

Westhead Lathom St. James Church of England Primary School
Pupil Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ) /Parental Questionnaire (PQ)
Case Study

Westhead Lathom St James CE Primary School is a small, semi-rural school in the village of Westhead, near Ormskirk, West Lancashire. We have 72 children on roll. The children are taught in three mixed age groups. Currently, there are 21 children in reception and year 1, 22 children in years 2 and 3 and 29 children in years 4, 5 and 6 KS2.

Westhead St. James is a very successful, innovative and creative school with a commitment to high standards and high expectations for all children. We consider one of our core strengths to be our ability to know every child's strengths, weaknesses and circumstances. We, "go the extra mile," to ensure that we are in a position to know where each child is in their learning and in their well-being so that we can provide the next appropriate step in a 360 degree wrap around caring environment.

We have 14% of pupils on the SEN register. Analysis of data shows that our school enables every child to make at least good progress year on year. This was reinforced by OFSTED 2010.

Our self-evaluation systems are very wide and thorough. This includes going to great lengths in order to gather the views of stakeholders:-

- Our website has email access; a recently adopted text to home system is used frequently. Our teaching staff are available before and after school to talk to parents; parents are encouraged to telephone school with any concerns, queries and comments;
- We seek parents' views at different times of their child's education e.g. after pre-school induction and when leaving school;
- We actively seek parental views more formally on a regular basis through the Lancashire Parental Questionnaire which is analysed thoroughly;
- We consult children through the School Council, collective worship and in classes and record their views. We also let the children record their own views e.g. on collective worship evaluation board using post its;
- We also actively seek pupil views more formally on a regular basis using the Lancashire "Listening to Pupils", Pupil Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ). It is used annually with pupils in Year 4 and Year 6. It is a valuable process for collecting pupil's views which are then analysed thoroughly.

Our school finds the Parental Questionnaire and the Pupil Attitude Questionnaire to be very useful tools to look at school development from different stakeholder viewpoints and benchmark our progress against other schools. We use the questionnaires every year and use the information given as part of our self evaluation process. This informs our strategic planning and the findings are reflected in our SEF, SIAS and our Performance Management targets.

To highlight ways in which the Parental Questionnaire and Pupil Attitude Questionnaire have helped us two examples are shown below.

Parent Questionnaire

Question 1 My child enjoys school.
Question 2 My child is making good progress in school.
Question 3 Children behave well in the school.
Question 4 My child gets the right amount of homework.
Question 5 I feel welcome in the school.
Question 6 My child is always learning new things in school.

The PQ is reported in sections-parents of KS1 pupils and parents of KS2 pupils. Each of these results are then further analysed showing results in relation to a 5% summary and a 25% summary. Percentage ranking is shown and is flagged up in red if it is a cause for concern and green if it is a very favourable.

KS1

Key Stage 1 5% Summary

Qno	School Table			Project Results	
	%Pos	%Neg	%Rank	%Pos	%Neg
1	100.0	0.0	1	97.8	1.0
2	100.0	0.0	1	94.4	1.5
3	100.0	0.0	1	94.0	1.9
4	100.0	0.0	1	83.2	6.8
5	100.0	0.0	1	97.4	1.5
6	100.0	0.0	1	95.8	0.9
7	100.0	0.0	1	84.1	10.8
8	100.0	0.0	1	96.7	1.8
9	93.8	0.0	11	76.9	6.5
10	100.0	0.0	1	95.9	1.0
11	87.5	0.0	53	87.8	5.5
12	100.0	0.0	1	96.0	0.8
13	100.0	0.0	1	79.4	8.0
14	100.0	0.0	1	97.3	0.6
15	93.8	0.0	36	88.8	1.2
16	100.0	0.0	1	88.8	4.0
17	100.0	0.0	1	95.0	1.3
18	100.0	0.0	1	95.4	1.1
21	100.0	0.0	1	97.0	0.9
23	100.0	0.0	1	96.1	1.7
38	100.0	0.0	1	76.5	4.6
39	100.0	0.0	1	94.8	0.3
53	100.0	0.0	1	92.9	1.4

	Parental responses fall within the lower 5% of the project
	Parental responses fall within the upper 5% of the project

The KS1 feedback shows that we were within the top 5% for positive responses for most questions asked but there were two questions which were not rated in the red low score zone but were still of some concern to our school as we are always aiming to improve the service we provide.

The questions were:-

No. 9 The school works in close partnership with parents.

No. 15 The school values children's views/opinions

The staff were quite surprised to see these results as we thought that every effort had been made to keep parents informed and have numerous ways in which we actively seek the views of pupils throughout the year. A plan of action was set out. An informal meeting between staff and parents was arranged. Parents were invited into school to discuss ways in which they would like to be kept informed. At this meeting, it became evident that many letters containing information about timetables, children's age-appropriate targets and curriculum meetings for parents were being lost between the classroom and home.

To remedy this we started to put all correspondence on the internet, which is also archived so that it is all accessible to most. In addition, we adopted a text to parents system which allows us to send unlimited texts to all, parents, groups of parents, staff and individuals to tell them information, remind them of events and tell them to expect a letter in their child's bag. No-one can now say, "I didn't know."

In addition we wanted to be sure that parents felt that they could work in partnership with staff to maximise levels of achievement. Previously, (four years ago) curriculum meetings for parents were extremely poorly attended (1-3 parents). This was seen to be inefficient deployment of staff time, especially as our staff already have to multi-task across the curriculum both inside the classroom and as leaders outside the classroom. It was also felt that we needed to include parents in the learning process and if they couldn't come to us then we would get the information to them.

For this reason, we devised leaflets which were sent to parents instead, e.g. maths calculations strategies devised for our poorly attended "Maths Take-away Night" and detailed level expectation leaflets. However, some of these leaflets were being lost or thrown away at home. After discussion between staff and parents at the above meeting we saw that the face to face evenings needed to be reinstated but as a highly advertised priority and annual opportunity for parents to return to school so that we can all support the children consistently. Curriculum leaflets would still be produced and handed out but also loaded onto our web site. In hindsight, previously we had offered too many opportunities and parents were picking and choosing which resulted in low attendance.

The parents in the discussion group agreed with this plan and are looking forward to the next Maths Take-away night in September. It has already been publicised with parents showing quite promising interest.

Another suggestion from the parents of Key Stage 1 children was to provide the youngest class (reception and year 1) with a daily notice board outside school on the path. The plan was for staff to update daily with news and requests. This was easy to introduce and already parents are making positive comments about its benefits.

We have also made it more obvious that we do value the opinions of children in our school by drawing attention to our suggestion box, worry bag, extremely active school council and sports council, eco warriors and garden force by noting it in newsletters, writing it on notice boards, sending text messages when appropriate and announcing it at school events. We hope that this will help to communicate to parents how frequently their children's views are sought. Our opinion is that we have always sought the views of pupils but we weren't telling the parents what we were doing. We believe that the children's views are sought frequently enough and successfully too as the Pupil Attitude Questionnaire confirms,

“Our school is in the top 5% of schools for the number of positive responses to the questions relating to teachers listening to what children say and feeling that their opinions can help to make changes at school”

KS2

Key Stage 2 5% Summary

Qno	School Table			Project Results	
	%Pos	%Neg	%Rank	%Pos	%Neg
1	93.8	6.3	83	97.3	1.7
2	100.0	0.0	1	94.3	3.2
3	100.0	0.0	1	93.1	3.0
4	87.5	12.5	37	83.7	12.7
5	100.0	0.0	1	96.2	2.0
6	100.0	0.0	1	96.6	1.5
7	93.8	0.0	24	84.3	11.6
8	100.0	0.0	1	94.8	3.1
9	93.8	0.0	31	87.4	5.3
10	100.0	0.0	1	96.7	1.5
11	100.0	0.0	1	86.5	8.2
12	100.0	0.0	1	95.8	1.4
13	93.8	0.0	38	88.2	7.1
14	100.0	0.0	1	97.1	1.3
15	100.0	0.0	1	89.3	2.8
16	100.0	0.0	1	86.9	7.8
17	100.0	0.0	1	94.0	2.1
18	100.0	0.0	1	93.8	2.3
21	100.0	0.0	1	94.9	1.4
23	100.0	0.0	1	96.0	2.2
38	100.0	0.0	1	84.2	5.4
39	100.0	0.0	1	95.7	1.3
53	100.0	0.0	1	98.5	1.5

 Parental responses fall within the lower 5% of the project
 Parental responses fall within the upper 5% of the project

In the Parent Questionnaire, at Key Stage 2, the only area of concern was in relation to question number 1, "*My child enjoys school.*"

At first glance we were surprised and concerned to see that our school was at the 83rd percentile ranking for this as we pride ourselves in ensuring that our children are happy and content in school and plan fun and exciting events through which they can learn successfully.

On further examination it became clear that this ranking was despite the fact that our school had scored 93.8% positive comments from the forms submitted. The project score was 97.3%. This is exceptionally high. We took into consideration that as a small school, each response is worth a higher percentage and therefore results can be misleading. Still, our score could be cause for concern and should be investigated. We cross-referenced against the Pupil Attitude Questionnaire and found that the children's anonymous response to the same question was very positive.

Again we felt that the children's responses showed that we were providing an enjoyable learning experience and environment for the children but that this was not being communicated to the parents.

Again, another plan was formulated:-

- Firstly, to report to parents through newsletters and the web about the successes and love of learning at school in lessons and outside the classroom too.
- Secondly, it was decided that we should approach a group of parents and children separately who would be able to offer views informally.

The meeting with the first group of parents was not fruitful at all. These were the easily accessible parents who were keen to come into school and sing our praises readily. This was heart-lifting to hear but did not help towards unravelling the mystery. Another group of parents was invited into school one afternoon. Two declined at the last minute and one couldn't make the meeting. The remaining three parents felt that their children were generally happy but that could not say that their children enjoyed school as there was so much pressure for their children to achieve a certain level despite two of their children being on the school action SEN list. They relished the creative projects and themed learning we offer but felt that there was no getting away from English and Maths daily. This was casually slipped into the conversation with the children of the parents at another meeting and they said that they found it hard to sit still and concentrate in English and Maths.

As a staff we looked at the types of learners in our school and realised that the middle class consists of predominantly kinaesthetic learners. We decided to create as many opportunities for the children to be active learners. This would have implications for planning time, classroom support and the volume of recording in their books/ folders but felt that it was the way forward.

The children are now expected to learn outside at least part of every day if they are in reception or year 1 and for half a day a week if they are in year 2 or above.

Security systems have been revised-cones available at the base of the path we cross onto the school field plus a series of combination locks on gates. We are aiming to install an electro magnetic gate at the playground entrance with access controlled from the school office.

Support staff timetables have been revised to ensure that teachers can plan to have active children in quite adventurous circumstances. Teachers' planning is expected to show opportunities for active learning.

A member of staff is to receive training in the Forest Schools strategies. This will provide excellent purpose for writing and will help children to organise their thoughts, giving them an abundance of mental sentences to convert into writing. There have been far more out of your seat maths and even out of the classroom maths. This has caused us to re-think some ways of recording. When we have a very active themed week in maths the children benefit the most from making notes on post-its for the start of the week and then converting these notes confirming what they have discovered and learned into small group posters. Active maths has been a great help to A.P.P. report updates. Literacy and numeracy continues to play a part in our themed work whenever possible. As a result of this decision to provide more opportunities for active learning we have planned an enterprise project which will require all children from years 2 though to year 6 to be able to gather data, construct all sorts of graphs, including using soft-ware packages, and to practise methods of calculations for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division with a sense of purpose.

Other questions were in our 'some cause for concern' category and so, as a staff, we thought about how these responses could be improved in the future: Question 4: After consultation with parents about quantity of homework, it was found that some wanted more whilst some wanted less. English and maths homework in the middle & top classes (Y2 – Y6) were flexibly increased i.e. a bare minimum is set but additional extra homework is set over weekdays & weekends to accommodate parents' busy lifestyles. This was communicated to the children and to parents via a letter, the school website & parents' evening discussions. The adoption of an online mathematics scheme called 'Mathletics' from reception to year 6 has provided opportunities for consolidation and extension. Verbal feedback on these changes has been very positive.

Question 7: Parents also report that they feel that they are better informed about their child's level of attainment and way of working and that their children feel more confident about tackling mistakes in maths due to Mathletics.

Question 9: We are moving towards using a similar system for consolidation and extension for spelling and hope that this will have a positive impact too. We need to continue to address this area by revisiting our assessment for learning techniques.

Question 13: 'The school provides a range of extra activities outside lesson time'.

We were again shocked that it wasn't virtually 100% positive as we offer clubs in chess, dominoes, ICT, early years book appreciation, drama, rounders, cricket, rugby, football, dance, maths, netball, multiskills, tri-golf, orienteering and musical instruction on a rota plus wrap around before and after childcare. These clubs take place most lunchtimes and after school.

We employ a teaching assistant as extended officer who promotes these clubs to parents, letting them know what is available and displaying information on a notice board. We are aiming to include every child in at least one club.

We feel that analysis of the results of the Parent Questionnaire and Pupil Attitude Questionnaire have led us to question and fine-tune our educational provision with a successful impact.

We know that a school cannot please every child and parent all the time. We also realise that the questionnaire results can be flawed if they are completed immediately after a misunderstanding between a child and their teacher or the school and a parents. In which case, especially in a small school, results can be skewed by a tiny minority.

We value the PAQ & PQ results as on the train journey of a child's education they make us stop, reflect and go back & repair, redesign or reroute the track.

It is pointless going forward if it isn't on firm foundations and in the right direction.