

Cornerstone Church of England (VA) Primary School

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Building our Community with Love, Forgiveness and Hope
Growing an Inspirational Learning Community

19 September 2016

PARENT SURVEY SUMMER 2016

Dear Parents,

Many thanks to everyone who responded to our parent survey at the end of last term (22 responses). In this letter I will share a summary of the views expressed and how we as a school will be aiming to respond to some of these points during this academic year.

How much has your child or children enjoyed the year at Cornerstone?

Very much so	Reasonably so	A little	Not at all
77%	14%	9%	0%

55% of parents who responded thought that their children had made a great deal of progress in their learning and no parent thought their child had not made progress. As you are hopefully aware the new National Curriculum from 2014 was fully in place last year, therefore Year 2 and Year 3 pupils were undertaking a more challenging curriculum than previous cohorts would have experienced, as was explained at the Teaching, Learning and Assessment workshop we ran last year. Undoubtedly at times this was also a challenge for us as staff to pitch and pace the children's learning and progress (as was the experience in schools at county and national level). After a range of work undertaken within school and externally with other schools and county advisors we are in a stronger position this coming year to support your child's progress.

82% of parents stated their children were very or reasonably motivated by their learning and different projects. This is in line with feedback we have from internal monitoring activities, governor visits and visits from other professionals. In fact a point our County Inspector made on his most recent visit was that the children were so engrossed in what they were learning that they weren't distracted by him visiting and walking around their classrooms. I think it would be impossible to state that every child is always highly motivated by every aspect of their learning every day. What has been noticeable over a number of years, with changes in technology and society generally is that children in primary schools often want increasingly fast paced, highly interactive, bright and colourful learning experiences, and their attention spans do not last as long as perhaps they used to. While we obviously do many things to create exciting and interactive lessons and use technology, there are some elements of learning that require practice and/or lengthier periods of time to master certain knowledge and skills.

I am pleased with the high percentage of parents who recognise the regular way that children, staff and parents show the school Values of Love, Forgiveness and Hope (95% very or reasonably well and regularly or fairly often). Again this is an aspect of our school consistently noted by visitors, whether they be prospective new parents, visiting teachers or governors. The way the children develop their empathy, care and consideration for each other is truly heart-warming. I am proud of the way the

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staff model this so regularly and effectively, it is a very positive environment for us all to be working in. I would also like to sincerely thank you as parents for the respect, support and positivity you show us as individual staff and a school as a whole. It makes a huge difference to the ethos of our school as a community and allows open and productive partnerships to flourish.

How useful have you found the communication from school this year?

Very useful	Quite useful	Not useful
65%	30%	5%

Communication is always a tricky aspect of school life to get a good balance for. In all schools some parents would prefer to have more information, some parents would prefer to have less. We have aimed to predominantly use the text and email services, which are a service the school pays for, but which was highlighted last year by parents as the preferred sources of information after face to face conversations. We have also aimed to give at least two weeks' notice of main events. Where these are sufficiently advanced in the planning stage, we also put these on the half-termly newsletter, and dates are added to the calendar on our website. Please remember our website is still the central source of information, and we are ensuring that from now on copies of letters are placed on the website.

85% of parents found staff very or reasonably approachable and that their comments were listened to very well or reasonably well. It was pleasing to note that "friendly staff" was the second most popular response to "what are the most positive strengths of the school". I accept that time is always limited and therefore some parents may not be able to speak to a member of staff on the first opportunity every time they need to. I ask for your patience if this occurs for you and to remember that first and foremost the staff are here to support the children's development and learning. So for example a brief message at drop off time in the morning is fine, but if you need a longer conversation asking for an appointment after school is more suitable. I also accept that whilst we listen to all comments, we may not always act upon individual requests, as I said above there is always a range of opinions (both from parents and staff). There are a huge number of discussions and decisions being made on a regular basis, both in individual classes and as a whole school. I can assure that opinions are listened to and that we regularly review our practices.

The main positive strengths of the school recognised by the responses to this survey were the: community feel; friendly staff; small school; values and moral guidance; positive atmosphere; outdoor space and facilities generally and that children are happy and treated as individuals. There were also many positive comments about how useful the two Parents Workshops (Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Maths Calculation) and the Parents Consultations were last year.

There were a number of suggestions as to how we as a school could further improve during this coming year. I aim to respond to some of these here, but if you feel your specific point has not been addressed please do have a conversation with me about it.

- Having greater consistency of teachers was raised. It is certainly our aim this year to maintain the teaching staff throughout the whole year, however sometimes changes happen which are outside of our control.
- Better timing of communications and making communication easier. As stated above we always try to give two weeks' notice for main events, and give advance warning of the newsletters and website. I would be interested to hear more detailed ideas from parents to help us make communication easier, which I'm sure would be appreciated by all.

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- Greater differentiation, more challenging work and accommodating faster learners better. I can understand why this point was made, and as stated earlier managing the pitch and pace within a new curriculum has been a learning curve at times for us last year. However as explained at the Teaching, Learning and Assessment workshop last year, differentiation for higher attainers is being approached differently now across the county and country. Previously the system encouraged us as schools to move children on quickly once they had shown a relatively few occasions that they could do a particular element of their work. As a teacher with many years' experience in Years 5 and 6, I have seen first-hand children who have lists of objectives ticked to show they have met them at one point in their time at school, but they have not remembered or understood them all (often some being fairly straightforward and key aspects of learning). Learning is not about racing up a ladder, and comparing yourself with others. Learning is about building bricks in a strong sustainable wall. By spending more time mastering and exploring aspects of learning children gain a stronger and deeper understanding, as opposed to relying on trying to merely remember and recall information. That is not to say that memory is not important, but if you truly understand something, it becomes almost impossible to forget it. We are still differentiating for those children who grasp a new objective or skill quicker than others in their class, but we are doing this through depth, rather than moving on to the next objective. This often involves them applying their learning accurately, fluently, flexibly and effectively in a range of contexts, and by evaluating their use of this learning and creating new learning and links to their previous understanding.
- More music, sports and languages opportunities. I agree that we should increase the regularity of music opportunities. We do have a school choir and a weekly whole school singing session, but we will investigate how we could offer more and I have been in contact with Hampshire Music service about peripatetic instrumental lessons. Through our links with Henry Cort, the majority of our classes have a weekly lesson taught by a PE specialist as well as another PE lesson during the week. We encourage a range of physical activities at lunchtime and through initiatives like Family Fun Run Friday. As a small school with a small number of staff there are also a reasonable number and range of clubs that we offer, which are being increased again this year. Modern Foreign Languages are expected to be taught from Year 3 onwards, which is what happened with Dragonflies class last year, and will with Leopards and Ocelots classes this year.
- More information about what the children are learning each term. We give overviews of this information on the half-termly newsletters. We have also posted updated Curriculum Maps on our website. This year we have developed Reading bookmarks to support reading at home, sharing a range of questions of the type we will be working on with your children in school. We have also redesigned the Maths Learn Its for each class, which give parents greater guidance on key elements of maths being learnt and suggestions for how to continue to practice these skills at home.
- Reward good attendance. A good point which we started at the end of last term, with some 100% certificates.
- Praise children's achievements more. We do this weekly through our Special Book, with commendations and stickers. We have Ready Steady Grow certificates which the children gain over time by following the school values and rules. We have Top Table winners every week for good manners at lunch and behaviour at lunchtime. We also celebrate out of school achievements in our weekly Celebration Worship. Added to this the children are praised verbally and in their books in classes for a range of reasons.

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Requests for other information events for parents were for a Reading workshop and an IT evening. Miss Pretty had been planning a Reading Information workshop, so I am sure this will take place and I will be discussing an IT workshop with Mr Penfold in due course.

In summary, we appreciate that we will not get every decision fully correct and also that it is not possible to please everyone all of the time, particularly as some families have differing views on certain matters. We hope that because of this you also understand we will listen and consider all parental views, but will not necessarily agree with or action every request. We will also consider latest research and ideas from other external colleagues and advisors, as well as drawing on our professional understanding and experience.

We continue to be committed to working in a positive partnership with you for the best interest, wellbeing and learning of your child. As always if you have any specific questions or queries please talk to a member of staff and we will endeavour to answer you as soon as possible.

Many thanks for your continued positive support and partnership

Yours sincerely,



Tim Clarke
Headteacher