

9th December 2015

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Towards the end of last term, you may recall that we sent out a questionnaire to parents. The results are contained at the end of this letter.

We have looked closely at the answers (a little short of 300 replies were received) and considered our reaction. For the most part, there was a very positive response, with many respondents expressing (through their answers) support for the school. But it also reveals there is work to do. In some ways these answers are pleasing (if not as positive as we would like in certain areas) – this is because we had already begun to address the matters raised before responses were received. The questionnaire served, therefore, to re-inforce our areas for development and improvement; it also enabled us to evaluate actions taken following the previous questionnaire.

In considering our reaction, we have added up the responses that were either “strongly agree” or “agree” and present the information accordingly. Where the average of the four years is 90% or over, we are pleased (but not delighted – 100% will cause that!) and where it is less, we have discussed the actions we need to take. Also, if the number falls over the six year period we looked at this closely.

I therefore take each question in turn, where the response has caused concern, and hopefully provide some response, explanation and reassurance of our sustained determination to improve:-

7. The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle for my child – although a healthy lifestyle can mean many things to many people, we have looked to increase the amount of sport on offer – mainly through the House system, more are taking part in activity. We have also changed our caterers and have seen an encouraging response to their offer. When we speak of our expectation of working hard, playing well and making good choices, we hope that this preserves a healthy work/life/play balance and involves more students in the wider school life. We also encourage students, through our mentoring, House tutor time, assemblies, Life programme to think and reflect about important matters. Mental health is also an important issue here, and we work closely with third party providers as well as running our own student support team to offer help where needed.

11. The school seeks the views of students, and takes account of their suggestions and concerns – we have increased the school parliament membership this year, to have one representative per form (which is much greater than before). The change in caterers arose from discussions with students, as did the new multi-gym. Houses choose their charity focus, which is driven by our students. I also meet with the Head Boy and Head Girl twice a week and we share opinions on how to improve the school. Whilst never raising hopes and managing expectations, we are keen to extend our listening, where possible.

13. I am satisfied with the quality of the catering. Our change of caterer has been warmly welcomed – wider choice, a new deli bar and better decor have contributed to improving this. Initial feedback seems very promising, although they are only in their first term and there is still some way to improve further.

14. I am satisfied with the school uniform – opinion is always divided on our school uniform in terms of the colour, form, and options in the summer. I will, at some point in the future, invite further discussions on this. But for the moment, the purpose of the uniform is to provide an angle of discipline and commitment to the school, and students wear it well and with pride. There are relatively few times I need to pick up students with respect to their uniform.

18. I am impressed with the facilities the school is able to offer - our facilities are constrained by space and money. We have recently refurbished one science lab, the music room, painted and re-carpeted the crush hall and a major part of the downstairs corridor, created a fitness suite, invested in artwork and photographs, refurbished reception. In relation to the investment in new schools, this is very small, but students and parents/carers who have visited have appreciated this work. There is an ongoing plan for minor capital development (which is what we can afford). Major capital development depends on us bidding for, and winning money, from a small and reducing pot from the government. Whilst we are an outstanding school, we are unlikely to qualify for extra money.

20. I am kept informed about how my child is getting on – we will be increasing the frequency by which we report to you, and sharing our plans next term.

21. I feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, a problem, or a complaint – whilst the responses were a little low, the fact that this is rising is more encouraging. Staff do listen to questions and problems, on a vast range of different areas.

22. The school seeks the views of parents/carers, and takes account of their suggestions and concerns – whilst improving, I would like this to be higher. Whenever parents/carers do raise concerns, we seek to act (but they are usually about students so the detail cannot be shared). I hope that by responding to this questionnaire, we are providing some reassurance on this matter.

23. Staff explain how I can help my child to make progress towards achieving his/her best – the newly formatted reports make this clearer, the PPD also helps in this respect and the parents’ meetings also contribute to this. Some Heads of Department have training sessions with parents/carers on mark schemes so that they can support their children. We are looking at ways of taking this further – I invited all of year 10 parents/carers to the launch of GCSE, and gave advice on how parents/carers can support the work of the school – this was well received by those attending, although at a turn out rate of 40%, we had fewer than we would have liked.

25. I am quickly contacted about any problems concerning my child – we will not always contact immediately, preferring to try to sort out the problem as it arises. Where problems are serious, we always try to make contact the same day, where it is possible to do so. Much depends on the seriousness of the matter.

26. I know how to contact a member of the School Governing Body if I need to – governors occasionally attend school events and address parents/carers at formal occasions. We will shortly be re-launching our web-site, and will draw parents’ attention to the members of the governing body, their backgrounds and which committee they sit on. We are also considering re-instating the Governors’ Report to Parents, which will enable further dialogue with governors.

29. I am given sufficient information about the school's policies and plans – policies are on the web-site, although a number are due to be updated. The school produces an annual School Development Plan, which comes from the school Strategy. Next term we will share this detail with you. Whenever parents/carers come to visit and wherever major changes are decided, then essential matters such as our vision and values, details of those changes, are shared.

35. The school provides appropriate homework – our new software, Show My Homework, has enabled parents/carers to monitor homework, and we have received some very good feedback. We continually evaluate the amount of homework given out – and homework is designed to support learning, and therefore takes different forms. We will also look at our homework policy later this academic year, and share this further with parents/carers. It may be that parents/carers who are interested in this matter come to a round-table discussion with me and the Senior Leadership Team on what constitutes “appropriate.”

36. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that my child finds interesting and enjoyable – I hope the response to this increases over time. When we refer to a student being expected to “play well,” this refers to joining in and contributing. This term we have had a House run, various other House sports, a House Academic Challenge and a House Music competition. There are some interesting clubs – and a good number of sporting ones, along with new initiatives such as the String group and Debating club.

37. The system of rewards at school motivates my child to achieve his/her best – at the end of last year I commissioned some work from two members of staff on how we might make our rewards systems better, and probably more formal. It is a fine balance between giving out rewards and losing the value of them because so many are handed out. We will come back to you in the new year with our plans.

38. The use of ICT has helped to improve my child's education – opinion is always divided on this matter. The skill set of most students, given that ICT pervades our lives in many dimensions, is impressive. ICT makes the execution and storage of work easier, enables access to swathes of information, and provides a communication tool which is standard amongst many. In itself it therefore supports learning, but must never be a replacement to a pen, paper and reference book!

Although I will see some of you in school over the next few days, and particularly at the Christmas Concert next week, may I use this opportunity to wish all of you a very Happy Christmas, a prosperous new year and calm and peaceful time over the coming few weeks.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.J. Barratt', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

M J Barratt
Principal

	Questions	'09	'11	'13	'15
1	My child enjoys school	94%	93%	94%	95%
2	Students at The Priory behave well	91%	90%	96%	95%
3	My child is not bullied at school	89%	88%	92%	93%
4	Staff treat my child fairly	90%	89%	95%	92%
5	Staff encourage my child to become mature and independent	93%	92%	98%	98%
6	The arrangements for my child to settle in when he / she started at the school were good	94%	95%	96%	96%
7	The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle for my child	76%	78%	83%	72%
8	I feel that my child is safe at school	95%	95%	98%	99%
9	The Priory gives my child the opportunity to make positive contributions to the school	91%	91%	95%	95%
10	The school teaches my child to respect people from different backgrounds, races, religions	94%	91%	96%	98%
11	The school seeks the views of student, and takes account of their suggestions and concerns	78%	79%	88%	86%
12	The school helps my child to develop positive relationships with staff and other students	87%	87%	94%	95%
13	I am satisfied with the quality of catering	62%	63%	67%	50%
14	I am satisfied with the school uniform	84%	81%	92%	91%
15	I am happy with the values and attitudes that the school engenders	95%	93%	96%	97%
16	The school is led and managed well	92%	89%	93%	94%
17	I am proud that my child attends The Priory School	95%	91%	97%	97%
18	I am impressed with the facilities the school is able to offer			89%	86%
19	My child has not witnessed racial abuse in school			92%	93%
20	I am kept informed about how my child is getting on	79%	78%	82%	75%
21	I feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, a problem, or a complaint	85%	86%	91%	93%
22	The school seeks the views of parents, and takes account of their suggestions and concerns	69%	71%	83%	82%
23	Staff explain how I can help my child to make progress towards achieving his / her best	78%	74%	83%	80%
24	I feel the text messaging service is a valuable means of communication	79%	83%	93%	96%
25	I am quickly contacted about any problems concerning my child	63%	68%	91%	89%
26	I know how to contact a member of the School Governing Body if I need to	58%	58%	64%	69%
27	I feel welcome when I come into school	93%	93%	95%	97%
28	Newsletters are helpful and informative	98%	97%	95%	94%
29	I am given sufficient information about the school's policies and plans	86%	89%	91%	88%
30	The school has a good reputation	98%	95%	98%	90%
31	Parent/carer consultation evenings have been useful			92%	88%
32	My child is making good progress	90%	87%	94%	92%
33	Teaching at The Priory is very good	92%	88%	94%	93%
34	Staff expect my child to work hard and do his / her best	96%	96%	98%	97%
35	The school provides appropriate homework	79%	77%	86%	84%
36	There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that my child finds interesting and enjoyable	67%	65%	67%	74%
37	The system of rewards at school motivates my child to achieve his / her best	71%	70%	79%	76%
38	The use of I.C.T. in school has helped to improve my child's education	74%	71%	85%	82%
39	The school provides high quality learning opportunities			96%	94%