

2016 Parent Questionnaire – school responses

Community

Positive

- Great reputation in the community
- Lovely school
- Good values
- Outstanding school
- Friendly enthusiastic teachers
- Good range of clubs
- Very proactive
- Would absolutely recommend this school (a number of comments)
- Real family feel and everyone is made to feel welcome
- Classroom assistants are a credit to the school
- Very friendly lots going on

Negatives

- **Parking issues and traffic by school**

We share parents' views about this, and as everyone will know, regularly appeal to parents in the weekly bulletin, to encourage more considerate and safe driving and parking. There have been some near-accidents reported to us and this is a real concern. We have contacted West Berkshire Highways department and also the local Community Police for help, however we are advised that this is a problem at almost every other school, and there are not the resources to help us. We urge all parents to allow more time and to park a little bit further away from the school, to ease congestion. As frequently mentioned in the bulletin, pulling in opposite the school to drop children off, and pulling in or parking on double yellow lines and near junctions severely reduces visibility and safety of pedestrians. Extreme vigilance is needed when driving and manoeuvring in the vicinity of the school.

- **Constant requests for monetary donations**

We offer a wide variety of experiences to the children to enrich their learning and to ensure that lessons are engaging and memorable, and in order to achieve this it is sometimes necessary to ask for monetary donations. These are always kept to the minimum needed to provide the activity. Significant anticipated requests (where known) for contributions such as off-site visits are shared with parents during the Autumn term each year, to help with forward planning and family budgeting. Monetary donations are voluntary, however if not enough donations are received it may be necessary to reconsider a planned activity for a particular year group.

The Environment

Positive

- New security gate to infant playground a welcome addition

- New security door in reception
- Safe secure environment
- Learning environment gets better each year
- PTA are fantastic
- Great new play equipment

Negative

- **Some areas could do with a little more attention from maintenance staff / School and grounds can appear untidy and cluttered**

The school occupies a large site which we try to keep as tidy as possible, within the resources available. If there is a significant matter needing attention, please let us know and we will ask the caretaker to look at it when his work list allows. Earlier this year we entered into a contract with a new grounds company who deal with the trees and hedges, and are very pleased with their work.

- **Concerns about child safety at start and end of the day**

Children in the infants are released only when their parent or known carer is seen to be waiting. This is an extremely busy time, and we ask that parents pay full attention to the children coming out, to ensure that the children come to them directly. We are grateful for the shared vigilance of both staff and parents to ensure that once children have been dropped off in the mornings, they do not come back out again during this very busy arrival time in the cloakroom areas.

From Year 3 onwards, the children are released from class to meet their adult in a pre-arranged place on the school grounds. It is not permitted that any child leaves the premises unaccompanied without prior arrangement, and the children are instructed to come to the school office if nobody is there to collect them. Parents wishing their child to wait at the gate, or to walk home from school are asked to read the 'Walking to school' policy and to complete an authority as appropriate. We ask that if an adult notices a child seemingly uncollected, that they remind them to come to the office as it may be that we have taken a late phone call from their parent and are looking for them.

In order to avoid unnecessary alarm, messages from parents running late or with other special instructions should be made by 3.00pm wherever possible please, as such messages need to be delivered around the school on foot and once the children have gone out of the doors at 3.15pm it is very difficult to find them.

- **The school gates are opened too late at the start of the day**

We know this has happened on occasion and are sorry. The gates are opened at 8.40am however our caretaker needs to get from one gate to the other which means a slight delay. There is no staff supervision available in class before 8.40am.

- **Comments about security checking of adults coming in to school**

We take security very seriously and are satisfied that our procedures are robust. When a visitor buzzes at the front door they are first let through by the office staff, to whom they need to refer in order to go through into the school. The office staff recognise most parents and also have a list of

who is expected each day. The second, internal security door exists to prevent people going further into the school without authority. Once it is established who people are seeing or where they are going, visitors are asked to sign in, and are given a visitors badge on a lanyard which indicates to staff that they are permitted to be in school. All contractors, volunteer helpers, parents or otherwise, must be DBS checked if they are to be allowed into school/classrooms. Records of DBS checks are very carefully maintained. All staff expect unfamiliar people seen around school will be wearing a lanyard and would immediately challenge anyone on site who was not.

The only exception is when we assemblies where large groups of parents are invited.

- **Perimeter fence not secure**

Replacement of the perimeter fence is something we very much want to achieve. Unfortunately however, the cost has been quoted at more than £20,000 and therefore is not something we can accomplish at the moment. We agree that a stronger fence would look smarter and would be improve security.

Communication

Positive

- Weekly bulletin very useful and informative
- New parent teacher booking system is great (numerous comments)
- Foundation welcome pack was most useful
- Parent/teacher discussions really helpful
- New reports really helpful, more personal and holistic

Negative

- **Not able to book appointments for both children simultaneously for the parents' evening**

The new Parentmail booking system has received largely positive comments and feedback shows that having one platform for all purposes is welcomed. The previous software was particularly helpful in that it showed more than one teacher's availability simultaneously, however using Parentmail once you have booked one child's appointment and go to book the next, you will find the first child's appointment is indicated by a greyed out time, to help you align the bookings.

- **It is clear that parents are not really welcome to "pop in" and see the children's teachers**

The teachers often have club or tutoring commitments immediately after school, appointments with parents and staff meetings, which may explain why it is not always possible to spend time with a parent who calls in unexpectedly at the end of the day. We are always happy to arrange an appointment where more time can be spent, and do so frequently. If appropriate, a note can be written to a teacher, or a message passed via the office staff. We request that parents do not come in to see the teachers at the beginning of the day unless it is urgent, as it is such a busy time of day with just a short time to register the children and get them to assembly.

- **School website could be used more effectively to communicate with parents**

Lots of information is on the website including the weekly bulletins and term dates. We do, however, find Parentmail to be the most effective form of communication as a text or email draws attention to any messages immediately, rather than the parent needing to seek it out on the website. 99% of our parents are subscribed to ParentmailX now, enabling us to communicate instantly.

- **There is sometimes very short notice of events/activities**

We always aim to provide as much notice as possible and apologise that this is not always possible. Sometimes we are provided short notice of events and then have to make a decision to either provide the opportunity for the children or not to participate in the event. We are proud of all the extra opportunities the children are able to experience and apologise if the notice provided is not always as long as we would like.

Child Welfare and Protection

Positive

- Lovely staff throughout the school
- Children love the school and rarely complain about going

Negative

- **Lack of access to toilet at lunchtimes/queuing taking up most of lunchtime**

Lunchtime is indeed a very busy time and the children do queue, one year group at a time, for hot school dinner service. A while ago we introduced a second service point which has greatly reduced queuing time. However the children all have lots of time to play outside and it is inaccurate to suggest that they queue most of lunchtime – this is absolutely not the case. Our youngest children are encouraged to go to the toilet before they go to lunch however there are subsequently large numbers asking for the toilet again once they get into the hall, and given that they need to be accompanied, this can indeed take a while.

We have a dedicated team of lunchtime controllers who are allocated particular classes and year groups to supervise and whose main objective is to maintain the lunchtime routine and ensure the children are safe while they eat and play. The children work hard during lesson time and therefore are allowed to be noisy and to run about and play games when they are outside, with the lunchtime controllers stepping in if a game is clearly getting too boisterous or to prevent harm or upset to anyone.

The lunchtime controllers have a demanding job for an hour and a quarter every day, and we appreciate their dedication. We do remind the children that they need to show respect for the lunchtime controllers' supervision in the same way that they do towards their teachers and classroom support staff.

Teaching and Learning

Positive

- The reward system works well
- The staff are highly motivated, hardworking and dedicated (numerous)
- Child well supported and encouraged
- The behaviour of children is exceptional
- The children are aware of the expectations on them
- The children really enjoy school

Negative

- **The reward system is not fair and consistent**

Unfortunately this is something that will be felt by a minority of parents whatever system we use. The reward system links directly with our school values which all of the children are familiar with, and which are clearly displayed throughout the school. All of the teachers review their class charts regularly to ensure that each particular child is where they ought to be and to ensure consistency with their year group teacher partner.

- **Too much homework in the holidays**

We agree that the children need to relax during the holidays, however in order to achieve everything required of the curriculum it is necessary to set homework too. We are aware that many parents take pride in their children attending a school graded by Ofsted as Outstanding, and to maintain these high standards in respect of the children's effort and attainment, we do need support from parents on homework, even if it is set for the holidays.

- **Too little homework in term time**

As above, we are also criticised for giving too much homework so this is something that is perceived differently throughout the parent community. We give the amount of homework that we consider necessary to enhance and consolidate the children's learning, in support of what is being done in class.

- **Continuity of teachers in the classroom can be an issue**

Parent concerns are understandable, when a change to teaching staff is necessary, for example due to a maternity absence. As most parents will be aware, all teachers have weekly planning time, and Senior Leadership Team teachers have management time, out of the classrooms. We do our utmost to ensure consistency of PPA cover in the classrooms, so that children have the same teacher each week at these times. Where it is necessary to recruit a new teacher our standards are very high. There is a national shortage of teachers at the moment, which compounds the challenge of sourcing

teachers of the calibre we require here and may necessitate a temporary arrangement for covering a class.

Extra-curricular Activities – significant increase in positive ratings

Positive

- Excellent range of activities offered (numerous)
- The school always has new ideas to inspire children
- Theme days allow more creativity
- Superb new playground facilities
- School trips are excellent (e.g. trip to Houses of Parliament)
- Staff work incredibly hard on enrichment weeks and activities

Negative

- **Less dressing up days would be appreciated**

We receive many positive comments about our themed days, and find that they greatly enhance the children's experiences and topics. Many of us are parents too, and we do understand that dressing-up days are an added burden, but in general the fun and the benefits greatly outweigh this.

Occasionally a dressing-up day might be something arranged by the School Council. The School Council is run by the children themselves and where possible we like to allow them some autonomy to follow through their ideas. Children can often adapt something they already have at home – we don't expect parents to buy expensive outfits.

- **Can parents come to Harvest Festival or Christingle?**

This would be lovely, as these assemblies are particularly special. However, it is a matter of space. When all the children are in the hall it is not possible to invite all parents too.

- **More free clubs would be appreciated**

A wide variety of club activities are available before and after school. The clubs that are run by teachers are free of charge but those run by specialist coaches are chargeable. We are grateful to the teachers who run clubs, for their time. However, we should appreciate how hard our teachers work to provide an outstanding experience for our children.

- **More spaces at BASC would be welcomed**

Yes, this would be desirable, the clubs are extremely popular and the sessions often oversubscribed. However the building was constructed especially for this purpose, and for fire safety reasons can accommodate a maximum of 32 children plus supervising adults.

- **Productions can take up too much time and should be scaled back**

We respect opinion on this, however have received huge numbers of positive comments about the productions, the high quality of performance and production, and the fantastic pride and enjoyment

the children experience in taking part. Almost everyone comments on how amazing it is that the children are able to achieve such high standards, getting the chance to experience not only acting, singing and dancing, but the scenery, props and lighting too. We have no plans to scale this back and are extremely proud of what the children achieve and of the lasting memories created for them. We are aware of other schools who do nothing like this, and whose class assemblies even, contain no dramatic content or impact. We feel strongly that what we do here is preferable.

Your Representatives & Governing Body

Positive

- PTA are a credit to the school and an outstanding feature
- Governors support the school very well
- PTA are very dedicated
- There is a fantastic atmosphere of togetherness at the school

Negative

- **Concerned about the future of the PTA and lack of infant parent representation**

This is a concern. The school has historically had a very active and successful PTA, however for this to continue it is vital that new generations of parents are encouraged to join the PTA and to volunteer to take on key roles within it. The parents who have taken on key roles in the PTA in recent years are understandably now wanting to hand over to new volunteers, of which there is a serious shortage. The PTA organise some very popular events such as the summer and Christmas fairs, the fish and chip quiz nights, and the children's discos, which raise a huge amount of money which is spent directly on the children in school. A lot has been achieved by way of significant contributions from the PTA and it would be a great loss to the children if not enough parents joined to enable this to continue. We greatly value and appreciate the work of the PTA volunteers and would like to encourage other parents to consider if they can spare some time to join.

The new assessment reports

Positive

- Well explained at the parents' evening and informative
- The information was easy to understand and enables parents to support at home
- Simple to see what areas my child needs to work on

Negative

- **More information on interpreting the reports would be welcome**

It was unfortunate that not everybody could attend the parents' evening where additional information was provided. The presentation notes from that evening are available on the school website, something which we highlighted on the weekly bulletin at the time. We also ran a drop-in session following the distribution to assist parents.

- **Impersonal with the lack of general comments on how the child is doing**

The report provided replaces the previous termly letters that only provided a level for each subject. The new termly letter provides an overview of where your child is working to national expectations and a breakdown to the objectives your child can and can't do. The end of year annual report will continue to be provided at the end of July.