

18th October 2019

DC
DEAN
CLOSE

PREPARATORY

CHELTENHAM

LANSDOWN ROAD
CHELTENHAM
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
GL51 6QS
TEL 01242 512217
FAX 01242 258005

Response from the Headmaster to the Parent Satisfaction Survey 2019

Dear Parents(s)/Guardians(s),

I am most grateful to those parents who took time to respond to the survey carried out last term. In the useful feedback, the vast majority of parents felt their children were very happy at school, commenting on the school's strong sense of community and friendly feel. The range of high scores received for the provision of a 'balanced and high quality education', where the school was recognised as caring about each child's academic success, is particularly encouraging, as is the recognition of the appropriate number and breadth of co-curricular activities.

However, constructive comments given also help us to consider ways in which we might be able to improve further. I would like to draw out a few areas of particular note, explaining both the current situation and areas where we aim to make further developments.

Firstly, amongst some parents there appears to be the unsavoury perception that favouritism exists at school, with some pupils being given greater opportunities than others - in their classroom experience, sports teams or opportunities for drama. Sadly, this is not an uncommon opinion within any school, but a charge that DCPS takes very seriously and one of which all staff are made aware. The accusation runs contrary to our aim of providing opportunities for all and our expectation is that, through our nurturing environment, all pupils can achieve their full potential. As a school, we are fortunate to have children who join us from a range of backgrounds and experiences, with varying levels of ability in an array of disciplines. The school's responsibility is to ensure that all pupils are making progress, both in and out of the classroom, and to this end we ensure that our specialist staff teach across the age and ability range. For example, this term Mrs Emma Bailey (Head of Girls' Games) not only coaches the 1st team hockey, but also assists each week with the coaching of the U11 B and C teams and the U8 teams. In addition, whenever logistics allow, she has umpired / coached matches for both the U13 6th & 7th teams. Alongside this, our Director of Sport, Mr John Sutherland, coaches the U9 boys, as well as the U13A and the U8 teams. Likewise, Mrs Lawrence (Director of Drama and Dance) not only instructs Speech and Drama classes to those talented individuals who may be working towards the top graded LAMDA Examinations and advanced classes at the Cheltenham Festival, but also teaches pupils starting out on their journey in drama in all year groups, beginning with Year 3, irrespective of their ability and experience. Both Junior and Senior school productions have an 'open door' policy, where every pupil has the opportunity to be involved in a production, and all pupils are entered for annual LAMDA Examinations as well as public events such as the Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts. In each of these cases, talents are recognised and nurtured to ensure that pupils make continual progress, whatever their ability and, when required, are confident to represent the school in an appropriate setting, whether it be on stage or on the sports field. Whilst I am happy to remind them of this issue, I have every confidence that the teaching staff here do not exhibit favouritism and I would be pleased to hear from any parents who have any indication of this taking place.



Secondly, some parents have queried the school's ability to appropriately celebrate a pupil's accomplishment, particularly when they have shown high effort and not just appreciable achievement. The suggestion is that this might be particularly prevalent if children are considered to be 'middle-achievers', who may not be highly excelling at any one particular discipline. I am happy to remind parents that in each of my weekly Head's Assemblies I recognise a wide range of pupils for whom a piece of work, or co-curricular achievement, has shown a notable display of effort and progress, rather than simply recognising those who are the highest achiever in the class. Further, the main purpose of our tutor structure in Years 6 and above, is to ensure that a tutee is individually known by their tutor. This ensures that each child is championed by a member of staff and their unique achievements, however great or small, are shared and celebrated appropriately.

Finally, a subject that is always close the heart of any pupil – food. Some parents have reported back that the school's 'food and nutrient services' have not always met their child's needs. Whilst not an uncommon topic during a pupil's 'end-of-day' reflections, I would hope that comments about the school lunches and snacks are not the only feedback a child gives to a question about their daily experience at school, despite the fact that what they have eaten (or not) often outweighs their other activities in their own minds. The school works closely with our caterers (palmerhowells.co.uk) to ensure that pupils enjoy an exciting, varied and healthy diet. We enjoy receiving pupil feedback through the School Council, as well as through the recently formed, Food Forum where our caterers can respond directly to our pupils' wishes and concerns. Indeed, should parents wish to experience a meal at the school to sample the quality of the catering on offer themselves, please do contact the front office who will happily make these arrangements for you.

To conclude, thank you once again for your feedback and I do hope that you find us to be a school that is keen to foster an open and accessible relationship with all of our parents. Should you have any suggestions on ways in which we can improve the educational provision for all within Dean Close, please do not wait until the next survey, but come and see me at your earliest convenience.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P Moss', written in a cursive style.

Mr P Moss
Headmaster