

Hilltop Infant School

Survey of parents' and carers' views of school life.

FINDINGS

This is a summary of the responses from the questionnaire distributed in October 2009. 95 forms were returned. Not all people answered all questions.

The school will be taking action on some of the issues raised and will keep you informed about progress.

What do you think about the following school issues?	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
The curriculum (including themes taught)	47	47	0	0
Discipline.	44	49	1	0
Behaviour	36	55	4	0
Open evening and consultation arrangements	41	42	9	3
The school building	52	39	0	0
The school grounds	59	34	0	0
What sort of reputation does the school have within the community?	59	32	2	1*

Comments on any of the above areas:

- *'The school has a good reputation and I think the outside areas are really good for the children.'*
- **The person who reported a bad reputation said that they had experienced a lot of gossip in the community and particularly in a preschool setting.*
- *'I am very impressed with the way the school has made my child and I welcome and involved.'*
- *'The outside area is now looking fabulous. I especially love the gym trail.'*
- *One parent commented on how much her child has enjoyed the thematic approach and in particular the space and pirates themes.*
- *Three parents would like later consultation times to enable both parents to attend.*
- *Another commented that they would like greater notice of consultation evenings.*
- *We received one request for more time to talk to teachers at open evening.*
- *One parent said that they would appreciate more feedback in the home school diaries for completed homework.*
- *'I think that the school grounds are wonderful considering the lack of space, which is a little small. This is the only reason I have ticked 'good' instead of 'excellent'. What has been done with the outside area is great.'*

How do you feel?	Yes	Mostly	Rarely	Not at all
When you visit the school are you made to feel welcome?	69	23	0	0
Does the school have a caring attitude?	77	18	0	0

Do you feel able to come and talk to the staff or head about your child?	79	10	3	0
Do you feel the school works in partnership with you and your child?	74	20	1	0
Do you feel the school listens to, and acts upon, your views and opinions?	62	29	2	0
Are you pleased with the number and range of clubs that the school offers? (<i>only answered by KS1</i>)	39	22	6	1
Are you happy with the school's uniform?	86	8	0	0

Comments on any of the previously listed areas:

- *One parent has found a problem with the quality of the school logo on jumpers; 'it is not good after a few washes and looks awful.'* Another said that they were happy with the school uniform, but not the materials used as they found the jumpers fray at the cuffs.
- *One parent stated that they would like more than one ticket to be available for families to watch the Harvest Festival etc. (NB As a school, we would LOVE this to be possible, but the size of our hall means that we cannot accommodate any more without the children performing too many times.)*
- *Three parents expressed concern about the way they have been welcomed on occasions.*
- *One person said that they felt there is too much choice of uniform for girls.*

Your child	Yes	Mostly	Rarely	Not at all
Is your child happy at school?	76	17	1	0
Does the school enable your child to make good progress?	78	16	0	0
Are you happy that your child is safe in school?	81	12	0	0
Has your child ever complained of bullying in school? If so, please explain what happened and if and how the school resolved the situation in the comments section below.	3	2	11	78
If your child had a problem in school do you feel she/he would be able to talk to his/her teacher / headteacher?	54	33	6	0

Comments on any of the above areas:

- *One parent commented on the enormous improvement in anti-bullying that had occurred in school since 2005.*
- *Of the 3 incidents of bullying noted, 2 felt that the situation had been handled very well and that the communication between parents and school over the situation had been excellent. One was not happy that the issue was resolved satisfactorily.*
- *One parent said that they reported 'mostly' in response to the penultimate question as their child generally resolves situations himself.*
- *One parent commented on the persistent issue of dangerous parking by some parents*
- *Another parent said that they are a little worried that the green fencing is not high enough or secured during school hours and another commented that they worry that the gates are not*

locked and that someone might take a child.

- *It was commented that some staff are more approachable than others.*
 - *One parent said that they were impressed with how friendly and available Mrs Mackenzie is.*
 - *'My child often says that his days can be quite boring and he finds the work too easy.'*
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Communication

Are there enough opportunities for you to meet staff and talk about your children?	64	27	2	1
Are the school's booklets, letters and other information valuable?	78	15	1	0
Are they written in a friendly, easy to understand way?	81	12	1	0
Do we send home an appropriate number of letters?	89	5	0	0

Comments on communication

- *One parent suggested that timescales on the return of documents could be longer, as it can be difficult for parents who have to check with work about obtaining time off.*
 - *Another said that they would appreciate letters being sent home to both parents.*
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ICT in EYFS	Yes	No
At home, does your child use: Heinemann Explore?	3	13
e-folio?	10	10
Educationcity?	11	7
Do you find the school's website useful?	19	1
Have you borrowed one of the school's minibooks?	0	22
How much impact do you think using ICT at home has on your child's learning? <i>(Please circle)</i>		
significant impact - 7	some impact - 10	no impact - 1*

ICT in KS1	Yes	No
At home, does your child use:		
Heinemann Explore?	28	29
e-folio?	37	23
Educationcity?	55	10
other software and websites?	52	12
Do you find the school's website useful?	56	4
How much impact do you think using ICT at home has on your child's learning? <i>(Please circle)</i>		
significant impact	26	some impact - 38
no impact	5	

Comments on ICT

- *One parent felt that their child was limited on the computer due to a lack of reading ability.*
 - *Another parent underlined the importance of children learning to write as well as to use the computer.*
 - *Many positive comments referred to the access school provides to educational websites at home (in particular educationcity) and the benefit of having login details stuck in home school diaries. Two people mentioned that their children liked printing the certificates from educationcity and bringing them into school as proof of completed homework.*
 - *Three people requested information on software and hardware used by children in school.*
 - **The person reporting ICT at home having no impact on their child's learning does not use a computer at home.*
 - *One parent said that his/her child uses the computer at home solely for playing games and that the child has not asked to use any of the school's websites.*
 - *'I think it is important for children to get to know how to use a computer. By using educationcity my daughter is learning as well and she really enjoys going on the site.'*
 - *A few parents thought that ICT would be something that children use at home later on in the year.*
 - *One person said that they found some of the websites difficult to navigate.*
 - *One parent said that their child had been using the computer since the age of 2 and can now access and learn through software independently. Another comment was on the importance of children learning basic computer skills.*
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New initiatives in KS1	Yes	No
Have you borrowed one of the school's minibooks (laptops)?	12	56
If so, did you find it useful?	10	4
Would you be interested in your child receiving peripatetic music lessons on an instrument such as the violin?	42	17

Comments on new initiatives:

- *One parent would like us to provide music lessons on 'more contemporary' instruments such as the drums and electric guitar.*
- *Another would like her child to have more opportunities to try different musical instruments.*
- *One parent said that their child was interested in guitar, bass and saxophone.*
- *Another parent said that their family is musical and that they would like guitar and drama lessons to start earlier. 'Drama is a great way for children to express themselves and build confidence.'*

Which of the following aspects of international education do you consider to be important?	Very important	Fairly important	Of less importance
Learning a modern language e.g. French or Spanish	53	33	7
Linking with another European school to share joint projects and learn about one another's' culture	30	50	13
Linking with another school outside of Europe (e.g. Africa) to share joint projects and learn about one another's' culture	28	44	21
Fairtrade	35	38	15

Comments on international work:

- *One parent highlighted how important they felt it was for children to learn about other parts of the world and fair-trade.*
- *Another said that whilst they deem it important to learn about other countries, they think it is more important for children to learn about their own country and culture first.(NB Children in KS1 will be learning through themes of both London and of Southend later in this year.)*
- *One parent said that from their own experience, they found learning French and learning about other European cultures more beneficial.*
- *Another parent would like to see language introduced at an early age and that the language be the same as senior schools (NB We teach basic French from EYFS, which is the language offered by Beauchamps School.)*
- *'We feel it's important for children to learn about other cultures, education etc.'*
- *One parent suggested that children could have pen pals.*
- *Another parent suggested that links with an inner-city school with a greater ethnic mix would also be educationally beneficial.*
- *'It would be useful for our children to understand that children all around the world have to go to school and would be interesting for them to share project information.'* (NB This is something we are doing through our Ugandan link school.)

Homework in KS1	Yes	No
Do you feel that your child receives an appropriate amount of homework?	66	2
Of the following types of homework, which would you like your child to receive?		
projects	36	19
weekly activities or worksheets	60	4
tasks which include parent involvement	60	3
tasks for children to complete independently	50	10

Comments on homework

- *One parent was keen to ensure children had some independent homework so that they do not become used to always relying on working with a parent.*
- *Two parents said that they liked their children having a variety of types of homework.*
- *One parent commented on how helpful she found her child being given a week to complete homework tasks. She also thought that communication was good and that the home school diary was very useful, a view shared by many others.*
- *One parent would like more clarity in the amount of parent support expected. Another liked worksheets but would like clearer instructions.*
- *Two parents felt that their children receive too much homework at once and another expressed the view that infant age children should not receive homework. One parent said that they would rather the school 'went back to basics such as reading and weekly spellings'. 'We always help our child with homework and talk to them about what they are doing, but I do feel that 4,5 and 6 year olds are too young for homework.'*
- *I think the homework now is fine. Obviously at this young age parents should be involved, but there is not too much pressure and so generally my son enjoys his tasks.*
- *One parent commented that they complete all homework alongside their child and give their child extra work at home too to help with their child's progress. They like homework being set on a Monday to be in by Friday.*

Does your child attend any clubs outside of school? If so, please list them.

The most popular activities completed outside of school were dancing (tap, ballet, modern), swimming lessons, football and uniform organisations such as Rainbows, Beavers and Brownies.

Other children have horse riding lessons, tennis and karate lessons, piano, violin and guitar lessons and attend 'Stagecoach' or other drama schools.

Has your child gained any awards (e.g. swimming certificates, dancing levels etc) during the past year? If so, please list them.

Many children have received awards for swimming, dancing, gymnastics and some for uniform organisations such as Rainbows, Beavers and Girls Brigade.

If we were to run more or different clubs, what would you like them to be?

- *A breakfast and after school club (7 people)*
 - *Clubs through the holidays*
 - *Singing or drama club (5 people)*
 - *Support clubs for reading, writing and Maths*
 - *Active clubs (possibly paid for) e.g. karate, judo, cricket and football (2 people)*
 - *Music Club (8 people)*
 - *Arts & crafts(7 people)*
 - *Swimming*
 - *Gardening(5 people)*
 - *Cooking(5 people)*
 - *Modern language Club (French/Spanish) (3 people)*
 - *Basic athletics or outside sports*
 - *Dance (3 people)*
 - *Maths Club*
 - *Computer Club (3 people)*
 - *Yoga*
 - *Street dance*
 - *A football club run by school staff (2 people)*
 - *Science Club*
 - *Extension clubs for Maths and English*
 - *One parent remarked on the good range of clubs in school already*
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(KS1) Would you like the school to provide occasional after school creative arts workshops for you and your child?

Yes - 19 No -7

If so, would you prefer it to be art, drama or music-based?

Drama-based – 14

Music-based – 15

Art-based – 16

One person suggested a mixture of art, music and cookery and another suggested learning a foreign language together.

Would you like the school to run any workshops e.g. on supporting your child to read at home, the teaching of phonics, or 'number' in Maths?

Yes - 32 No -12

If so, what would you like the workshops to be on?

5 EYFS parents said that they would like a workshop on Maths/Number

14 KS1 parents said that they would like a workshop on Maths/Number1

5 KS1 parents said that they would like a workshop on writing

8 KS1 parents said that they would like a workshop on reading

6 KS1 parents said that they would like a workshop on phonics/spelling

Induction into EYFS	Yes	No	
Did you find the home visits useful?	22	1	
Is there anything else that you would have liked us to include in the home visits? Please specify.			
<i>No-one provided any further suggestions, but many people commented on how beneficial they found the home visits and how excited their children were as a result.</i>			
What did you find useful in the intake meeting before the children started school?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• ‘The most common comment in this section was how useful parents/carers found the one to one session with a teacher</i> <i>• Many responses showed parents appreciated being introduced to all the teachers and teaching assistants.</i> <i>• A lot of responses indicated that parents and carers felt that they gained a good understanding of the school and how it works during the meeting.</i> <i>• ‘It was nice to be able to discuss any issues/concerns about your child and be listened to. The school took an interest from an early stage.’ This was a common comment.</i> <i>• One person commented on how helpful she had found Mr Ashman, our ICT technician, explaining about the minibooks. Another said that the meeting was well-organised.</i> <i>• Many people said that the meeting put their mind at rest and that they felt welcomed and pleased that their child would be coming to school here.</i> <i>• One person remarked on being given a free book to share with their child</i> 			
Did you find the workshops that were run this half term by Mrs Bagshaw useful?	14	0	<i>Those who said they were unable to attend said that they found the handouts very useful.</i>
Does your child eat school dinners?			
	Yes - 29	No - 24	
If not, please would you tell us why?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Some parents said that packed lunches fitted in better with their family meals or childcare arrangements.</i> <i>• A number of parents said that their children were ‘fussy eaters’ and wouldn’t/ didn’t eat/enjoy school dinners. Others said that their children merely preferred having a packed lunch.</i> <i>• ‘A greater variety of jacket potato fillings would be good.’</i> <i>• One person commented that school dinners were more expensive than providing a packed lunch. Others thought dinners were too expensive.</i> <i>• One person would like squash or flavoured water to be provided instead of tap water with school dinner, whilst another suggested ketchup</i> <i>• One parent said that her child was worried that he would not like the school dinners</i> <i>• Another said that they did not think that school dinners were healthy enough.</i> <i>• One parent reported that her child has eating difficulties and will only eat certain foods</i> <i>• One parent asked that we use wristbands like the Juniors, rather than weekly forms. (NB We do use the wristbands, but feel our children are too young to remember their lunch choices without parents helping by filling out a weekly form).</i> <i>• ‘Waiting for free school dinners confirmation’</i> <i>• One person would like more whole wheat products on the menu.</i> <i>• One parent said that their child doesn’t like many vegetables and feels that he may be pressured into eating it.</i> 			

General

What do you feel are the major strengths of the school?

The comments below were expressed by many parents/carers:

- Many people commented on the friendliness and approachability of staff. They thought that staff encouraged children and made them feel welcome and safe
 - Good/great facilities inside and out – the overall look of the school is a strength
 - Children learn and make good progress in a relaxed atmosphere and have fun
 - ‘Togetherness’ of the school community and the way in which parents are included
 - The caring attitude which makes every child feel special and the commitment of teaching staff to children
 - Interesting and varied curriculum
 - Regular home/school communication via the website, letters and diaries
 - Welcomes parents
 - ‘Excellent relationships with parents’
 - Variety of clubs with staff giving up time to run them
 - Good educational practices -with ‘fun, varied learning’. There were lots of comments about how fun learning in for children at Hilltop Infants
 - Ofsted mark of ‘outstanding’ – the standard of education
 - Good reputation and great teachers
 - Child orientated
 - Happy environment for the children to be in and one that builds their confidence
 - ‘All round good school with plenty of parent and child involvement.’
 - Mrs Mackenzie being around outside after school
 - Excellent induction processes with lots of opportunities for children to feel part of the school from very early on.
 - The school environment (‘bright and friendly’) and the sense of community
 - Discipline and good values
 - Good resources
 - Cross curricula teaching
 - A number of people commented on the school’s leadership as a strength
 - High performance when compared to others
 - The fact that it is solely an infant school
 - Safe and happy environment
 - Three people said that they thought the headteacher was a particular strength of the school
 - Another person said that they liked the activities children were involved in on the playground.
 - ‘Every child is treated as an individual’; the school supports individual learning
 - Children are challenged but realistically
 - The variety of external projects that children are involved in
 - Modern facilities/ school building and playground
 - ‘I think the school tries to cater for everyone’s needs.’
 - Respect, openness, honesty’
 - ‘The teaching and overall look of the school’
 - ‘The children always seem to be having fun while learning.’
 - Friendly children
 - ‘Knowing what your children are learning weekly helps home discussions.’
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Are there any improvements you would like to see?

There were far fewer responses to this question compared to the previous one!

- *More visible no smoking signs in the school grounds*
 - *Disallow dogs by the school gates*
 - *Better hand washing facilities for children in the toilets (include hand gel and antibacterial soap)*
 - *A parent forum*
 - *Better communication between parents and teachers*
 - *One parent remarked that they are not keen on the job share of teachers*
 - *Staff sickness covered by a qualified teacher, not HLTA if for longer than one day*
 - *School gates closed for half an hour before and after school opening hours*
 - *Greater liaison and transfer with the Juniors*
 - *Smaller class sizes*
 - *One EYFS parent said that they would like 'more consideration to working Mums' who are unable to read notices which are stuck on the classroom doors. (NB The plans which are usually there will now be put on e-folio and so can be accessed from home.)*
 - *Ensuring parents don't park inappropriately*
 - *Feedback to parents in diaries to aid parental teaching*
 - *Feedback about school dinners – ie whether the child ate them.*
 - *More school trips*
 - *More support for teachers in class (ie parent helpers)*
 - *More notice for e.g. for school trips, especially if parental help is required*
 - *Online payments for dinners and trips*
 - *No split classes*
 - *More organisation regarding fetes etc.*
 - *'Better handling of the parking situation'*
 - *More opportunities to ask about the work children are doing – perhaps a monthly drop-in centre at school*
 - *Clearer pathways set out for safety in the car park.*
 - *Overhead shelters on ALL the classrooms (NB we would have liked this but planning permission would not be granted.)*
 - *Extra guidance for lesser/better progressed children and possibly the setting of children.*
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Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about?

- *One parent requested more one to one sessions with teachers.*
 - *Two parents queried the use of HLTAs to cover classes on occasions, saying that they would like absences covered by qualified teachers.*
 - *One parent said that they found keeping track of letters going home tricky and would like us to have an email system in place to send letters electronically.*
 - *Another would like a more spacious area for school plays (NB So would we!)*
 - *One parent would like taster sessions for Year 2 children at the Juniors (NB This is already in place.) and more collaborative working with other schools in Wickford.*
 - *One parent said that now her child is in KS1, she finds that there is less face to face time with her teacher. She would like more information about how her daughter is progressing.*
 - *'A fantastic school all round!'*
 - *One parent would like more opportunities for the building of children's confidence. Examples cited included plays and imaginative productions rather than assemblies based on festivals.*
 - *'My child is more than happy at Hilltop and we are very grateful for that.'*
 - *'The school is much respected by parents and pupils. Everyone at Hilltop should be very proud of the wonderful job they do!'*
 - *'My child is very happy at school and enjoys herself whilst making good progress.'*
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