

ELMSTEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

PARENTAL SURVEY – OCTOBER, 2011

For this year's parental survey we received 48 replies, although a number of the forms were clearly from families of two or more children. As the survey was anonymous we can only estimate that these views reflect an approximate 40% return. Not every question was answered, so the scores do vary. The yellow columns (5 & 4) indicate the number of positive scores, whilst the pink column (1) indicates the most negative scores. We have included the comments, that relate to the scores for columns 2 and 1, at the end of the survey findings with our response.

Please score 5 for the most positive response and 1 for the least positive, with any comments added at the end.		< Positive Negative >					
No:	Question:	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
1	Is your child generally happy at school?	27	17	4			
2	Are you generally happy with the school?	27	14	7			
3	Is your child generally interested in the work at school?	28	14	2	3		
4	Does your child take the opportunity to join after school clubs?	20	7	4		5	12
5	Do you feel your child is benefiting from their homework?	17	11	7	1	4	7
6	Do you feel confident in supporting your child with their homework?	23	11	2		3	6
7	Does your child ever worry about tests?	8	6	7	3	4	14
8	Is your child heard to read enough by an adult at school?	4	15	12	6	9	
9	Do you share books at home with your child just for pleasure regularly each week?	31	9	5	1		
10	Does your child feel they are doing well academically at school?	20	15	5	3	2	3
11	If your child is part of the KS2 1:1 Tuition Programme do you feel that it has benefitted/is benefitting them?	5	7	1		1	29
12	If your child attends Wide Awake Club do you feel that it is benefitting them?	4	3	2	1		34
13	How positive has been your child's experience during the September transition period, as they make the adjustment to the new academic year?	28	12	6	3		
14	Does your child have a good relationship with their teacher?	31	9	5	1		
15	Have you ever helped in school?	24	4		1	4	13

Please score 5 for the most positive response and 1 for the least positive, with any comments added at the end.		< Positive Negative >					
No:	Question:	5	4	3	2	2	N/A
16	Have you ever helped with a school fundraising event – such as the Fete, jumble sale etc?	20	7	3		6	6
17	Do you think the parking around the school is safe?	2	5	11	7	14	2
18	How well do you think the school deals with the issue of bullying?	8	12	10	3	3	9
19	Have you found the Parent-Mail texting service helpful? e.g. notification of school closure because of snow.	23	8	8	1		1
20	Do you feel the school exercises good judgement when your child is not feeling well during the day?	19	11	8		3	2
21	If you use the website on a regular basis how helpful is it in providing information about the school?	8	14	11	6	1	2
22	If you have received an Achievement Text how encouraging did you find it?	19	3				19
23	How informative were the 2011 end of year reports?	21	12	6		1	3
24	How happy are you with the balance between the number of school trips each year to the actual cost?	13	18	5	1	2	3
25	Did your child benefit from the school trips they took part in, over the last academic year?	22	12	4	1		4
26	Do you feel that the school is a secure place for your children?	29	12	1			
27	Do feel, overall, that the school's outside environment is a safe place for the children to be?	27	10	5	1	1	
28	Generally, are you happy with the school meal menu?	21	13	4	1	1	
29	Generally, are you happy with the quality of hot lunches?	19	12	6		1	4
30	How positive are your experiences when dealing with the school office?	24	12	6	2		
31	How positive have your experiences been when dealing with members of the school leadership team?	22	8	7	1		5
32	How successful do you consider to be the role of governors in supporting the school?	16	15	8	1		3
TOTAL SCORE:		607	338	172	48	67	181
TOTAL PERCENTAGE:		43%	24.%	12.2%	3.4%	4.7%	12.8%

The survey reveals that of the questions asked, 67% of the replies were really positive, such as those relating to how happy you are with the school generally. 12.2% fell in the middle, 7.9% replies brought a more negative response, particularly in respect to the issue of traffic outside the school and the amount of time a child is heard read in school. In the optional comments section we are able to examine in greater depth the negative comments, some of which have already been solved, but some of which will require careful consideration.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS:

If you were to add your own question, for the next survey, what would it be?

The questions below are listed exactly as suggested by parents. Next year we will incorporate these, with some re-wording, into an expanded questionnaire.

- Do you read the school newsletter every week? If so, how useful and informative do you find it?
- Would you like to know what your child has eaten if they had hot lunches?
- Is your child's teacher easy to contact if you have any concerns?
- Do you think that your child drinks plenty?
- Do you think lunch times are supervised well?
- Do you think the school offers enough support for working parents?
- Are you happy with the way the school makes parents/siblings of pupils feel welcome?
- Would you like swimming lessons added to the curriculum and be prepared to pay towards the cost?
- How effective do you think communication is between teachers and parents?

OPTIONAL COMMENTS:

The following comments have been grouped in common themes, as a summary of those added by some parents. Ironically, some of the more negative comments came from parents who gave high scores for other aspects of school life. Only on one occasion did a parent return a generally more negative survey.

Traffic:

- Having the caretaker on site during morning period, start of school, has proved to be a good plan. Seems to help with the outside congestion.
- Car park needs to be expanded.
- Small gate closed at end of day has been a nightmare as too many pushchairs and parents outside Reception Class.
- Maybe the school should employ two staff to guard two gates, that makes sense.
- Too much parking on the yellow lines, even a camper van, making visibility impaired.
- The only thing I am concerned with are the cars that come into Elmcroft Road. It should be a no go road and there should be a zebra crossing.
- Parents still drive too quickly and it is inappropriate behaviour to perform three point turns in the road by the zig-zag lines.

Response: *Always the biggest area of negative comments. Deploying the school caretaker to monitor school arrival has certainly helped, plus he maintains a log of those cars that stop on the yellow lines, with letters written to those reminding them of their road safety responsibility. Whilst closing the small side gate was done for safeguarding reasons, we now re-open it at the end of the day only, as the bottle-neck outside Class R was unacceptable, with so many parents arriving and leaving at the same time to collect their children.*

Bullying:

- The school acted well – they listened to us and put measures in place to help our child.
- The school needs to show that they are tough on bullies.

Response: Only three comments about bullying, with one being really positive. Always an emotive issue. Dealing with bullying effectively – at whatever level – is a must. Fortunately, we have few cases of bullying to deal with, but it is always an upsetting experience. Every member of staff has to remain alert and the need to **listen** to any child's worries is a must..

Communication:

- Sometimes a lack of communication between teachers and parents.
- Website not always up-to-date, but easy to improve.
- I feel that parents of children in the upper end of the school (5 & 6) are not always kept so well informed of their child's progress.
- I find that events are sometimes advertised too late (eg Harvest Festival) to enable me to ensure someone can attend.
- I am not a fan of the new Newsletter format as not so easy to read.
- More pupils' work on website would be nice.
- I appreciate the reasons why, but I do think parents should be allowed into the KS2 classrooms every morning. It is nice to have a quick word with the teachers occasionally before the start of the day.
- Difficult to make appointments as staff not always available when I am.
- The Achievement Texts are a brilliant idea.

Response: We wanted to improve the appearance of the Newsletter, but the present new format isn't easy to prepare and for some parents, downloading takes longer. We will look at a simpler format. However, there seems to be overwhelming support for the ParentMail service, as a way of keeping parents informed. As for the website, we will ensure the monthly calendar is updated regularly and at least three months in advance. We will also ensure that the start times of events are always shown when we publish the date of an event. Putting children's work on more regularly is another target.

For meetings with Class Teachers, the only practical times are at the end of the school day, simply because of teaching commitments. Meetings with one of the Deputy Headteachers is possible during the day, on Mondays and Thursdays, whilst a meeting with the Headteacher can be arranged at most times, apart from Monday and Thursday mornings. We are aware of the advantages of a parent having a 'quick chat' with a KS2 teacher at the start of the day, as in KS2, but we had to halt this for safeguarding reasons, with adults have access to all areas of the school, which was very difficult to supervise. KS2 Class Teachers have certainly found that the children have settled down more quickly at the start of the day, in addition to displaying more independent skills. Of real concern was the manner in which a number of parents talked about what should be confidential issues within earshot of children. Maintaining open and regular communication, whilst complying with safeguarding regulations is a difficult thing to balance!

Reading:

- Some weeks my child reads twice in school and some weeks not.

Response: We will consider this at a staff meeting as regular reading to an adult is crucial. At the same time there are 30 – 32 children in each class and giving each child sufficient time cannot be done by the Class Teacher alone, particularly when there is an expansive National Curriculum to cover.

Lunchtime Supervision:

- Disappointed with supervision during lunchtimes.
- Increase in dinner ladies. More monitoring needed, to be safe.

Response: Our deployment of MDAs exceeds the recommended ratio, but we will look more carefully at their interaction with the children and see what can be improved. This is the one time of day where all the children spend a significant amount of time together and must be managed effectively throughout. However, the survey shows that the large majority of parents consider the outside area to be a safe place to be.

Office:

- Office staff sometimes dismissive and not as helpful as they could be.
- The school office staff are very helpful – nothing is too much trouble. This also applies to the teachers.

Response: *The large majority of parents consider the office in a positive light, although we don't like to think that someone would consider them to be dismissive. On the other side, we must also take into account the small number of parents who are sometimes dismissive in their attitude when talking to the office staff. It is a relationship that has to work both ways.*

End of year reports:

- Very informative and lovely to receive. A lot of work went into them.
- I thought KS1 school report at the end of year was far too complicated.

Response: *The reports are kept as straightforward as possible, with all the key information. The report feedback forms were overwhelming appreciative of teacher comments and information provided. It is unlikely that we will change the format in any significant manner for this academic year.*

Clubs:

- Lack of sports clubs
- More after school clubs for KS1 please.
- Could we add swimming to the school curriculum again.

Response: *Tricky one this as we cannot offer clubs on Tuesdays, because that is when our staff meeting is held and Friday – when we tried – did not prove popular with anyone. We rely on staff volunteering to run clubs, which they are more than willing to do; but availability is limited with four staff involved in running after school 1:1 Tuition sessions. Some clubs are operated by outside agencies, but this naturally incurs a cost. More clubs for KS1 will become available after Christmas, but if anyone is interested in volunteering to offer a club we are certainly interested.*

Parents' Evenings:

- Not enough account taken for full time working parents – lots of options of times but only one evening.
- I feel the October parents' evenings are too early in the year.
- Excellent transition this year.
- The July transition meeting for Year 5 could have been more helpful.
- The transition from Class R to Class 1 has been fantastic.

Response: *Majority considered that parents' evenings and transition meetings were a success. The October meeting is more about evaluating a child's settling in period and reviewing their key learning targets for the year, so any later would be less helpful. Two evenings are always held with some staff offering other days to accommodate parents. We also publish the dates of these meetings well in advance, although meeting slots can only be organised closer to the time. Any requests for a later time slot can always be sent to the Class Teacher to keep a note when sorting out available allocation times.*

Booster groups:

- In Year 2 there were 'booster' groups and in Year 3 they do not start until Easter.
- Perhaps too many resources are spent on the less able.
- Extension groups are appreciated. We would like to see them start earlier in Year 3 like before.
- The children at the top of the class, in the upper end of the school, are pushed, as are those at the lower end. However, those in the middle are often left, which can make them feel undervalued.

Response: *It is not the case that those children in the 'middle' are left unchallenged, as tracking data shows that over time they make the same rate of progress as the other groups, but are more*

likely to hit or exceed their predicted targets by the end of Year 6. With more able and less able groups of children quite rightly challenged to progress to the best of their ability, the remaining group has the focus of the Class Teacher, because this is often the largest classroom grouping. It is also the group that is making the average rate of progress, with initiatives like 1:1 to add even more to the classroom challenge. This is something that we are more than happy to talk over with any parent. Simply e-mail the Headteacher at headteacher@elmstead.essex.sch.uk and a discussion can be arranged. Many parents take up this offer on a regular basis.

Hot lunches: The introduction of pulses (eg lentil bolognese or soya mince) would make a significant improvement to the school diet of those children who don't eat meat at all. School dinner non-payment letter rudely worded.

Response: *Non-payment letter is computer generated and we are unable to change wording. It is abrupt and the tone is wrong, so from now on we are simply taking the figures and pasting them into our own letter. It will take a little longer, but is worth the effort. The vegetarian options will be looked at. Whatever the case, we are happy to report that hot lunches are now running at their highest numbers since our re-launch*

Shows:

- Welcome pre-schoolers to shows as did before.
- Loved the Junior's play. Wonderful opportunities.

Response: *Everyone enjoys the shows, which increased in number last year, with KS2 classes offering a variety of performances. We had a negative comment about not allowing babies and toddlers into shows, but nowhere near the number of negative comments when we did allow them in! The children performing were justly annoyed when their lines were spoilt by a disrupting noise in the audience. It would be fine if all parents took their children out, when their children became restless, but some ignored the effect upon the show taking place. No easy answer to this one.*

School trips:

- We often get multiple school trip payments in the same week – can you pre-plan this please for those with more than one child at the school.
- An additional school/class trip would benefit the children.

Response: *Most trips take place in the Summer Term and every effort is made to plan well in advance. Keeping costs down is always our aim, particularly in the present economic climate. This year we will endeavour to publish trip dates as soon as they are booked.*

1:1 Tuition:

- Our child received 1:1 Tuition which was excellent for his development. Should his needs have not been met by usual teaching though?

Response: *This initiative is hugely successful and is now offered nationally, although some schools have not opted to exploit the funding. As a result we regularly apply for more and have been lucky thus far to receive more. A short bout of 1:1 Tuition really pays off for those children, who with a bit more attention, can jump forward earlier than they might otherwise do. If something extra can be done, for any child, we will take advantage of that opportunity.*

Foreign Language teaching:

- In KS2 this is insufficient.

Response: *In some respects it is, but finding regular time, within the National Curriculum, is difficult without losing something along the way. Nevertheless, we are looking at ways of how we can deliver Spanish in the most effective manner. Please note that in primary school it is as much about awareness of that country and its culture as it is about language acquisition.*