

Bernards Heath Junior School

Annual Parental Survey: Feedback Summary for 2016/17

Process

At the start of the spring term 2017 a letter was sent to parents/carers jointly from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors asking for their views on the school by:

- i. judging the 12 statements on Ofsted's online "Parent View" questionnaire, and also
- ii. giving wider comment in response to the two questions in the school's own annual questionnaire.

The letter remained accessible to parents via the Schoolcomms archive on the school website, and a reminder email with a direct link to "Parent View" was also sent. Responses were requested by half term and could be submitted either in paper copy or by email.

Aim

The purpose of this exercise was to seek the parental perspective on how the school is performing and identify where this concurs with the school's own self-evaluation, and where the perspectives differ. Both of these would be really useful to build into future planning and development of school strategies.

Parents were reminded that this was not the forum for any very specific concerns or queries; these needed to be addressed with one-to-one dialogue between home and school when individual matters could be discussed.

THE RESULTS: What parents have told us

"Parent View" (Ofsted's national on-line questionnaire)

- The highest number of responses recorded for the same period since Parent View's introduction five years ago, and over double the number of responses compared to last year (87 for 2016/17; 43 for 2015/16)
- Responses overwhelmingly positive: 87% overall agreeing with the statements (compared to 75% at the same time last year), and only 4% (down from 8% last year) disagreeing.
- 36% and 6% respectively responded "Don't know" to the statements on "bullying" and "response to concerns raised", presumably because the parents concerned had no experience of bullying at the school or had needed to raise any concerns.
- The statement: "I receive valuable information from the school about my child's progress" drew the highest level of disagreement at 16%, but this compares to 81% who agreed.
- 95% said they would recommend our school to another parent (93% for 2015/16).

It was very pleasing to note the higher number of responses from parents this year (roughly 25% of the parent body) and that these were overwhelmingly positive. To put this into a wider context, this is a far higher level of response than for many other primary schools, several of which do not even have sufficient data to generate a report yet for this year. Bernards Heath Infant School seems to be the only local school to have a higher response rate (a very impressive 210 for 2016/17, but this was largely generated by a visit from Ofsted in the autumn term).

"Parent View" can, however, only ever give a general overview, and it was hoped that parents would take advantage of the school's own simple questionnaire to add more useful detail to their views.

The School's Annual Parental Questionnaire

- 24 responses were received which, although still a low response rate, was an increase on the 13 responses received last year
- There was a more even spread of responses from all four year groups this year
- Parents of both boys and girls responded (slightly more boys than girls)

It remains difficult to identify trends or common themes with so few responses (about 7% of the parent body), especially as there are contradictory views on some aspects from one reply to the next, for example, one parent says:

"The mixing up of pupils across the year group (from yrs 3 to 4) has encouraged and developed new friendships and increased interaction throughout the 3 classes, which in turn has increased child's confidence and willingness to mix with a broader range of children."

whilst another parent would like the school to:

"Consider opportunities for classes to mix after the year 4 change around to maintain friendships across the whole year group"

All the points raised are carefully read and noted, and we appreciate the trouble parents have taken to let us have their views. In some instances where deemed appropriate, specific comments have been responded to personally and straight away by the Headteacher. All other comments are considered alongside the many other factors as part of the structured process of deciding on actions and priorities to be taken by the school for the coming year. Although the 6% response rate cannot viably be considered as representative of the whole parent body, it was notable that some areas received more frequent comment than others and suggest more focussed consideration.

Summary of parental comments:

Aspects which I consider to be strengths at the school and would like to see continued

1. **The wider curriculum opportunities** (17 comments), for example:
 - *The variety of subjects throughout the week, and moving to other classes to learn with other teachers and peer groups*
 - *The trips and school visits from outside organisations to teach the children about a variety of topics is good and has generated interest in topics that my child has either not thought of or been exposed to before*
 - *Visiting authors and workshops: great opportunity for children to experience a practical aspect of the subject they are learning – children always stimulated and enthusiastic about these events*
 - *The range of clubs, extra-curricular activities and music tuition very good*
 - *Varied approach to curriculum to keep things interesting, e.g. themed weeks, access to outside speakers and resources, specialist coaches for certain sports*
 - *Themed weeks (e.g. Art, Maths): children really enjoy these*
 - *The selection of sports clubs after school is very good and the quality of delivery is very high*
 - *Several of the sports clubs have been a positive experience increasing confidence and resilience*
 - *Commitment of the staff to providing extra-curricular activities*
 - *Good sporting opportunities with committed members of staff to lead these*
2. **Supportive, caring, nurturing environment** (12 comments), for example:
 - *Both children feel very safe and secure at the school*
 - *The school is a welcoming and supportive environment*
 - *Caring and nurturing feeling to the school*
 - *Care for the emotional needs of the children*

- *Focus on the child as an individual*
- *Schools knows every pupil*
- *Children comfortable in their surroundings and confident talking to adults, teachers etc.*
- *Understanding and support both academically and emotionally has aided progress*

3. **Quality of teaching** (11 comments), for example:

- *High quality standard of teaching*
- *High quality learning environment*
- *Teachers create excellent learning environment – consistent, well-managed and organised*
- *Teaching staff are excellent and have good relationships with children*
- *Staff encourage children both academically and emotionally*
- *Great teaching: child is really happy, always enthusiastic about her learning and her teacher*

4. **Celebration** (6 comments), for example:

- *Award systems appear effective and motivate the children especially when there is peer recognition or acknowledgement from the Headteacher for a child's efforts*
- *Recognition of learning and inspirational behaviour in front of the whole school in the weekly assembly*
- *Celebration of success in different areas: academic, sport, music*
- *House points system and Headteacher awards: they make the children proud of their work as their achievements are recognised*

5. **Availability of staff** (5 comments), for example:

- *Friendly, approachable manner of staff, including Headteacher*

6. **Good Communication** (5 comments), for example:

- *Any initial worries were dealt with very effectively with good communication*
- *Class blogs are a good way to keep parents informed about learning topics*

7. **Encouraging greater independence and responsibility** (3 comments), for example:

- *Children encouraged to be much more independent than at the Infants School – good stepping stone to secondary education*
- *The continuation of developing independence, e.g. encouraging children to take responsibility for their belongings, managing their homework*
- *School pushes children to take responsibility for actions and their own organisation especially at top end of the school thus facilitating preparedness for transition to secondary school*

8. **Information sessions for parents** (3 comments), for example:

- *The information evenings for parents, e.g. on-line safety, maths*
- *Appreciate the extra commitment of staff to run information evenings for parents*

Other comments in this section referred to:

- *Child being happy/thriving at school (4 comments)*
- *Headteacher's leadership is good, everyone is encouraged to achieve their best at school*
- *Well stocked and maintained library / Fantastic library*
- *144 Club: a great way to practise times tables' fluency*
- *The Young Carers club*
- *Wonderful Christmas Concert*
- *More mindful approach to 'dressing up' days (e.g. World Book Day) – less expense for parents, more creative and fun for the children*
- *The school's focus on standards of behaviour*
- *The 15 minute jog session*

Aspects parents would like the school to consider for the future, or which they think could be improved

1. Communication (19 comments), for example:

- *A communication 'strategy' is needed with consistent and clear guidelines on channel choice when communicating with parents*
- *School website could be improved, particularly "Information for Parents" section which is not user-friendly*
- *School blogs need improvement; lack of consistency with use and updating*
- *School could reach out more to parents to inform how they could support children better, including more regular updates from blogs*
- *Communication is not one of the school's strengths, in particular information about arrangements for clubs, trips, parent volunteers, etc.*
- *Suggestions for the introduction of a regular newsletter (weekly or fortnightly) to ensure parents are updated on what is happening at school: events, key dates, staff changes, etc. but also to publicise and celebrate all the good things going on that parents do not generally know enough about*
- *Weekly Newsletter: the many emails from school can make it hard for parents to keep track of all the different deadlines. The implementation of a weekly newsletter with important reminders would be welcomed*
- *It would be useful to have all information and updates regularly in one place (newsletter) which would cut down on school emails and calls to office staff*
- *It would be useful to have more information within the body of emails rather than as attachments*
- *Suggested introduction of a "secondary school style" school planner/reading record to facilitate communication between home and school*
- *Useful to have more information and updates to parents throughout the year following on from key approaches outlined in the initial "New to Year" meetings*
- *Useful to have paper copies of letters sent home when reply slip needs to be filled in and returned*
- *More and earlier communication around teaching methods and resources available to enable parents to support children better; useful to have links to educational apps.*
- *Prompt communication to parents about any teacher changes that affect the class in the medium to long term, plus an opportunity for parents to be formally introduced to any new teacher to the class*

2. Inconsistencies (6 comments), for example:

- *Some inconsistencies between classes in the same year group with regard to tasks like times tables*
- *Children do not seem to practise the times tables consistently every week. As the 144 Club is one of the strengths of the school, the expectation is for this to be done regularly in class irrespective of other learning projects, plays, concerts, teaching assignments, etc. to ensure that the children do not fall behind in their maths.*
- *Greater consistency needed with marking reading records, spellings and homework to maintain even level of learning across a year group*
- *Reading records do not seem to be regularly checked on a weekly basis – this de-motivates the children to read at home as their effort is not recognised*
- *The reading levels of children who are not yet "free readers" do not appear to be monitored or re-assessed consistently over time – it should not be up to the children to ask to be moved up a level*
- *Feedback from teaching staff varies greatly from one staff member to another*

Other single comments/suggestions in this section referred to:

- *It would be great to have more whole-school events but realise that capacity is a problem*
- *Some items have gone astray even when clearly labelled*
- *Insufficient information on child's progress and overall wellbeing*
- *Not happy with the current times tables system*
- *School lunches: not consistently good; would like to see healthier school dinner options*
- *More outdoor learning; creation of outdoor learning area*
- *Suggestion to write to parents to make them aware of current financial challenges in schools*
- *Not in favour of homework other than times tables, reading and the occasional project*
- *Poor lighting around the school for access on dark mornings and evenings*

It is clear from the comments and suggestions received that the school needs to review how it communicates with parents and publishes consistent and up to date information. This coincides with discussions already taking place between school leaders and governors who have recognised the need to develop a new school website that better meets the needs and expectations of parents, is more user-friendly and emphasizes/celebrates better the school's many successes.

Actions taken or planned by the school in response to parents' comments

1. Headteacher to respond directly to specific points raised to discuss, clarify or reassure as appropriate (February 2017)
2. School leaders, including governors, to be made aware of the points raised (Feb/March 2017).
3. Headteacher to feedback to class teachers parental views and suggestions alongside her report to staff on whole-school quality of teaching and learning (Feb/March 2017)
4. Summary of parental views to be forwarded to our County School Improvement Partner so that these can be built into his overall judgements on the school during the Spring Term Ofsted-style inspection visit (Feb/March 2017)
5. Findings from the survey and comments from our School Improvement Partner to be fed back to parents via a Governor Newsletter (March 2017).
6. All key issues raised will feed into the joint staff and governing body discussions early in the summer term to formulate the 2017/18 priorities for the School Improvement Plan.

*Mary Liming
Chair of Governors
February 2017*