

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2024

Governors were delighted that there were 82 completed questionnaires and 401 comments and suggestions, some of which were developed at length. All the comments have been read by myself, other school governors and Mrs Di Palma-Heath. It will not be possible to implement all the suggestions made, but all suggestions will be considered carefully and implemented where it is felt the change will improve what is offered by the school.

What particularly pleased governors was the fact that the vast majority of definite responses to the questionnaire were very positive about what the school is doing, and most comments and suggestions were made in a spirit of cooperation. It is important to the governors and staff to have this overwhelming vote of confidence from the parent body.

Governors are particularly concerned when more than 10% of definite responses to a question are negative. This year, two questions received over 10% of negative responses. The two questions were concerned with the system of rewards and sanctions used by the school and the standard of school lunches. Governors were also interested to see how parents responded to two new questions, one concerned with uniform policy and the other with the possible tension between the school's historic Church of England foundation and its role as a community school

In the case of the question about the school's system of rewards and sanctions, for the second year running, this question received more than 10% negative responses. Criticisms of parents included the lack of opportunity for some to get rewards, apparent inconsistencies in the award of sanctions and rewards, confusion caused by the large variety of rewards available with variations from year to year and the traffic light system for dealing with negative behaviour. One commentator observed: 'I do not feel the ... traffic light system is helpful. I feel there is ambiguity about how children move within the system and, for children with more complex needs or certainly those experiencing toxic shame, this system could create significant anxiety and withdrawal from certain aspects of school life.'

The governors accept that systems will vary from year to year and from cohort to cohort because rewards and sanctions that will be effective vary from year to year and from cohort to cohort. They did, however, acknowledge that the traffic light system had its problems and noted that the school is actively looking for an alternative. It is also the intention of the school to develop a whole school policy on rewards and sanctions, a policy which doesn't currently exist. The views of parents will be taken fully into account as that policy is developed

In the case of the question about school meals, 88% of parents who made a definite response said they were happy with the lunches the school provided; 12% were not. The governors are aware that we now have a new member of staff in charge of the kitchen who will be looking at every aspect of the work that is done. Governors understand that menus are being reviewed, and consideration is given to asking children to make choices in advance to ensure that they get the meals and portion sizes they want at lunchtime and that much less food is wasted. These developments will go a long way to meeting the concerns expressed by parents in the questionnaire.

In the case of the question on uniforms, 92% of the parents who made a definite response were satisfied with the school uniform policy, which was a pleasing outcome for governors and staff. 21 parents went on to make comments on uniforms, particularly about cost, quality and enforcement. There were comments on PE t-shirts, which the school has already responded to and some other interesting suggestions about possible changes which the school will consider carefully.

In the case of the question about the possible tension between the school's historic Church of England foundation and its role as a community school, 94% of the parents who made a definite response felt the school did strike the right balance between the school's Church of England origins and its role as the community school for south-east Otley. Nine parents commented on this question, and, in particular, concern was expressed that certain values were identified as Christian values which implied the values were exclusive to Christians when this is not the case. Governors understand this criticism and will consider other ways of describing the values that are important to the school.

The annual parent questionnaire is an important way for governors to learn what parents think about the school's work, and I hope that even more parents will complete it in future years. Of course, parents can contact the school at any time during the year with their concerns, and the school is committed to dealing with all parental concerns fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality of service to those who raise concerns.

I hope you have had a good summer and are looking forward to the new term, as are the governors and staff.

Allan Boddy
Chair of Governors
September 2024