not work well, problems could arise that parents wanted to address. They emerged most markedly in complete basic schools, in about two thirds. In contrast, in upper secondary schools and incomplete basic schools it was only about a quarter of schools. The discussions mostly concerned problems with the implementation of distance learning in the pupil’s household, but also the allegedly low or, conversely, high extent of distance learning. In upper secondary schools with a predominance of pupils in *Maturita* fields, disagreement with evaluation of the pupil was also an important issue.

In most basic and upper secondary schools, the management was also interested in pupils’ views on distance learning. For this purpose, direct feedback from pupils at the end of synchronous learning, online class teacher lessons and various questionnaires were used. In some schools, the school psychologist was involved in finding out the views and satisfaction of pupils, helping to set up distance learning to make it as effective as possible for pupils.

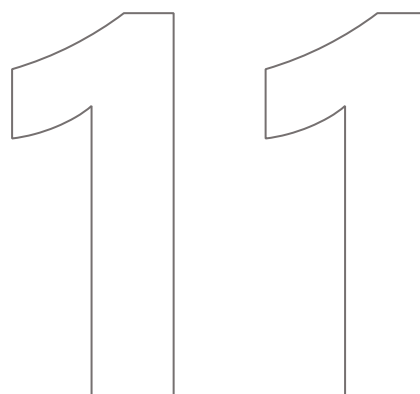
*The school psychologist is also involved in distance learning, working with the class in online lessons and in person (instead of Music Education); there are also individual consultations for individual pupils in person at the school using canine-assisted therapy by prior arrangement.*

Distance learning, which teachers often provide from their homes, also affects the frequency of their mutual communication. Although some teachers communicated to a greater extent during the onset of distance learning, a significant group of them report a reduction in the frequency of mutual communication, which is certainly not a positive finding in the period of limited contact among people.

**CHART 31 | Changes in mutual communication among teachers**







# Recommendations

## 11 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for schools

- A) Schools that have not yet followed the Methodological Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for Distance Learning:
- Become acquainted with the Methodological Recommendation for Distance Learning in its applicable wording.
  - To the maximum extent possible, take this Recommendation into account in the preparation, organisation and implementation of distance learning and in the evaluation of pupils during distance learning.
- B) Schools that have drawn inspiration from the Methodological Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for Distance Learning:
- Appropriately reflect on everything that does not work – it is very likely that problems signal a dysfunction and need for change. In general, it may concern:
    - ✓ settings and organisation,
    - ✓ teaching methods,
    - ✓ educational content,
    - ✓ shortcomings in communication within the school or between the school and parents,
    - ✓ omitting some dimensions of the development of pupils, but also teachers (such as social contact, sharing experience, etc.),
    - ✓ evaluation and provision of feedback.
  - Plan gradual changes in education for the next period. Schooling will not return completely unchanged to the period before the Covid-19 pandemic; some changes will persist and prevail over time. For this reason, it is important to move smoothly towards such changes. This can mean, for example:
    - ✓ reduction of educational content,
    - ✓ use of effective cognitive activation of pupils,
    - ✓ changes in ongoing evaluation,
    - ✓ changes in final evaluation.

### Recommendations for statutory authorities

- Be intensely interested in the implementation of distance learning, in the problems that the school encounters in distance learning, and in the needs of both the school principal and teachers in order to support the quality of distance learning.
- If low quality of distance learning due to low pupil involvement in learning is identified or if such learning is commenced later, pay increased attention to improving the level of management of such schools.
- Support school managements in one of the most difficult situations faced by schools, especially in those areas identified by school managements.
- Do not be satisfied with the existing digital equipment of schools but enable schools to further develop by supporting the improvement of technical equipment.
- Enable schools to create optimal material conditions for the education of all their pupils.

## Recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

---

- Prepare and issue methodological recommendations for schools on the appropriate procedure after pupils return to in-class learning.
- In the context of the impacts of long-term distance learning, think about and communicate in time with schools the preparation and organisation of the 2021/2022 school year, especially with an emphasis on educational content.
- Support the process of improving schools from within, using reflection on experience from distance learning (for example, by transferring inspiring examples, supporting school principals' meetings on issues related to reflection on distance learning, mediating the experience of schools that have changed their approaches to distance learning as a result, etc.).
- In the period after returning to in-class learning, support schools in the development of all dimensions of pupil personality and targeted compensation of mental and social deprivations caused by distance learning (for example, by providing a varied and targeted offer of activities in schools that contribute to pupils' personal and social development, by supporting the activities of organisations focusing on the holistic development of pupils so that schools can participate in them or use them, by purposefully emphasising these issues in communication with schools so that this topic becomes an integral part of the goals schools should aim for in the following period, etc.).
- Prepare for the period after the termination of distance learning with targeted support for teachers' mental health (for example, in cooperation with mental health professionals, prepare initiatives that will reach the widest possible group of teachers, create and support available activities for teachers to help compensate for mental health problems caused by the complexity of distance learning, etc.).



Fráni Šrámka 37 | 150 21 Prague 5 | [www.csicr.cz](http://www.csicr.cz)