

Parent Questionnaire (April 2023)



Dear Parents and Carers,

We really appreciate the feedback you give us through our annual questionnaire. It helps us to know what is working well, as well as suggesting some things for us to consider too.

We have already shared with you feedback from the Parent View form and would now like to share with you the comments made on the form we designed.

Please read on to find out what parents have said and our responses, where appropriate.

Many thanks.

Kay Hemmings

Head Teacher

Opening Doors, Enriching Lives

Additional Questions (There were 40 responses for each question):

Does your child feel safe in school? 95% said they did.

Do you feel your child is safe in school? 100% said they did.

Does your child know who they can speak to if they are upset or unhappy at school? 97.5% said they did

Do you feel the school teaches your child how to lead a health and active lifestyle and how to keep physically and mentally healthy? 97.5% said they did

Please feel free to write any further comments below. If you answered no for any of the statements above, can you explain why as this could help us to improve our practice.

When we discovered that my son's grandad had alzheimer's I will never forget the support they gave him and myself. It was a big help to get my son to understand about the disease and help him the best he could. Thankyou for that! (Y6)

Lessons on puberty are given far too late for children growing up these days, particularly for girls some of whom will not be prepared for the changes that are happening to them and their friends. (Y5)

The school has always been great in my opinion for learning and encouraging the children. (Y5 and Y1)

My daughter knows who to speak to if she's upset about something but I think she is scared to speak to people if she has a problem so I hope that people notice if she has an issue as she keeps things in. (Y3)
Staff are really quite perceptive. They usually pick up on something if a child is presenting differently but we also actively encourage children to talk if anything is worrying them. We also have the 'Well-Being Post Box' where children can ask for help by posting a message and an adult will come to speak to them. We find this approach works for those children who might not have the confidence to initially speak out to an adult.

Our daughter was having reoccurring issues with friendships in her class. We approached her teacher and shared our concerns explaining what had happened. We feel as though he dealt with this sensitively and proactively and did so as a whole class to ensure she would not feel embarrassed or isolated. We have had no further complaints, and the teacher even ensured he spoke to us at a later date to monitor how things had been going for our daughter and if there were any further concerns. (Y3 and PS)

The school lacks professionalism in important areas, especially in the early years team. My oldest daughter is now reluctant to attend school after the school created an incident which resulted in my oldest scared and in tears thinking she had misbehaved. (Y3 and Rec)

The school followed the policy in this situation. We are sorry if your child felt scared. We needed to talk to them but reassured them throughout that they were not in trouble.

Worry about SEND and if child is now supported as aware teachers that used to support these children have now left. Need awareness of adhd and autism to best support children with these needs (Y4)

Our SENDCo did leave and we appointed Mrs Brotherston who has a good knowledge of a wide variety of Special Educational Needs and the support that is available. Staff also are knowledgeable.

My child loves being in pre school and excited to start reception. All teachers treat both my child and myself fantastically. (PS)

My child does not feel safe in school due to being hurt/tormented/picked on by other children numerous times, however, I feel they are infact safe there due to issues being dealt with when raised. (PS, Y2 and Y3)

We then asked for comments to particular questions.

Responses were as follows (any response we have made is in green)

In your opinion, what are the school's strengths? What do we do well?

Providing exposure to a wide range of subjects and topics (Y2)

My child is keen to learn, has a lovely group of friends and continues learning about things that have sparked her interest at home. (Y1)

The whole feel of the school is a happy one, everyone is friendly and approachable. I love the pupil charter at the main entrance. (Y4)

Interesting topic work, my child retains lots of facts and knowledge within history, geography and RE. (Y4)

OPAL is fantastic, everything is well kept and the grounds look inviting and lots of fun. (Y4)

Listen to children's views through school Council. Push my children to do their best. Instill that good behaviour is rewarded by not losing privilege time and hot chocolate reward. Friendly staff (Y6 and Y2)

Residential visits (Y6)

Residential opportunities and Outdoor experiences (Y5)

Tanfield makes school fun. The opal play is amazing and miss Hemings understands the importance of being out doors just as much as indoors. (Y5 and Y1)

Help children to thrive with reading (Y4 and Y3)

Keeping parents involved and updated. Planning events and activities to keep children eager to learn and interested in particular topics. (Y3 and Y1)

I feel it is a good school. The information coming home on email and Twitter is strong. My son enjoys coming in every day. They continue to support him on his speech therapy. (Y1)

Communication is good. Information can be found online via the website or Twitter and any questions directed to the office are dealt with effectively. My only issue would be knowing how to contact a teacher direct as we (parents) aren't always on the school run and emailing teachers direct doesn't seem to get a response. (Y2 and Y4)

If you are wanting to contact any teacher directly, please email the school email address on tanfieldlea@durhamlearning.net and put the teacher's name in the subject box, which will ensure it is forwarded to them. This address is checked a number of times throughout the day and is the best way to make contact.

Keeping us informed child's progress. (Y3)

They help my child a lot when needed

The school offers a wide range of learning opportunities and an engaging curriculum. Both our daughters love OPAL and we feel incredibly lucky that our children have the opportunity to access such spaces and resources freely. (Y3 and PS)

The teachers have really taken their time to get to know our girls and therefore are aware of their perks and quirks. There is a strong community feel to the school. (Y3 and PS)

We believe that Tanfield is an inclusive school which strives to support and develop each and every individual, both academically and personally. (Y3 and PS)

Communication - keeping us informed on activities at the school through regular newsletters and emails. Keeping parents advised on child's progress and what may need attention. (Y4)

Home/School communication; consistency for the children alongside a supportive environment; fantastic staff who care for the children and build secure relationships; a strong curriculum - my child's progress since starting at the school is fantastic (PS)

Supportive teachers, wide and varied curriculum, excellent communication and updates to parents. Extra curriculum activities. Fun activities e.g egg painting, water slide (Y4)

Keeping the parents involved and included (Rec)

My child has benefitted from excellent, friendly and approachable staff once she joined the school in year 3.

A very focused, open and responsive Head Teacher who has time for parents and always has the children's best interests at heart.

Communicate effectively with parents and regularly update us on the children's progress and achievement.

A caring and friendly school ethos. (Y6)

OPAL, good community feel, range of learning opportunities (Y6)

Wrap around school care (Y3 and Rec)

Outdoor play. (Y3)

Very good at making my child feel happy and settled. (PS)

The school provides a safe place for my children and a rich environment for learning. The school offers breakfast club and after school club, allowing flexibility in our working lives. Updated information is provided well with news letters every months, email reminders and social media (Twitter), allowing parents to see what the children have been up to while in school. (Y4 and Y1)

The school offers a good variety of subjects and additional/after school activities. (Y6)

I think the overall feel of the school is very good, students and teachers appear to be really happy. I like the positivity that comes from the school. (Y4)

encouragement for the kids and great at keeping the children safe. (PS)

I think the school is great it's been a great support to my daughter and has brought her on so much. (Y5)

You know individual children well and work to meet their needs. (Y6 and Y1)

Keeping parents up to date with how my child is getting on, (PS)

The school has always brought out the best side of my children and helped them achieve their best (Y4 and Y6)

Support children in their social and academic development (PS, Y2 and Y3)

What opportunities is your child offered that you really value which support their personal development?

Interacting with other schools for sports competitions (Y2)

Reading, sports (Y1)

The residential trips. Sports competitions. Talent show. Gala Theatre performance. Connections with Brandon School. (Y4)

School Council, school football, reading, sats booster groups, residential trips (Y6 and Y2)

Howtown and Grinton residential visits really gave my son a boost to his confidence and the opportunity to take part in activities he wouldn't have been able to. (Y6)

Residential opportunities, musical tuition and choir (Y5)

Music lessons, choir, Tanfield got talent are just a few. There is opal play. Tanfield brings the fun in lessons for children they seem to make the kids enjoy their lessons while learning. (Y5 and Y1)

Computer club with McIntosh (Y4 and Y3)

Additional challenges in class when they have completed work. Encouraged to go out of their comfort zone. (Y3 and Y1)

Sports. I think having CNS in the school really benefits the children. It encourages interest in a variety of sports which apart from being good for their physical health, is great for their mental health and improves team work, confidence and social skills. (Y2 and Y4)

My daughter sits next to someone that needs a little help with things so she helps them which also helps the development of her as she has to understand things before she explains to them which definitely helps her development. (Y3)

Their help in my child's career

Swimming Opportunities to perform on stage Meet the teacher/parental engagement sessions Special lunches Sports events Art Exhibition (Y3 and PS)

This year, for example, the opportunity to perform at The Gala was quite special, and gives the children extra confidence. (Y4)

Being able to send photos into school that my child can share with her peers; the school make links to my child's interests and things going on within her home life within school (PS)

Howtown, multi sports with Brandon (Y4)

I really value all of the performances the children do for parents at the local church and I particularly enjoyed the GALA theatre production.

The residential visits would have certainly supported my child's personal development, however, she did not want to go to either. (Y6)

OPAL and extra curricular activities (Y6)

When children get the opportunity to cook i.e flipping the pancakes (Y3 and Rec)

Choir and the opportunity to perform however these events don't always appear well planned / explained to parents or children (eg the Christmas performances at the club - no one knew where they were going). (Y3)

They seem to do a lot of work with individual children as well as the group, which is good. (PS)

Interventions to support learning, such as reading/spellings. Sport activities enabling my children to try new activities and progress in physical development. Opportunities to meet others at different schools. Performance opportunities, such as church, nativity and theatre. Allowing my children to gain confidence in front of others. (Y4 and Y1)

Assisting with tasks within the classroom (developing responsibilities), interaction with other schools. (Y6)

Opportunities to meet and mix with other children from different schools, sport competitions etc. (Y4)

the school gives the kids an opportunity to be themselves and more open and learn at their own pace. (PS)

I extra help from her teacher helping her earlier in the morning with extra times tables (Y5)

Lots of extra activities, such as Lego robotics club, choir, trips away in year 5 and 6... (Y6 and Y1)

After school activities, school council, school trips (Germany, Howtown, Grinton) (Y4 and Y6)

Offered the opportunity to deal with issues in an appropriate manner (PS, Y1 and Y3)

What do you think the school could do to improve?

Offer a few more school trips to younger Year groups (Y2)

Due to Covid, we had to stop trips for a short period of time but these are up and running again now. However, they are proving extremely expensive due to the bus prices. We are mindful of this for parents.

Communication by phone promptly when there are head / face injuries (Y1)

Any significant head or facial injuries we would expect a phone call home about this. I am sorry if this has not happened.

More meals at lunch time e.g one kind of sandwich a day should be more options for hot and cold foods
After school activities football should be for all of ks2 not just year 5/6 (Y1,3 and 6)

With regard to the meals, there are always 3 choices. The Local Authority wants to encourage hot dinners rather than sandwiches but we are looking into whether more sandwich fillings can be offered on a daily basis.

Regarding football, the focus is Y5/6 because of the competitions they can access. CnS do offer KS2 football sessions but there is a charge for this.

Football kits need to be improved. The boys go to matches against other schools and are embarrassed by the old-fashioned kit. Other schools in the area have sourced funding to replace these or had a non-uniform day to raise funds. It gives the impression that the school doesn't prioritise sports or appearances when playing against other schools. I am aware that a request for a sponsor was made in a recent letter but non branded shorts/tops can be purchased cheaply online which could be funded through a non-uniform day. It doesn't have to be a fancy kit...just modern so the kids feel special playing for their school. (Y6 and Y2)

Prior to our questionnaire going out we had requested sponsorship for the kits via the newsletter and secured funding for both teams. It has taken time to sort out printing etc. Both girls and boys now have new kits 😊

Also more notice for events and reminders not just in the school newsletter or a day or so before. (Y6 and Y2) We feel that we give you ample notice of events. We've had many positive comments regarding our communication. We are conscious of how many emails we do send and that if we overwhelm with these, parents will stop reading them. We feel by giving you the dates well in advance you can put them in your diary.

Nothing needed to be done it's been a pleasure to have both my sons attend the school for the last 9 years (Y6)

Keeping parents involved in their child's learning. Giving regular meaningful progress over time data and goals/targets. (Y5) Parents get an update on their child's academic achievement each term. In addition to this we have two Parent Meetings where this is discussed in more detail. The majority of parents find this useful. We have added more information to the end of year report to help parents understand the assessment terms.

Stricter bullying policy and more support for kids and parents when dealing with this issue. (Y5 and Y1) If we have concerns, or if concerns are brought to our attention, we communicate with parents and have a clear system of consequences in place to support the resolution of these.

Success stamps. Either give them or not. My daughter last had one in Feb 2022. My son gets these regularly, it's not done fairly. My daughter is a good student and I never see her rewarded, it's poor. (Y4 and Y3).

We are aware that there have been some inconsistencies with this and intend to be tighter with this next year. We want to reward children for making the right choices and working hard. We need to ensure our Success Cards do this for all.

I think that more could be done to explain the information given on the assessment of your child's attainment form. Simply putting 'year 1 emerging or pre key stage 1 standard' does not give me much information. A simple key or a comment section from his teacher would be much more beneficial. As it can be confusing and a bit heart wrenching to get one form (parent update) saying their exactly where you want them to be to then get the attainment form saying their behind but not explaining where abouts etc. when I questioned it in the past with my child's teacher I felt like I should have known the answer when it isn't clear. (Y1)

We have changed how we do this on the Data Sheets and the end of year report and hope that this now makes more sense to parents.

I feel like the children can sometimes be penalised for things that their classmates have done. One example is a few 'naughty' boys in my daughter's class showing bad behaviour which resulted in punishment for the whole class. They lost minutes of PE for a few weeks. I would rather have heard that these particular boys lost PE time or privilege time as opposed to the whole class. And my son wore a fitbit for school (he takes a good interest in the time and how many steps he does each day) for 8-9 months with no issues but then after Christmas other children must have been faffing with their own fitbits so they got banned for all children. This seems a little unfair to impose a blanket ban. (Y2 and Y4)

With regard to the PE situation, we don't generally do blanket punishments because it is unfair.

Re Fit bits/Smart watches – they were becoming a distraction and with something like this you have to impose a blanket ban. It would be impossible to monitor otherwise.

I think it would be good for the children if drama was a subject for them. I think it would help them feel more confident in front of people if they are shy, etc. (Y3)

We agree that drama is important for children. It is part of the English curriculum. We also offer children the opportunity to perform in the nativity, harvest celebrations, Easter Celebration service, Talk for Writing (when they will perform their story map), Tanfield's Got Talent and the end of Y6 performance. It is good for developing children's confidence, we value it and try to give a variety of opportunities for this.

After school provision for Pre-School Homework - We feel that regular reading at home is essential and should be encouraged, but we do not feel that any of the extra homework is necessary (Y3 and PS).

We feel the Home Learning enhances the children's experiences and is a good home/school link, letting the parents know what we have done each week in school. It is often a photo task (what have you been doing at the weekend/holiday/100 things to do before you're 6) which is an opportunity to build vocabulary, name

writing, simple maths (matching numbers and dots) and these are only each term. In addition to this there are little tasks like use shapes around your home to make a rocket etc.

We feel this is an important part of Pre-School and parents love to know what their children are doing at home and can extend on this at home if they want to. However, if parents don't want to do it, they don't have to.

Procedures at lunchtime on a Wednesday when nursery parents are dropping children off. There has been a couple of occasions myself and my family have been hit by footballs, and it can be difficult to navigate around children playing with equipment and avoid children running, especially when pushing a pram. (PS)

We had been aware that this was happening and have taken action. It is tricky as the children in the Upper School are still playing when the afternoon Pre-School arrive and the only way is across yard. We now have member of staff who opens the gates. He has stopped the football taking place and stops the bikes coming down the covered walkway during this time. I hope this has resolved the situation.

Maybe another kind of after school club aimed more for the younger children (Rec)

We introduce After School Clubs for Reception in the second half of the summer term. We could discuss the possibility of introducing this sooner for Reception. We could discuss this with CnS. We haven't done it earlier in the year, particularly the autumn term, as the children are generally exhausted by the end of the school day.

The use of the success cards has been great from when my child started in year 3. However, she is now in year 6 and sadly, the cards don't seem to be used very often at all. I think my child has maybe achieved only one or two stamps (comments) since starting year 6 so they aren't much of an incentive unlike previous years. (Y6).

We are aware that there have been some inconsistencies with this and intend to be tighter with this next year. We want to reward children for making the right choices and working hard. We need to ensure our Success Cards do this for all.

Since my child has been in year 6, she seems to have a variety of different staff teaching her. She rarely has her class teacher for full days which appears to be a bit disruptive and my child notices and comments on this herself. (Y6). All teachers have Planning, Preparation and Assessment time during the week. Teachers who are on the Leadership Team have additional non-contact time but they still plan the lesson and we have a member of our own staff team covering this. This year we have had a number of appointments to make and so this has impacted on this particular class a bit more as their teacher is also on the governing body. This is not usual.

Better communication in particular with regards to SEND. Support plans could be followed up and shared better. (Y6) Support Plans are shared and discussed at Parent Meetings. They are emailed to parents prior to Parent Meetings to allow parents to read it through before the meeting. If more discussion time is required, staff will arrange this.

Early years teaching assistants need reminding about professionalism and confidentiality. The policies and procedures highlighted on the school's website need to be followed. (Y3 and Rec)

The members of staff involved in this followed procedure to safeguard the children involved.

The school's after-school care options are not appropriate. £7.50 without providing as much as a snack is too much. £7.50 regardless of whether the children are staying 15 minutes or 2 hours makes this facility inaccessible to many parents.

Whilst I am aware there are price points within the after-school club for those participating in the sports clubs, this is still not inclusive as not all year groups can take part each night and not all children want to do the sports clubs. Your after-school club ought to have price points for those staying up to an hour and those staying beyond an hour whether they are participating in sports clubs or not. It would also be a much more appealing offer if pupils were offered a small snack e.g. a slice of toast. We have considered relocating our daughter as we feel Tanfield does not cater well to the children of working parents. (Y3)
Thanks for your feedback on this. We intend to discuss this with CnS (the provider) to review the current arrangements. We are sorry that you feel it does not meet the requirements of working parents at the moment.

The school could provide a summary to parents of upcoming topics in core subjects. This will help us to support our children having prior knowledge to upcoming topics. (Y4 and Y1)

We share the curriculum plans on the website however, having reviewed this following your comment, we appreciate it is hard to find so have made this more accessible. This will be at the top of the curriculum page <https://www.tanfieldlea-primary.durham.sch.uk/our-curriculum/>

Really minor - but don't know how many times parents need to be told about parking on the double yellow lines and the one-way system out of school and still I see it happen. (Y4)

We regularly remind parents about parking on the double yellow lines. We will ask the parking enforcement people to come out again. Regarding the one-way system, most parents do follow this and we continue to remind all about the system we have in place.

Teaching kids what right and wrong in their behaviour. (PS)

Children in Pre-School are very young and a key part of their learning at this stage is with regard to personal and social education. This is a prime area of their learning. There are high expectations regarding behaviour in Pre-School but they are learning to self-regulate, manage themselves and build relationships. They learn about the difference between right and wrong every day.

Maybe offer some after school activities for pre-school/reception children (PS)

This is something we can explore. Generally we don't offer it because the children are tired at the end of the school day.

I feel the school has already improved and tried their absolute best to get the kids back to some normality especially since starting back after covid they have been great. (Y4 and Y6)

Employ more break and lunch time supervisors (PS, Y2 and Y3)

Despite the size of our grounds we are well resourced staff wise for break times and lunchtimes.

Additional comments – if you want to explain any or your answers or if there is anything else you would like us to know about, please tell us here.

I have concerns about how incidents of sexual harassment are perceived and dealt with by staff. (Y5)
Staff are very aware of potential sexual harassment incidents and deal with these sensitively but promptly.

Club ideas aren't great. CnS is costly. (Y4 and Y3)

We intend to discuss the cost of the clubs and the variety offered with CnS.

I'd love to see more netball in school, a team would be great.

Very pleased to have face to face parents evenings back.

Very pleased that eschools is no longer a thing.

We like the one-way system in and out of the school (it's a shame that the same ignorant parents take no notice).

We like that PE kit is worn on PE days rather than taking it into school. (Y2 and Y4)

Lots of positives here thank you. The children do have the opportunity in Y5 and Y6 to take part in a High Five competition but due to lack of time, we have not been able to offer a regular High Five team.

I feel like children should be taken notice of more when they have a problem. Sometimes my daughter comes home and tells me that something has happened with her friends or other people and I have always told her if anything is wrong at school always tell a grown up but sometimes she says that on break times if something happens and she tells the whoever is watching them then sometimes she is just told to go and play. So She said to me she doesn't like saying anything if she has a problem. Children should not be made to feel that way though. So that is a concern for me. (Y3)

That concerns us also if children feel they are not being listened too. Staff are generally very good at responding to children's concerns. The child concerned may not always think something is done about it as they may not see this, but staff will question or investigate. We will talk to the children to remind them they must speak to someone and if they don't feel they have been listened to, to speak to them again.

Our girls love school. They are thriving and we are incredibly grateful for all of the opportunities they are given. (Y3 and PS)

Direct email for head teacher and SENDCO as everything has to go through the main school email which isn't ideal if it is a private matter. (Y6)

We do not share any teacher's email addresses with parents, including the Head Teacher. We do this to support their well-being. Staff use the email system to contact each other about planning etc. and will do this on an evening or at the weekend. We don't want them to be receiving emails from parents that they feel they may have to reply to in their own time. For any communication with them we ask you to use the school email address. It is checked regularly throughout the day (teacher emails will not be). There are a very limited number of staff who can access this and they ensure confidentiality at all times. If there is anything private that you don't want to share then we'd just ask you to state that you would like the person concerned to contact you to discuss a particular issue. We do now have a dedicated email for the SENDCO but this is not accessed daily and so if parents are wanting a swifter response it is better to use the school email address.

Accelerated reader is not explained well to parents or pupils and many are left confused. The children are given too many AR books at once. This should be limited. Although we have had this conversation with our daughter, she is left with the belief she MUST take more books and was carrying around 10 in December. Instead of encouraging a love of reading this leaves children confused switching so quickly between different books. (Y3) The number of AR books a child should take out is limited. Children who are reading shorter books should have no more than 3 and if they are reading longer chapter books they should only have 1. If your child is bringing home more than this then please inform the teacher.

We are sorry that you feel it is not explained well to parents and the children may be confused. If there is anything you feel you are not sure of then we'd encourage you to contact the teacher in the first instance to explain this. The 'Meet the Teacher' meeting is held to explain things like Accelerated Reader and we hope this does help.

Telling kids to ease off on taking their back packs to school as we've recently been told to stop our child from bringing one in. This backpack helps with everything that is needed for school, including the little things that the school has told us we HAVE TO HAVE with him e.g spare underwear and water bottle. When kids get older they will always bring a backpack or bag into school even in comprehensive, so we don't see the point in easing him off this difficult task for him to need one in a few years time. (PS) It's an issue of space and management in Pre-School and Reception. The 'Friends of Tanfield Lea' supply all children with a book bag when they start. This is big enough to carry the essential things needed on a daily basis. We want children to use this rather than a backpack as in the Pre-School porches there is not the space for backpacks. The green book bags are kept in boxes. This is not possible with a backpack. You are asked to bring in additional items for Pre-School and Reception children but these are brought in as a one off. It's not necessary to bring these in every day.

