

South Gloucestershire Council

Charter School Survey of Pupils and Parents - July 2005

To provide the Select Committee with an executive summary of the outcomes of the questionnaire based school survey of pupils and parents in relation to the South Gloucestershire Council Charter in relation to Children and Young People.

Process

The design process involved (a) examination of relevant Government and local documents, (b) review of any precedents, (c) consultation with headteachers, (d) circulation and commentary on drafts and (e) pilot survey. Questionnaires were designed for pupils in primary and secondary schools and for parents/carers

Questionnaire for Younger Children (early primary)
Questionnaire for Older Children (secondary and late primary)
Questionnaire for Parents & Carers

Pupils in special schools were offered either the questionnaire for younger children or a customised version with 'Widget' symbols to support understanding. Support was offered from the Authority for children and adults with English as an additional language and/or from Traveller communities.

The topics in the questionnaires were organised under six headings linked to the five outcomes from the Every Child Matters White Paper and South Gloucestershire Charter for Children and Young People. The last page of each version of the questionnaire invited respondents to describe three things that they liked about the school and three things that they would like to change about the school.

Samples

Schools were invited to survey pupils in Years 2, 6, 7 and 10 and their respective parents. Some schools included additional pupils, either to boost small numbers in the selected year groups or to broaden the view they would obtain from the results. The completed sample sizes were as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	All
Younger	75	483	2430	399	78		23						3488
Older				4	192	848	2332	899	2	90	719	144	5230
	NA	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	Mi							
Parents	168	996	1006	369	174	839							3552
Special schools	Pupils	172		Parents	166								

Over 12000 surveys were analysed, although the response rate from parents in secondary schools was modest.

The proportion of people from ethnic minorities in South Gloucestershire is estimated at 4.2%; the proportions of pupil respondents at 5% for younger children and 10% for older children here identifying themselves being from not White British, ethnic minority groups exceeds this percentage as did 7% of parents. It is always a concern to ensure proper involvement of people from ethnic minorities, and in this respect the high proportion is welcome.

Reports

Schools were offered two reports:

- Report 1 Detailed Tables and Charts, sent immediately by post on completion of data processing for school
- Report 2 Summary Tables and Charts with Comparison to Phase, Word for Windows format, sent by post and e-mail after completion of data processing for whole sample

Results

In considering the results 80% agreement was taken as a notable strength.

Being healthy

Younger Children

Pupils in Year 2 responded with 80% or more 'yes' responses to most items. Just 63% of pupils thought their teacher told them what to do if they were cross or sad; 62% thought that their teacher would like them to walk or cycle to school.

Older Children

In primary schools, again there were only 63% who thought the school encouraged them to walk or cycle to school. Around 80% of pupils thought that the school encouraged them to be physically active, to eat healthily and drink water regularly.

In secondary schools, a fair majority of pupils agree with the items in this section. The agreement is more restrained when it comes to "The school encourages me to eat healthily and to drink water regularly" and "The school encourages me to walk or cycle to school", with 59% of Year 7 pupils agreeing and only about a third of Year 10 pupils.

In special schools, a good proportion of pupils supported most of the items. More restrained support was given to 'At School I learn about growing up' and quite naturally for 'My teacher likes me to walk or cycle to school' as most access home to school transport.

Parents/Carers

Parents of primary school children were mostly very clear about the health messages being taught by schools with regard to healthy eating, travel to school and being physically active – all around 80% or more. 71% thought that their child had an opportunity to be physically active for at least 2 hours a week. Just 55% of parents thought that the school gave them advice about how to keep their child healthy.

In secondary schools, parents were similarly confident about the school's attitude to physical activity but much less so about other healthy living messages (just 44% thought the school encouraged their child to eat healthily) and only 28% thought they were given advice on how to keep their child healthy.

In special schools 80% of parents agreed that the school wanted children to eat healthily, to be physically active and that it was helpful when their child was unwell. 75% agreed that they received advice on how to keep healthy and 25% agreed that the school encouraged walking or cycling to school.

Staying safe

Younger Children

Responses were broadly positive; most children felt safe at school and reported confidence in the support of teachers. 50% of pupils said that they had been bullied at school in the last 12 months although only 3% said they did not feel safe at school. It would be useful for schools to explore what is meant by these reports of 'being bullied'.

Older Children

In primary schools, there are high percentages agreeing that they are safe and taught about safety issues. 13% of Year 6 pupils said that they had not yet learned about the dangers of sniffing glue or solvents; 12% of Year 6 pupils disagreed that there are adults they can talk to at school if they feel threatened (with an additional 14% not sure).

In secondary schools, pupils recognise being taught about the dangers of a variety of health-risky behaviours, and indeed they are positive about most items. Just 40% think the school makes the places in school safe for them; 53% feel safe at school, nonetheless.

In special schools, 22 % of pupils agreed that they had been bullied and 33% worried about others being unkind. 85% agreed that they could talk to an adult if there was a problem and that the teacher would deal promptly with naughty behaviour.

Parents/Carers

In primary schools, parents were happy to assent that school was a safe place and that the school cared about the happiness and friendships of their child. Parents were unsure about items in the health education aspects of the curriculum e.g. 46% were not sure if their child had been taught about the dangers of smoking.

In secondary schools, parents and carers agreed that the school had clear guidelines for behaviour and explained rights and responsibilities. The other items usually attracted no more than 50% agreement, although most of the other responses indicated uncertainty rather than disagreement.

In special schools very few parents agreed that bullying was a problem, and about a third agreed that the school teaches about the dangers of alcohol, illegal drugs and smoking. Very strong support was received for my child is safe on the journey and at school, the school cares about my child's happiness and there is an adult to talk to if my child is upset.

Enjoying and achieving

Younger Children

Most Year 2 pupils thought they were helped to enjoy school and achieve well; 30% of pupils were only 'sometimes' proud of their work and a similar 29% thought that their teacher knew about their special achievements only 'sometimes'.

Older Children

In primary schools, most pupils indicate a high degree of satisfaction with their schools with respect to the items listed. The proportion who report that they enjoy school is just 46% and only 38% say they know what they are going to learn next.

In secondary schools, the picture is more mixed. Just 28% of pupils say they enjoy school although a majority agree with most of the positively-phrased items in this section. Less than a quarter say they know what they are going to learn next and 23% disagree that the school provides a range of things to do outside lessons.

In special schools good agreement was received for most of the items including enjoying school, learning from mistakes, there are activities for me before, at break time and after school, teacher is pleased when I get things right, and people listen to me. The weaker support was for 'I am proud of my work'.

Parents/Carers

In primary schools, 93% of parents/carers think their child enjoys being at the school. Parents are nearly all happy with the quality of teaching. There is less certainty when it comes to considering target-setting and preparing to leave the school.

In secondary schools, a fairly steady 50-60% agreed with all the positively-phrased items in this section. 76% of parents think their child enjoys being at the school.

In special schools fairly broad support of 75% or above was received for 'My child enjoys school', 'The school treats my child as an individual', is taught well and 'The school builds confidence'. Less than half agreed that homework is explained, that there are activities before, after and during break times for my child to participate in and that my child is prepared for when they leave school.

Making a positive contribution

Younger Children

Year 2 pupils are broadly positive about the items in this section of the questionnaire, for example, 81% think the teacher listens to what they have to say.

Older Children

In primary schools, there is a similar broadly positive response to this section. 14% of pupils disagree with the statement that the school teaches them how to manage their feelings and a further 33% are not sure about this item.

In secondary schools, between 40-60% of pupils agree with most of the items in this section. There is a marked exception for "The school teaches me how to manage my feelings", with just 23% agreeing.

In special schools no questions on making a positive contribution were common across all schools.

Parents/Carers

In primary schools, 96% of parents and carers think the school has clear guidance about how pupils are expected to behave. Parents are positive about other items, but least so about preparation for dealing with changes. 29% of parents are not sure that the school takes pupils' opinions seriously.

In secondary schools, at least half the parents/carers agreed with most of the items in this section (much higher for items on behaviour and rights and responsibilities), with the remainder mostly opting for 'not sure'. The only

clear signal of disagreement came for the item "My child joins in with clubs and other activities at lunchtimes or after school," with 36% disagreeing.

In special schools, there was strong support overall for items in this section

Economic well-being and equalities

Younger Children

This section was labelled 'Fairness' for these pupils. They were mostly in agreement with the listed items; just 64% thought that their teacher wrote helpful comments on their homework.

Older Children

In primary schools, items about homework and teaching were mostly positive but a large element of uncertainty and downright disagreement was found for all items concerning careers, work, further education and understanding businesses. 56% thought that the school taught them how to manage money.

In secondary schools, there is a mixed response to this section; 73% think teachers help with difficulties in lessons, and 60% think it's OK to be different at the school, but 33% think the school helps them to manage money and only 50% agree that homework is explained in a way they can understand (18% disagree).

In special schools there was strong support for all the items with none falling below 80%

Parents/Carers

In primary schools, a similar pattern was found as reported by pupils; parents thought that the school taught their child generic skills, encouraged them to do their best and so on, but specific topics in economic awareness all attracted a high proportion of 'not sure' responses.

In secondary schools, parents were much more positive than in primary schools about economic education items, and 89% were in agreement with the item "The school helps my child develop skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT".

In special schools, very strong support was received for the school develops skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT, and speaking and listening, it teaches my child to be independent, to do their best and it's ok to be different. About two thirds agreed that the school teaches about handling money, skills for adult life such as initiative and enterprise, and those for the world of work. Positively, very few parents agreed that children were treated badly because of the colour of their skin.

Support for parents and young people

Younger Children

Most pupils reported that they were made to feel welcome at school and were helped to work with others. 84% thought it was OK to be different at their school and 75% disagreed that some people at the school were treated badly because of the colour of their skin.

Older Children

In primary schools, pupils were mostly positive but around 15-25% reported 'Not sure' for items in this section, higher than found for earlier sections. The least positive item showed 55% thinking that the school treated them as an individual.

In secondary schools, around 50% of pupils agree with most of the items in this section with 10-20% disagreeing, the rest opting for 'not sure'. 92% think that if they are absent from school, their parent/carer always knows; 65% think the school encourages them to get on with other people.

In special schools there was strong support most items including 'Its ok to be different, getting help if I need it, help for understanding lessons and, the promotion of work in a team. Relatively weaker support was received for 'My teacher wants me to support others if I can.

Parents/Carers

Again, parents were not certain about what their child may have been taught. When it came to comments about being kept informed about progress, having a point of contact, agreement exceeded 90%. Parents and carers were also very positive about their children being taught respect for others and how to get on with other people.

In secondary schools, parents were markedly positive about most items. They were less likely to assent to being given advice themselves about drugs or other topics. Just 43% thought that "Before important changes are made in school, I am asked for my views".

In special schools, strong support was given to several items such as 'the school is friendly toward me', I know who to contact about progress, my child is taught to respect and work with others.. About half the parents agreed that the school taught children about the dangers of drugs; it provided them with information and advice on dealing puberty and sexual health and risks and how to avoid them.

Likes and Changes

Younger Children

Pupils in Year 2 liked playtime, PE/games, their teacher and their friends, with slight differences in emphasis between boys and girls. Fewer than half suggested any changes; those most commonly mentioned (by 10-20% of the sample) included "Poor / lacking playground equipment" "Want longer playtime/fewer lessons" and "Need more equipment/ resources/ furniture".

Older Children

In primary schools, the aspects of school most often reported as likes were again the teachers/teaching, their friends and PE/games. Just over half mentioned desirable changes: these were similar to those mentioned by Year 2 pupils and by similar proportions, but also included "Poor / insufficient choice of food" and 10% of girls reported not liking the toilets/cloakrooms.

In secondary schools, 40% of pupils offer nothing in response to this question. Of those responding, boys seem to like Games/PE, the teachers/teaching and the presence of their friends; girls like the same things but rate their friends more highly and PE less so – 18% of girls mention liking their lessons in general. More than 40% also say nothing about changes they would like; changes mentioned most often by both sexes include poor teaching, bullying, school uniforms. Boys would like to see more sports/PE facilities and longer playtimes (or fewer lessons).

Parents/Carers

In primary schools, the most common response was to omit the question, with 40% reporting nothing liked and over 70% nothing that needed changing. For those expressing a view, commonly liked aspects included the teacher, the ethos ("friendly"/"good atmosphere"/"respect shown"), and the response of staff to problems. The commonest changes sought (all by less than 10% of respondents) were in the amount of information provided to parents, provision of after-school activities and to provide healthier food.

In secondary schools, again 60% expressed no opinion about likes. The most common aspects like were similarly "Good teacher/ teaching", ethos and the response of staff to problems. Their views about changes were again similar to the parents and carers from the primary phase, but the top five concerns also included poor behaviour and bullying.

In special schools items most often reported as likes were the friendly good atmosphere and respect shown, followed by staff listen and help with problems and individual needs are met. Some 11% would like to change the view that parents are insufficiently informed.

Dissemination and Reflection

The Department is undertaking an internal programme of analysis and discussion with officers and headteachers; detailed data analysis, including results by cluster, has been just been completed and is being shared with headteachers.

A conference for Governors and Elected Members and one for headteachers and council officers to discuss the aggregate findings from the Primary phase have been held. A Secondary phase working day on pupil voice is planned in the New Year.