



## **Parent Survey Summer 2020: Findings and Proposed Actions**

### **Background**

The Governing Body and staff want to listen to the views of the school community to understand where things are working well and where there might be room for improvement – on both sides.

We had planned to carry out a series of surveys beginning in April 2020 but circumstances delayed the first surveys until July 2020. Two were conducted: one for parents/carers and one for Years 1 through 5.

When the survey was conducted, our school community consisted about 160 families and 214 pupils. Several of our children had been in the school since they joined the nursery.

All families were invited to respond but fewer than expected did: 34 (21%). A number of factors may have influenced this: children not back in school; time available to complete the survey; concerns about confidentiality. Given this, we propose to conduct all future surveys online; to ensure anonymity.

All responses have been treated in confidence. Only the Chair of the Governing Body knows which families responded although all governors are aware of what was said.

This paper summarises the feedback received from those families who responded and sets out how the school plans to address some of the points raised.

We were pleased to note that the pupil survey demonstrated that our children are happy at school and would tell their friends to come to St Mary's. They told us that their teachers listen to what they have to say in lessons and, importantly, there is an adult in school to whom they can talk to if worried. They did raise one interesting point; see point four below.

### **Findings**

#### **1. The pastoral care provided by St Mary's is viewed positively**

Most respondents strongly agree or agree that their child/children is/are happy at the School and feel safe. It is evident that the School is delivering on its mission. *I feel the school nurtures children in a well-rounded way. It's not all about academic learning, but also about behaviour and kindness to others*

Bullying is not prevalent at St Mary's though reference was made to an incident in one class that deemed to have been bullying. The School took this very seriously and investigated thoroughly as bullying will not be tolerated. Please do take a moment though read out Behaviour Policy; it can be found at: <https://www.stmaryschiswick.org.uk/our-school/policies>

We also need to keep in mind our more vulnerable children. It is evident that there are those who are less confident and more anxious, particularly at this time. The mental health and wellbeing of all our children is paramount.

The School already provides the services of a play therapist, but we also propose that the online version of the NSPCC's *Speak out, stay safe* programme be incorporated into the curriculum in the coming year. In addition, the Healthy London Partnership offers a schools' mental health kit that contains many valuable resources for schools and families:

<https://www.healthy london.org/resource/schools-mental-health-toolkit/>.

A healthy diet is important. Comments were made about the quality of the catering and access to sweets. A new menu has been agreed for this term and we suggest that families review this with their child/children to help them select a balanced diet across the week. The School also has a healthy lunch box policy. Both the menu and the policy can be found on the website at

<https://www.stmaryschiswick.org.uk/parents/lunches>

## **2. Lockdown and the return to school came in for much praise**

The way in which Miss Harte and her staff managed lockdown – and especially the return to school – was viewed very positively: *I think St Mary's has handled this exceptionally well as they seemed to manage to get children back in school faster than other schools in the area.*

Whilst the huge effort made by the School was appreciated, it was evident from the responses that families were not sure what to expect in terms of how teaching and learning would be provided. Families also drew comparisons between classes: believing some got more personal support than others.

As most appreciated, the School had to react very quickly to the emerging situation. All schools, including ours – and the Government – have learned a great deal from the previous lockdown. Plans are in place to assess the gaps in learning and how they can be closed. All schools also have to have in place a contingency plan should a further lockdown be required. This includes provision of a 'live classroom'; one that takes into consideration safeguarding, especially of primary school children.

Should a further lockdown be required, the plans will be shared with the whole school community. They cannot be shared at present, as the Government guidelines change regularly the final position is not known.

There may also be incidents whereby class bubbles have to go into quarantine. In such cases, individual class teachers will publish their teaching plans on the website. Should a further, complete lockdown occur, the School will be using Google Classroom that allows staff to connect with children at home. Instructions and a timetable will be issued as and when necessary.

## **3. The degree to which families are engaged in their child's learning – and understand it – needs to be strengthened**

For the most part, respondents believe that they understand how their child is performing at school but the responses to questions 10 to 15 provided the widest variation in response, more dissent than elsewhere. Written response indicated that families did not always know what to look for when they look at their child's books or how to help them.

The new website (<https://www.stmaryschiswick.org.uk/>) is the designated source of information. Here can be found information on the curriculum, each class's focus for the term and homework. We have asked Miss Harte and the Curriculum & Standards Committee to consider what else could be published on the site that our families may find of use.

Given that parents and carers cannot come into school at present it will not be possible to have parent consultations in person for the foreseeable future. Consequently, Miss Harte has agreed that class teachers will set up phone calls with families to review their child's progress. Issues often raised informally at the school gate, should now be noted in homework diaries.

Parent workshops and end of year reports are also key sources of information; for instance, the Maths Mastery workshops were identified as a very positive initiative. This said, responses indicate that families would appreciate a more detailed analysis of how their child, and the St Mary's as a whole, is doing. The Governing Body has agreed with Miss Harte that an interim progress report will be published at the end of the Spring term. This will detail the progress our children have made each term and what the predictions are for year-end.

#### **4. All pupil groups need to be set an appropriate challenge.**

Each class is made up of children who have their own special needs; the School works hard to cater for these. Therefore, it was interesting to note that a number of our children in Years 1 to 5 indicated via the pupil survey that they felt that they could be given work that gave them more of a challenge. We do not know which children said this however, some families also fed back that their child could take on more.

Teaching and learning have to be appropriate for each child and we want to make sure all are achieving to the best of their ability. Given this, we need to understand what the children meant by 'challenge'. Staff in Years 2 to 6 (last year's 1 to 5) have agreed to explore this with their classes. Findings and a plan of action will be shared with the Curriculum and Standards Committee this term.

#### **5. Good communication must be at the heart of our community**

The survey indicated that this is a key challenge. Even parents who clearly love the School stated that communication could be better. However, the overall feedback was that communication from the School was viewed as having improved during lockdown. Respondents also commented on the benefit of having a full-time head in place.

Communication is not just what we say but how we listen, what we say and how we act. To some degree all parties are failing to engage properly. The ongoing challenge is how expectations can be met. Experience tells us that some believe that they can determine the terms of engagement rather than working in partnership with the School.

What 'better' meant in practice had to be inferred from some of the comments. For example, timeliness and depth/clarity of information: *communication at times can be very poor and last minute*. There were also requests that families should be allowed to get more involved and the relationship with the Parent Teacher Association leveraged: *I feel strongly that we need to maintain this sense of community after lockdown and this means fully engaging with the parent body*.

All parties recognise the vital importance of communication. As mentioned, the new website, commissioned in 2019/20, needs to be viewed as *the* key source of information. Posts can be timely and information by year group detailed. The School commits to continuing to develop the information that families can access. Parentmail is the other key information source and staff have

been asked to use this - or the website – to share important information. Twitter can be used but only for informal exchanges.

A new communication policy was ratified by the Governing Body in September 2020. The whole school community needs to adhere to this. Particular attention is drawn to the timeframes for acknowledging and responding to parental requests. A copy can be found at <https://www.stmaryschiswick.org.uk/our-school/policies>

We are aware that each class has a WhatsApp group. These groups are not endorsed by the School and should not be viewed as an approved source of information. The School understands the benefits of using social media; however, if misused, the school community can be negatively affected, such as by damaging the school's reputation.

The Governing Body has attended some of the parent forum sessions over the last year. As and when such session can take place, they will continue to attend. So that as many as parents as possible can attend these sessions, Miss Harte has agreed to offer one session a term at 5.30 pm.

The Governing Body also proposes to hold a session with the class parent representatives and Miss Harte. We recognise that these representatives are an important conduit to the parent group and could help to ensure effective communication. The first of these will be organised for mid-November to review roles and responsibilities.

Our families are asked to find a moment review the Communication Policy, Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents, the Home School Agreement and our Code of Conduct for Parents. All can be found on the website at <https://www.stmaryschiswick.org.uk/our-school/policies>

Communication will be key area of focus in all future surveys; we will continue to monitor this.

## **6. Nearly all of those who responded would recommend St Mary's to another parent**

29 of the 34 families who responded would recommend St Mary's to another parent. *St. Mary's is an excellent school. St Mary's has a very strong sense of community, the collaboration between parents and school is outstanding.*

Five respondents said that they would not recommend the School. Various reasons were stated but the overall sentiment was that there was lack of consistency in the teaching and learning; specific examples were not provided. We need to bear in mind that most respondents were of the view that their child/children was/were making good progress in all subjects (Q14). However, it is our aim to ensure that all our children receive the same standard of teaching and learning across all year groups. Progress is monitored carefully by our Curriculum & Standards Committee.

## **7. Future surveys need to look for more absolutes**

The July survey offered families the option of neither agreeing or not agreeing. Consequently it was difficult in some cases, to interpret the feedback: did the ranking demonstrate the family had no experience of the point raised – for instance, Q11: *I know how my child is/children are performing against end of year expectations.* Future surveys will be worded more clearly.

## **Summary**

We would like to thank those families that took the time and effort to respond to the survey. Your views are important. Whilst the feedback provided does not represent the whole school community, we have assumed that those who did not respond share many of the views expressed.

Overall, as your Governing Body, we are of the view that the responses demonstrate that St Mary's is a good school; one that cares for its children - and champions robust teaching and learning. Our children are happy at school and feel safe. For the most part, our families demonstrate there is much to celebrate: *St Marys has a wonderful school community which shows genuine care towards all families. The children are well cared for and safe. The pastoral care is excellent.*

The efforts made by Miss Harte and her staff during lockdown and the return to school were clearly appreciated. Please join us in thanking them for all they did.

Whilst we recognise that there is room for improvement, St Mary's is a small school, full of enthusiastic learning and engaged families. A school that is managed and run by a team of committed professionals who often go above and beyond to serve. Together we can harness all these attributes to enhance all aspects of school life

**Governing Body**  
**St Mary's Catholic Primary School. Chiswick**  
**October 2020**

### Summary of responses\*

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. My child is / children are happy at the school.		25	8	3		
2. My child feels / children feel safe at the school.		25	9	1		
3. The school views the health and wellbeing of my child is / children as a priority		17	11	3	2	
4. The school has managed the return to school well		22	7	5		
5. The school encouraged and supported my child's learning during lockdown		17	9	5	6	
6. The school supports my child's /children's wider personal development.		11	16	6	2	
7. The school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.		16	18	1		
8. My child has been bullied and the school dealt with the bullying quickly and effectively.		2	2			
9. I understand how the school supports my child's/children's spiritual and faith journey		18	15	2		
10. I receive information about how to support my child's /children's learning and lot more journey at home		12	13	4	6	
11. I know how my child is/children are performing against end of year expectations.		9	13	9	2	
12. Reception-Y6 Do you understand what your child's areas of development are in:	Reading	13	12	5	2	
	Writing	12	10	7	3	
	Maths	12	9	7	4	
13. Nursery Do you understand what your child's areas of development are in:	Personal, Social & Emotional	2	5	1		
	Physical Development	1	4	1	1	
	Communication & Language	2	4	3		
14. I know that my child is/children are making good progress in all subjects.		10	13	6	5	2
15. I can see that my child is/children have made progress when I look in their books		12	11	8	3	
16. If your child has/children have special educational needs and/or a disability, the school gives them the support they need to succeed.		3	1			
17. The school is welcoming and there are opportunities to get involved in the school and in the parish. – strange ranking vs comments		16	15	3		
18. The school is ready to listen to my views and/or concerns.		6	13	11	4	1
19. When concerns have been raised with the school they have been dealt with properly.		8	8	9	7	2
20. I would recommend this school to another parent.		Yes	No			
		29	5			

\* Note: Numbers do not always add to 35 as parents clicked more than once if have more than one child in the school