

March 2018

Dear Parents

## Feedback from Parental Questionnaires



As promised, I am reporting back about the parental questionnaires sent out earlier this term. In total we received 35 replies from families, one was only partially completed and couldn't be used, the other came in after the data was compiled, it was been read and the comments noted. The number of responses is slightly less than last year (43 replies) however as you can see, from the summary sheets the overall results are very positive. Some questions elicited a better response than others and I felt it would be useful to focus on a few of the questions with a lower percentage of people choosing to 'strongly agree or agree' than in previous years

Almost all sections had very positive feedback, all statements except for school lunches had at least a 90%+ positive. There was an increase in statements showing less positive than in 2017.

\* Number in brackets denotes the % of people who answered either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to the statement.

## Curriculum Section

### Statement 7:

I am happy with the quality of school lunches. (84%. 2% up on 2016. 27 parents agreed and 5 disagreed. 3 didn't respond).

### School's response:

I was very surprised with this response as this issue has been a concern to the governors and myself since the introduction of UIFSM in Sept 2014. We began by receiving very poorly cooked meals from a local school kitchen, but as a result of our continual complaints the meals were moved to Long Stratton at the end of summer 2015. The quality and quantity is much more consistent and although the cook is limited by the menu NORSE devises, which has to meet exacting food standards, the meals are generally appreciated by the children most days now. All meals are compiled by a dietician who ensures the children receive balanced amounts of sugars, fats and carbs. Pasta and bread is 50% wholemeal and the rice is wholemeal. It is very rare that I need to raise a concern and when I have done so it has been acted on. The account manager from Norse visits regularly and always listens to any feedback we give her. Myself and the staff often eat lunches and we have the same meals as the children. Mass catering with a limited budget is never going to compete with home cooked meals for a family – the amount of seasoning and ingredients they are permitted to use are limited for example. However, despite this I feel they are good value for money.

We are once again inviting parents to come and dine with us, dates have been given via our newsletters but we are flexible enough to change them if you can't make the date. Parents who have been for lunch have given positive feedback and have enjoyed the lunches. If you haven't tried them yet and your child says they aren't nice, please come in and see for yourself. We are now beginning the new "summer" menu and so there are some changes again, if we feel the children don't enjoy a particular meal we do liaise with the cook at Long Stratton to change it. Salad, bread and milk are available each day to supplement the meal, the School Council informed us that the children would prefer to have the salad in separate components rather than a mixed salad and this has happened.

Parents' comments about food included:

- More choice and better quality – as I have mentioned above the meals are compiled by a dietician who has to balance the meals to food standards and appeal to children. The meat is “proper” meat and not reconstituted. Veg has been properly cooked, I always complain about anything that looks “overdone” however the veg are packed into metal sealed containers for the voyage and this causes condensation.  
As a school we don’t choose the jacket potato option or filled sandwiches/rolls each day for a variety of reasons. Our food is transported in a car which is already packed up with the containers, tins, insulated boxes, milk, bread, fruit and salad boxes there isn’t really space for jacket potatoes/filled rolls etc and the variety of fillings children may want. It is surprising the number of times the hot meals v packed lunches don’t tally – children say they are having a packed lunch and then discover they aren’t and have a hot lunch without saying anything (this is one reason why we sometimes run short of items such as chicken pieces and sausages). Children change their minds when they see the food, or can’t remember what they chose, another possible reason for food running low. It would be hard to say children are eating a balanced diet if they chose jacket potato or a filled roll each day. Finally the administration of it is one more thing for hard pressed Mrs Reeman to manage. Schools with their own kitchens can manage to do this more easily.
- Portion sizes have been a problem in the past, we do monitor this and feel this has improved. As we now have two sittings the older children go in second, I have encouraged our dining assistant to try and match the portion size to the child, eg: some children in YR find a larger plateful very overwhelming. There is always plenty of food, we insist on spares in case a child drops a plate and there is nearly always an opportunity for “seconds” for KS2. Items that need to be counted ie portions of chicken or sausages are less likely to be in excess, and there have been odd occasions in the past when someone at the cooking kitchen has miscounted. This is much less likely now as I complain and charge Norse for providing food I have sent in for the children from a local café! I guess when children complain of small portions it has more to do with them wanting more of the bits they like.
- The possibility of running our own kitchen was raised once again. This is a splendid idea however the start up costs and employment costs make this difficult to manage financially. The Governors have to make a decision on how best to use our limited resources to benefit the children and at the moment cooking our own meals is not a possibility. But never say never! If anyone with an appropriate background would like to explore the possibilities of this and the costing of it then please speak to me or one of the Governors.

### Statement 12

Satisfied with the amount of extra-curricular activities available: 9% - 3 parents disagreed

#### School’s response:

The range of extra-curricular activities has steadily increased and this has been commented on positively by several parents. We offer sporting, musical, and craft, art as well as chess both at lunchtimes and after school. For a small staff we do offer a good range. The school premises are used every afternoon of the week by at least one after school club. Whilst the majority of them are sports clubs there are at least two after school art and craft clubs. We have offered after school cooking in the past and once the refurbishments are completed we may be able to offer this again if we can find appropriate adults to run it. Two of the parents commented that there were no options for EYFS pupils which is true. In the first term we feel that EYFS children tire easily, however Miss Larter is planning an option for the youngest children which may take place at lunchtimes.

As a school we are able to offer Breakfast Club but there is simply not the demand for after school care to make it a viable financial option.

### Statement 13

Understand homework expectations in my child's year group: 9% - 3 parents disagreed

#### School's response:

KS1 offered sessions early in the school year where expectations were explained to parents. KS2 children have Home School books where homework is listed. Our homework policy also explains what is likely to be the expectation for a particular year group, this is also displayed on our school website.

### Statement 21

I receive enough information about the curriculum. 6% - 2 parents disagreed

#### School's response:

Each term the teachers post on our website the topics and areas the children will be working on. A curriculum map and letter is also sent home in hard copy and also put on the website. The school continues to offer a broad based curriculum which aims to foster curiosity and a love for learning within each child. Despite DfE regulations which seem to insist that pupils need to absorb more facts, we do try hard to make learning as enjoyable and fruitful as possible. We spend time planning visits, visitors and activities within class that make the learning memorable, including outdoor learning. Some year groups use My Maths as a way to consolidate maths skills. Kingfishers send home a weekly note explaining what the learning for that week will be, they also include an optional task to do at home which might include making something or talking.

In response to this statement last year we now hold Open Afternoons so that parents can come in and see what the children have been doing, look at the books, learning displays on the walls and any items the children may have made. This gives the children an opportunity to showcase what they have learned and to share this with parents. Parents may have also found curriculum evening helpful, for example on maths calculations and dyslexia.

We have always had an open door policy whereby parents can come into school to drop off their children, however it can be difficult if parents block the narrow corridors or enter classrooms and then start chatting with a friend. This does happen!! Instead we appreciate it when there is a swift goodbye and children are encouraged to become more independent by hanging up their own coats, lunchboxes etc, there certainly should not be a need for KS2 children to require parental assistance to do this. Parents in EYFS have commented that now they are asked to drop their children off in the main corridor they are less likely to know what is happening in class or to see the learning environment as the youngest children aren't always able/willing to retell their day. Miss Larter is arranging for groups of parents to come into school on Thursday afternoons to "stay and play" and will be sharing details of how this might work for you. We appreciate that not all parents will be able to make this, however Miss Larter is always available at the beginning and end of day should you want to talk with her.

We aim to be as friendly as always and you can have access to your child's teacher as always should you need it.

### Statement 25

I find the website informative when I use it (5% disagreed – 2 parents)

#### School's response

We try to keep the website as up to date and informative as possible. During the past year we have re-vamped it and hope that it is easy to use. There is statutory information that has to be posted on the website. Please inform us if you cannot find the information you require or if you have suggestions for other information that parents might find helpful. It is also always helpful to know if any links do not work.

Statements 15, 23, 26, 30 and 31 – one person disagreed with these statements

Statement 15

My child is offered a wide range of trips and visits.

School's response:

All classes have at least one trip per term, some are local some wider afield depending on the age and appropriateness. Trips and visits can become very costly for parents, especially if there is more than one child. We are fortunate that Friends and the school has been in a position to subsidise the cost in many cases. It is difficult to see how more trips/visits can be accommodated. We do try to invite visitors into school rather than incurring the transport costs of taking children out. We have tried on a number of occasions to take children to London and stay overnight however these has always been resistance to this from parents. We have in the past taken children on a day trip, however there is a certain nervousness around this in the light of random terrorists attacks last summer.

Statement 23

I am aware of who the school governors are and know how to contact them.

Governor's response

There is a board in the main corridor with photos of Governors on it as well as bio pics on our website where the Governors have a dedicated Governor section. Meet and Mingle on the Dig Deep Day is an annual invitation to meet Governors between 8.30 and 9.15am. There is normally a Governor presence on at least one of the Parent/Teacher meetings. Each class also has a dedicated parent Governor whose photo is displayed on the classroom doors.

Statement 26

I feel happy to support the work of the Friends.

School's response:

Friends are a voluntary group of parents who work extremely hard to raise funds for the school for a number of years. Without them and the support and generosity you all give them the children would have many, many fewer opportunities and the equipment/facilities we have would be very inferior. The Friends are inclusive, all parents can go along to the meetings and will be made welcome. The school community benefits enormously from them.

Statements 30 and 31

“Confident school deals with inappropriate behaviour effectively” and “My child is confident there is someone they can go to”

School's response:

We have very high expectations of pupil behaviour. For a variety of reasons some children find school behaviour harder to conform to than others and need to be helped to develop better social skills. We do have a Behaviour Policy which is on the school website and treating each other as you would wish to be treated yourself is a core value the school adheres to and repeats often to children. Children who persistently misbehave do have appropriate sanctions applied to them. As parents it can be difficult sometimes to distinguish what has happened when there is an “incident” on the playground, as we all know children do tell it from their own perspective. Please speak to your child's teacher or me if you feel there is persistent bad behaviour that we are not dealing with.

We expect all the children to know they can talk to any adult in school, they usually go to their teachers and TAs if there is something they are worried about. Sometimes however children will confide in the MSAs and Mrs Reeman. The play buddies are another group the children can approach. The children are about to complete a pupil questionnaire for their views on school life which will include how safe they feel in school

**On the back of the questionnaire parents had the opportunity to write additional comments. Here is a selection of some of the very positive things written about Alpington Primary School.**

*“safe, caring nurturing approach, with engaging teaching and topics”*

*“focus on helping individual children to do their best”*

*“lessons are fun and enjoyable”*

*“my child LOVES coming to school each day”*

*open friendliness of staff...good values”*

*“older children set a good example to the younger ones”*

*“lovely atmosphere, the children are really well looked after”*

*“my daughter enjoys school tremendously”*

*“the school encourages progression and hard work”*

*“small, friendly, family environment....great parent community”*

*“all the teachers know all the children...teachers are very approachable”*

*“I love the very active Friends association”*

*“pupils are happy and parents are very involved”*

*“academic achievements and progress for less able are excellent”*

*“learning is encouraged to continue at home”*

*“my child is taught good values”*

*“the quality of teaching and can-do attitude of teachers”*

*“learning styles are varied”*

*“happy, safe and nurturing atmosphere and the feeling that the children always come first”*

*“Breakfast club – very popular with my child”*

*“friendly parents, happy atmosphere, caring teachers and high expectations”*

*“behaviour is good, children are polite and very well behaved”*

*“ Care and consideration of the staff, I am confident that any concerns are addressed. Very positive atmosphere.”*

*“School environment is positive, children are encouraged to do their best and not others best. My child goes to school happy and comes home happy”*

**There were many, many lovely things said about the school – Thank you!**

**Many of you have taken the time to add your comments and suggestions for improving the school. We read these carefully and consider the things you have said. As you will appreciate it is not always possible to act positively to all the suggestions but we do include some in our school improvement and development plan, even if it doesn't happen immediately. We also discuss those suggestions which are raised by several parents or crop up from year to year.**

### **Communication between teachers and parents**

We have taken note that some parents of the youngest children felt they didn't always know what was going on in school...four and five year olds are not going to have a long conversation at the end of the day about things they have done, so in order to overcome this we have begun to hold sessions where parents can come in on a Thurs pm at 2.30pm and play or read with the children. Some reception classes use Tapestry, an online device for teachers and parents to share what their child is learning and to comment. This is continually being reviewed with the staff in EYFS. Currently we use our Learning Journeys as a record of your child's achievements. These are sent home for you to write your comments in them. If you wish to discuss this further please come and speak to Miss Larter and myself.

**Inconsistent setting of homework** – all classes do have a homework timetable which they do keep to most of the year. At certain times homework might be suspended or need to be in at different times usually for specific reasons or because of how the terms ends. We encourage parents of children in EYFS and KS1 to read each day with their child, either read with them, hear them read or read to them or even listen to a story DVD together. It is my experience that children who read regularly are going to make better progress with reading, writing and spelling than they would if they didn't regularly engage with stories and books.

### **Other topics raised by individual parents include:**

**Are children taught about other religions and people with differing beliefs** – our RE curriculum ensures that children are taught about the wide range of beliefs that people might have. We also try to have visits and visitors from different cultures to the school...tricky in rural Norfolk but arguably more necessary because of this.

**Encouraging children to get out into the countryside more** – we do try to encourage outdoor learning where possible. Our children live in a rural setting and probably have more opportunities to experience the outdoors than children living in the city.

**More PE and running** – we have increased our PE provision. The plan is to do some running on the field once the weather improves.

**Online system for the payment of dinner money** – Mrs Reeman is on the case, it is the way forward but at present there would be a cost to parents. We would still have the existing system for parents who don't choose to bank online.

**Dangerously narrow pavement** – I have reminded parents not to stand and chat on this part of the pavement as some parents have complained that they then have to walk in the road.

**Update reading book provision in KS1** – this is happening now...more phonic based ones that more closely parallel Letters and Sounds are on order.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the questionnaire and for making suggestions and comments on how we might improve the school further. These are very good suggestions; in a small school however the challenge is always to prioritise what we have capacity to take on. I am always very pleased to discuss any suggestions you may have to improve our school further.

**The Governors are holding a Dig Deep day on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March when they will spend time in school observing teaching and learning, also meeting pupils and staff. The Governors would also like to meet you to have informal conversations. Please join us for a cup of tea or coffee in the old hall between 8.30 to 9.15am.**

Thank you to those parents who put their names to the questionnaires as it enables me to approach them directly to respond to their concerns. This is a priority for us.

The 'governors' page on our website <http://alpington.norfolk.sch.uk/about-us/governors/> lists all our current governors. The Chair of governors is Michael Hibbin and the Vice Chairs are Michaela Warner and Joy Shreeve.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Osborne  
Headteacher