

Parental feedback from July 2017

Stars (the things you really like about St. George's Central CE School)

We sometimes only focus on the things that we need to improve on and do not celebrate the things that you feel we do well, and so we have therefore continued to share both sides of the feedback that we received from the questionnaires.

'Similar' responses have been grouped together

Parental star – Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*The fact my child loves coming to school. She has lots of friends and loves her teachers (excellent staff).*All the staff are friendly and I know if I have a problem I can talk to anybody at the school.*Friendly and approachable members of staff that make me confident to know my children are in good hands at all times.*Breakfast Club is very good with caring and helpful staff.*Mr Simmons is a great teacher! We look forward to the tweets and he has great communication skills. My son really enjoys his classes and has come on so much this year.*Most staff are friendly and helpful, although a bit more communication between staff would help.*Teachers are understanding and always seem happy and helpful, even with behaviour out of school.*Mrs Kearns is so helpful and helped me and my boys a lot through school.*Friendly and helpful staff.*I really like the fact that both teaching and office staff are friendly and approachable. I like the fact that children are polite and courteous to both visiting adults and their peers. For example: holding doors.*I like the fact that the school has increased its number of male teaching staff to create an even mix. I feel this prepares children for the transition to high school.*I would especially like to thank Mr Young and Miss Glassbrook for their excellent teaching skills this year. My children have both had a very enjoyable time.
Parental star – Extra-curricular activities/Community events
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*The varied after school clubs – many of which are free – thank you. They give the children the opportunity to try something new, such as the kurling club.*A fantastic range of activities available both during and after school for all the children.*Sports clubs offer good opportunities for the children to get busy and to compete.*School trips are good and the annual pantomime.*Good range of activities outside school but would be great to have more variety instead of football. The outdoor adventure activity club was enjoyed by my son.*Like how passionate the school are about getting the children involved in sport and activities.*Great after school activities.*Home projects.*School discos.
Parental star – Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*I like the text reminders/communications that are sent out.*Paper copies of the term dates are useful.*We really appreciate the text reminders of events as sometimes I could miss something in a newsletter.*I love the 'Tapestry' app and the Twitter/Facebook updates. My child doesn't always remember what he has been doing/or is too tired to talk about it, the pictures help to prompt him and he is always proud to show everyone what he has been doing and Tapestry is a nice way to share what has been going on at home too.*Good communication, teacher to parent.
Parental star – Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*The progress my children have made since starting school.
Parental star – Open door policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*We love the stay and play sessions in nursery, it is lovely to see my child with his friends and the types of things he gets up to.*The parent workshops along with the class visits and head teacher forums.*Open assemblies are fantastic and give parents the chance to see what their children have been learning.*The workshops Mrs Pearce have put on have been brilliant and helpful.*The stay and play sessions are a great idea and I have enjoyed attending them.*Always getting parents involved.

Parental star – Provision/Ethos

- *The interim progress updates (Y1-Y6) we have had this year followed by the opportunity to speak to class teacher with any concerns has helped me, as a parent, understand where my child’s development is at and what we can do at home to support their learning.
- *That I know my child is in safe hands and within a safe environment.
- *The school is good at getting problems sorted quickly.
- *Christian Values.
- *Friendly atmosphere.
- *Positive approach to learning.
- *Varied styles of learning.
- *Good values.

Many thanks for all your ‘stars’. It is great to receive feedback on things you feel are going well. It is also encouraging to hear that amendments we make in school are having a positive impact on the children and yourselves.

Wishes (ways that you think we could improve the school)

‘Similar’ responses have been grouped together

Parental wish – Mixed classes	School response
<p>*Children have more consistency at SGC and there are no more ‘split classes’. Split classes have a negative impact on children whether they are split on age or ability. They do not benefit the children. At least have all Year 6’s together, instead of a room for ‘adults’ being built on to the school. Why not do what parents want and use the extra space to make the Year 6 classroom bigger and allow the children, at such an important time in their life, be with their peers.</p>	<p><i>Our annual intake number is set by the local authority and, because of our available space in school and our budget allocation, this means that we have to have mixed year group classes.</i></p> <p><i>It would not currently be financially viable to organise our children in ‘straight age classes’ throughout school as this would mean that we have to increase the number of classrooms we currently have by three. Added to this, in order to meet statutory requirements, I would have to employ three more full time teachers, which we do not have the funds to do.</i></p> <p><i>Schools are allocated funding based on the number of children on roll – in order to secure more funding for our school and bring our school in line with others locally and nationally, I have contacted the local authority about increasing our intake number to 45 in each year group. Our school was designed to take 45 in each year and for many years successfully took in this many children. The intake number was reduced to 40 before my time but our current school size and staffing levels could accommodate the additional pupils.</i></p> <p><i>To successfully ensure that all our children were in ‘straight’ age classes across school we would have to increase our intake number further to 60 children in each year group, which would mean that we would have two classes of 30 in each year group. If this was to be the case, we would be provided the appropriate funding to build the three extra classrooms. However, within our area, there isn’t currently the need for such a large increase (the Local Authority only have 3-4 years worth of data to work with as children have not yet been born).</i></p> <p><i>In terms of the current extension to school, it’s about doing what the school needs. For the Year 6 children to be put together (in two classes) then that would mean that the Year 5 children would need to all be together (in two classes). Something that due to current staffing budget allocations, we wouldn’t be able to accommodate.</i></p>
Parental wish – Uniform	School response
<p>*The white and yellow t-shirt is changed to navy blue. This would be much easier for parents and would save money. The white and yellow are easily stained and have to be thrown away.</p>	<p><i>We are currently thinking about amending our school uniform so that all the children wear the same. I will be including something in the newsletter around Christmas time and I will be looking for some ‘volunteers’ to trial some different uniform options and provide feedback which will support our decision making for September 2018.</i></p>
Parental wish – School access	School response
<p>*The gates on KS1 side of the school are a nightmare, they need widening as getting through especially with a pram is really difficult.</p>	<p><i>One of the ‘difficult’ gates has been removed over summer (where I usually stand each morning) and so access should be slightly easier in this area. However, we have a second ‘difficult’ gate in the same area that has not yet been replaced. We are aiming to have this work completed ASAP.</i></p>

Parental wish – Communication	School response
<p>*I have to give 6 weeks notice at work before I can take time off. I often miss out on events such as sports day, Christmas productions due to short notice provided. I'm aware that there are probably not many parents in my position but it is a wish of mine.</p> <p>*Sometimes I don't get a copy of the newsletter and miss out on certain things – not a big deal, but I don't always get email and find it hard to find it sometimes. Other than that I think this school is excellent!!</p> <p>*Longer times at parents' evenings. 10 minutes sometimes is not long enough.</p>	<p><i>You are absolutely correct and so over summer I produced a new 'Key Dates' letter, which you should have now received by email. This document is also on the opening page of our school website so that you can download it at any time and there are also paper copies kept in our new 'letter holders' in the entrance area so you can just nip in to pick a copy up. All the events on this letter are what I would describe as the 'major events' throughout the school year. The aim is that I will send this letter out at the end of each school year so that you will receive it before we break up for summer. I will continue to send home half termly dates letter as they go into more details about upcoming events and different events will crop up at shorter notice. To further ensure that you don't miss out on any key events over the course of the school year, on your mobile phone you can now download 'Our School App' and search for St. George's Central. You will be able to save our school as your home page and this will provide you with quick links to our school website, Facebook page, my Twitter account and other key information. A great feature of this App is that we can add dates of all the key events taking place in school and this will 'sync' to your phone calendar and you will receive reminders.</i></p> <p><i>A newsletter is emailed out once a month (usually at the end of the month/half term). We aim to have all email addresses updated on our system before we send out our first newsletter (the first Friday of the first week back). This is why it is imperative that if any of your contact details (including mobile phone numbers) change then you let the school office know. I always ensure that I send the newsletter email to the school office before I start Celebration worship on the Friday morning and then it is usually emailed out after all parent/carer queries at the office window have been dealt with (however I am aware that due to some server issues the time some people receive the email does differ!). Please see the new 'Key Dates' letter which has all the dates on when the newsletter will be emailed out for the whole year and remember that a paper copy can be picked up from the new 'letter holders' in the entrance area.</i></p> <p><i>For parents' evening, the number of parents/carers our teachers need to meet with ranges from 20 – 30 (in our Spring meeting, Mrs Davies in nursery usually has to meet with 45-50 parents/carers. We have a formal parents' evening in October, an optional 'drop in' in December, a second formal parents' evening in March/April and a final opportunity for you to 'drop in' to speak to teachers about annual reports in July. With this in mind, we feel that 10 minutes at our formal meetings is sufficient time. However, should you feel at the end of your next meeting that you wanted to discuss things further then you could make arrangements to meet with your child's teacher outside of the meeting.</i></p>
Parental wish – After school provision/opportunities	School response
<p>*An after school club to help working parents.</p> <p>*Have more after school activities that don't always include football!</p> <p>*That all children should have the opportunity to represent the school in the many sporting events. In KS1, I can think of at least 3 events where the same children were picked. I appreciate the school wants to do well in these events, but I am sure that there are other children, just as talented, who could do just as well, given the opportunity – instead of coming away from school feeling they aren't good enough.</p>	<p><i>An after school club has been considered as an option in the past and is something we may consider in the future. I'll keep you informed as soon as I have any further news with this area.</i></p> <p><i>There are a variety of different after school activities on offer at our school and these change each half term. In Summer term 2 for example: we had 20 extra-curricular clubs on offer (which included one KS1 football and one KS2 football club).</i></p> <p><i>Many of our after school clubs are used to provide teams for the many sporting events we take part in, which means the children are selected from the ones who have chosen to attend the club. As our clubs are organised by many different staff members across school, sometimes staff may not realise that a child has been previously picked for a team. With so many events taking place across the school year, it sometimes is hard to keep track. However, I will ensure that staff area aware of this valid point you have raised as, like you have said, there will be others who could do just as well given the opportunity.</i></p>

Parental wish – Consistency	School response
<p>*That the school was more consistent in things they tell the children are going to happen and what they need to do. Some children don't understand when they are told one thing but another thing happens.</p>	<p><i>We aim to be consistent in all things that we do and say in school. Without providing specific details, I am unable to provide a full response to this. Please contact the school office to make an appointment with me to discuss any specific example further so that I can fully investigate.</i></p>
Parental wish – Sports Day	School response
<p>*That the more traditional sports day be brought back. Having witnessed all of my children compete over the years, not only is it difficult to be in two places at once when trying to watch more than one child, but this year, the majority of children, not necessarily my own, were just going through the motions with no smiles or enthusiasm at each event, yet when it came to the good old fashioned running races against each other at the end, all the children were cheering and urging one another on and applauding. Surely this is more fun for the children.</p> <p>*To improve sports day.</p> <p>*To change sports day, much preferred sports day when it was based on individual merit rather than teams or mix the events to combine both. Sports day is a bit too long.</p>	<p><i>Our approach to sports day ensures that children have an opportunity to 'have a go' and master a variety of different sporting events (long jump, javelin, triple jump etc). In order to successfully manage this, without children queuing and waiting around (which usually leads to misbehaviour) the children need to be organised into groups. We plan the groups so that you do not have to be 'in two places at once' when watching your children as we put siblings in the same group. There are many reasons why we approach our sports days in the way we do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>*Children have an opportunity with a wider range of events;</i> <i>*Children are competing against 'national standards';</i> <i>*Children are 'competing' against themselves year on year (so it is based on individual merit);</i> <i>*It is more inclusive and our % uptake in our sports day is very high;</i> <i>*We feel that our events are more effective in preparing children for future sporting events, for example: we choose speed bounce as opposed to a sack race etc;</i> <p><i>In sport, when most people are competing, they are concentrating and aiming to perform at their best, they rarely smile as they are focused on what they need to do.</i></p> <p><i>We include the optional 'good old fashioned running races' at the end so that children do have the opportunity to compete against others if they want to (they will have all done this many times in class). But the way we view it is – the running races at the end involve everyone watching the children perform against each other where everyone sees the result. Some children who are not naturally 'sporty' can feel demoralised if they see that they always come last with such a large audience watching. The way we do it, the children compete against the stopwatch (and themselves, year on year) as they aim to beat their previous time.</i></p> <p><i>We wouldn't demonstrate individual performance in other subjects: For example – we wouldn't read out Maths test scores in class as this would demotivate children with low scores and 'turn them off' that particular subject – we are aiming to inspire healthy lifestyles, no matter what the 'performance level' of the children and that's why we plan our inclusive sports day, the way we do.</i></p>
Parental wish – School dinners	School response
<p>*More variety of food choices for lunch, my son is constantly having the same meals week in week out.</p>	<p><i>If your child has a lunch from school, the first task they undertake when they come into school each morning is to choose their lunch from the four hot/cold options. Our menus work on a three weekly cycle and so different food is on offer each week. Children, like adults, can get into a habit of choosing the same things and there is nothing wrong with that - as long as they enjoy what they are eating. If you look on the opening page of our school website, you will see a link for the school lunch menu – you could maybe look at this with your child and discuss potential lunch choices with them.</i></p>
Parental wish – Staffing	School response
<p>*Teaching Assistants not to be leaving classes unattended.</p> <p>*Office staff could be more friendly and helpful.</p>	<p><i>I am sure that no classes are ever left unattended by any teachers or teaching assistants. We do sometimes use some of our teaching assistant to cover some of our classes, however no children are ever left unattended – please contact the school office to make an appointment with me to discuss any specific examples further so that I can fully investigate.</i></p> <p><i>I am sorry that you feel your experience with our office staff has been negative. There are times when the office is quite busy with many things being dealt with at once, but rest assured, all our staff in school are here to help wherever we can.</i></p>

Parental wish – Money	School response
<p>*Please can the children stop being sent home with letters that involve money. For example: Art Exhibition, sponsor forms. It is getting more often and harder to keep up. We pay the contributions to school trips which is understandable and expected but all these extras just put a strain on finances.</p>	<p><i>Thank you for supporting and contributing financially to our school trips – without the support from our families with this, many of our trips and visits would simply not take place because of the extra financial strain that has been placed on schools and the increase in prices across the board. We do keep any ‘extra’ requests for money to a minimum throughout the school year (we have the Art Exhibition every three years) however I do remember, in June, that both the Art Exhibition and the NSPCC sponsored event were around the same time of year. Therefore you may have received two requests within a short space of time. I hope you felt that with both these, there was no ‘pressure’ from school for you to part with any money – in fact we still have some of the art work in school that wasn’t actually purchased. We would still ask, and be grateful, for your continued financial support with our trips and visits as we believe these greatly enhance your children’s learning experiences. There are specific ‘national’ charitable events that we always try to support such as Comic Relief and Children in Need but we are mindful of your concerns and we will continue to keep any extra requests to a minimum, thinking more carefully about the timings of such requests throughout the year.</i></p>
Parental wish – Positives	School response
<p>*I would not change anything about SGC as I feel it’s an excellent school. My daughter leaves for high school and she has thoroughly enjoyed her time here. She has been part of a lovely year group and has made some wonderful friends over the past seven years. I am so sorry it has to come to an end but I am sure that the amazing experiences she has had and the valuable skills she has learned will help her as she moves onto the next chapter of her life.</p> <p>*My child has a happy school life.</p> <p>*That my child remains happy at school.</p>	<p><i>Thank you very much! I can assure you that over this last year every staff member at St. George’s Central has worked extremely hard.</i></p> <p><i>During my fifth year as headteacher at St. George’s Central, I have continued to learn how although we aim to provide many positive experiences for your children and do the very best for them, we will not please everyone and I will echo the comments I have made in previous years when I say:</i></p> <p><i>“We do our best, but when you have over 300 sets of parents who are different ages, come from different backgrounds, with different life experiences, it is sometimes difficult to please everyone. At the fore front of our mind, when we do anything at school, is the children and their long term benefit. That is why we are here! Without them, we would have a building with no life or soul. We will continue to work hard and ensure that the mantra of ‘NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS THAN YOUR BEST’ is something that every staff member carries out and every child leaves our school knowing and living.”</i></p>



Mr M Grogan
Headteacher
Friday 29th September 2017