Parent Engagement Survey: Findings

St Michael’s Primary School
May 2013
Objectives & Methodology

- Parent governors initiated a survey to find out how involved other parents feel in school life generally and more specifically with their children’s learning.
- The key objective of the survey was to identify ways that the school may be able to improve communication and engagement with parents so they can more effectively support their children’s learning at home.
- The survey was conducted by the parent governors over a period of a week from Monday 22\textsuperscript{nd} to Friday 26\textsuperscript{th} April 2013.
- Parents were approached personally by team members in the playground before and after school and asked to complete a 2-page questionnaire, containing 12 questions and a space for comments.
- Respondents could remain anonymous if they wished.
Response

- 227 parents/carers completed questionnaires
- This represents 62% of all families with children at St Michaels
- Very few parents refused to complete a questionnaire. Non-respondents are thought to be mostly:
  - Parents/carers of older children, who do not spend long in the playground;
  - Parents/carers who work and do not drop off/pick up at the usual times;
  - Those who took questionnaires away to ‘complete later’;
  - Parents/carers with limited English.

The survey demonstrates that a high level of response can be obtained from parents, when approached directly.
Key Findings

• Parents are overwhelmingly happy with St Michael’s and most feel reasonably well-informed about what goes on at school
• Many parents feel they could do more to support their children’s learning, but are unsure how to do this
• Parents would find it helpful to have more regular updates about what their children are learning in school
• A majority of parents are working or have other commitments, so their ability to come into school is restricted
• There are many examples of good practice in communications with parents, particularly the interface with teachers, but this could be more consistent between classes/year groups (Parental Involvement Policy?)
• There are some barriers to parental communication/involvement:
  • The school website is not up to date, so the majority of parents do not use it, but say it would be a very useful communication tool
  • There could be better co-ordination of parent volunteers to take advantage of the help which is on offer from parents
  • Dedicated point of contact in school office at key times of day or better use of electronic media could take some pressure off teachers in relation to administrative matters
Respondent Profile – Year Groups

- All years were covered, but there is a bias towards Reception & Y1 parents (more often in playground)
- Note: At the time of the survey, Reception and Y1 each had 90 children, Y2-6 had 60.
The majority of respondents who did not give their first language are thought to be those who have English as an additional language. On this basis, the survey respondents fairly represent the number of families with English as a second language, compared to school records (48% EAL). In the survey, some non-native English speakers gave ‘English’ as the main language spoken at home. There were 25 languages (other than English) represented by survey respondents.
The majority of respondents feel quite or fully involved in school life, although more than a quarter do not.

Q1. To what extent do you feel involved in school life at St Michael’s?

- Not at all: 4%
- Slightly: 24%
- Quite: 46%
- Fully: 26%

Mean score = 2.9

% of 225 question respondents
Parents/carers demonstrate a high level of involvement in school events...

- 100% of respondents have attended at least one type of event
- 87% have attended 3 or more different types of event
- Attendance at ‘learning-related’ events has generally been good, with the vast majority of parents attending parent consultations
- There is some correlation between the timing of events and level of attendance

...and the majority of parents feel well informed about what goes on in school
However, 65% of respondents feel they could be more fully-informed about what their child is learning at school.

Q2. Do you feel well informed about what your child is learning at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of 227 question respondents</th>
<th>Mean score = 3.0</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Not at all</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<td>4 Fully</td>
<td>35%</td>
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A majority of respondents feel able to help their child at home with learning...

Q5. Do you feel able to help your child at home with:

- Reading/phonics: 93%
- Spelling: 91%
- Maths: 88%
- Other homework/projects: 90%

- Ability to support learning was weakest in maths (parents felt they did not understand the methods being taught in school)
- Parents sometimes found it difficult to understand the instructions on home learning
- Parents who had spent more time in school found it easier to support their children at home
... but 3 in 10 parents think the school could provide more information to enable them to help their children at home.

Q6. Do you think the school provides parents with sufficient information to enable them to help their children at home?

- 29% Yes
- 71% No

% of 223 question respondents

- Many parents thought the website could be used to link to topics and home learning.
- Parents would like a better understanding of the curriculum and topic work (particularly at the beginning of each year/term).
- Parents would like more notice of key events (trips, performances, topic outcomes, etc), so they can prepare and be more involved.
There is a strong appetite amongst parents to learn more about how subjects are taught in school.

- 96% of respondents expressed interest in learning more through at least one of the offered options.
- There seems to be a strong preference for materials to use at home (website, booklets), maybe reflecting the number of parents with other commitments.
- Parents preferred the idea of participating in lessons rather than more formal workshops.
Parents have varying preferences for times to come into school, and most have limited flexibility

Q8. What time is most convenient for you to come into school?

- After morning drop off: 47%  
- Before afternoon pick up: 36%  
- After afternoon pick up: 37%  
- Lunch time: 14%  
- Evening: 44%

% of 227 question respondents; multiple responses allowed

- 96% of respondents expressed a preference, but 48% gave only one time slot. Only 16% gave 3 or more convenient times.
- Afternoon pickup time is significantly less favoured than morning or evening slots – may explain lower attendance at topic outcomes?

➤ Timing of events will significantly affect attendance; poor attendance does not necessarily mean lack of interest!
Over 60% of parents surveyed say their work prevents them coming into school.

Q9. What prevents you from coming into school?

- Timing/notice of events needs to take into account the high proportion of working parents.
- Parents with younger children often need to bring them into school with them, so this could be facilitated.
- The parents who were not comfortable coming into school said it was because of their level of English.
- Working parents need more notice of events to schedule time off.

- Looking after younger children: 28%
- Working: 61%
- Difficulty understanding communication from school: 2%
- Insufficient notice of events: 11%
- Don't feel comfortable coming into school: 2%
- Other: 4%

% of 222 question respondents; multiple responses allowed.
Newsletters are an important form of communication, but the website could be better!

Q10. How do you find out information about what is going on at school?

- Newsletters are clearly popular and widely-read!
- Most parents make relatively little use of the school website because it is not up to date
- Many parents rely on other parents for information, which is potentially not a reliable or consistent means of communication
Parents would like to make greater use of electronic communication

Q11. How do you/would you prefer to communicate with school:

- Parents clearly prefer communicating directly through the class teacher
- However there was strong support for greater use of electronic communications (email, text, website), particularly among working parents
- ‘Other’ was via child, text & social media (Facebook)
- A number of parents said they felt uncomfortable communicating via the school office; office staff are clearly very busy and administrative workload will increase as school expands
- Parents would like to see head teacher more often at start/end of day
Two-thirds of parents surveyed would be interested in sharing ideas and feedback via a parents’ forum

Q12. Would you be interested in taking part in a parents’ forum?

- Yes: 66%
- No: 34%

211 question respondents

- There was a significant level of interest in a parents’ forum across all year groups.
- Parents’ forum could meet on an ad hoc basis to test ideas before any significant changes are implemented.
- There were many ideas generally about how parents could use their skills to help more in school.
Other Comments from Respondents

• 62 parents left other comments or suggestions on the survey form, while others were received verbally.

• Key themes were:
  • Website is a key tool for communication and needs to be improved
  • More use could be made of parents’ skills and interests
  • Parents who have volunteered to help in school or on trips say they have not been given the opportunity to do so
  • Parental involvement could be facilitated by giving parents more notice of events, scheduling events around the working day and making arrangements for parents with younger children