

Thornton Primary School
Thornton
Bradford
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Dear Parent / Carer

9 October 2017

Thank you very much to all parents/carers who completed the online questionnaire and gave us their feedback. In total we received 94 responses and an abridged summary of the responses is attached to this letter. *(Please note that only a selection of comments indicative of the range of themes mentioned have been included. The comments included in the summary have been paraphrased and/or had references to pupils or year-groups removed.)*

While it is heartening to know that many parents are pleased with the work we are doing at Thornton, there are clearly a number of key areas in which many parents have concerns or frustrations. Three areas which were mentioned repeatedly were:

- poor timeliness of some communications;
- not being effective in following-up concerns or issues;
- a lack of information about children's progress.

In the past, the main complaint regarding communication was that there was too little of it. While this no longer seems to be an issue (in fact, some comments mentioned that there are too many communications) it now seems to be that some communications can be too 'last minute' or not give parents enough notice or details. Our aim is to try and give parents at least two weeks' notice of events and we are aware that this has not always happened.

While we will strive to do better in this regard, there are, sometimes, opportunities which come to our attention with little notice. Where this happens, and we cannot offer more notice, we will try to make this clear in the communications we send out.

Along with the complaint of too little notice, several comments were made about the timing of events which involve the children (such as open afternoons) and how these regularly created problems for parents whose jobs meant that they could not attend. While we really do sympathise with this, it is, unfortunately, something we cannot do much about. It just isn't possible to hold these events after school or in the evenings because many children will not be able to stay after school, and the school staff themselves cannot usually stay either. We hope that parents will not unfairly hold this against the school.

Regarding the following-up of concerns or issues which have been raised with the school, common complaints were that the response from the school had not been satisfactory, that the issue was not actually resolved, or that no reply from the school had ever been received.



While we endeavor to find resolutions that are mutually satisfactory, we are aware that, in some cases, parents will not be happy with the outcome. However, where parents feel that the issue has not been addressed at all, or the school have not replied to the initial concern, we would urge parents to contact us again and raise the issue with a more senior member of staff. There is a complaints procedure available from the school website and we would encourage parents to follow this if they feel that the issue they raised has not been investigated at all or taken seriously enough.

Several comments about children's progress made it clear that some parents did not always feel that they had been kept informed when their son/daughter fell behind or needed additional support.

To try and make sure that there are enough opportunities for parents to be kept informed, we have Parents' Evening meetings in October and March, and reports in the spring term and at the end of the year. However, some respondents mentioned that the information they had been given throughout the year indicated that their child was doing well, but then, at the end of the year, it seemed that they had, seemingly inexplicably, fallen behind.

This is an area we hope to improve in this year and our staff will be communicating with parents more frequently where there are concerns about progress. Our new assessment system will also enable us to be clearer about which pupils are not making the progress they should.

As always, we continue to welcome positive or negative feedback at any time either via a telephone call or e-mailed to our dedicated communications address at tps.responses@focus-trust.co.uk

In all cases where someone has a complaint, we strongly urge them get in touch with us first via the proper channels and not to jump straight to social media. In most cases, this does little to resolve the issue but invariably inflames emotions and can quickly turn the comments to being unfair and unfounded personal attacks on individual members of staff, all of whom are working very hard to try and improve the school.

We are the first to acknowledge that we don't always get things right, but we absolutely want to do our best to work positively with everyone connected to the school and move forward to drive the school onward and upward.

Thank you for your continued support.



Mrs. E. Davison
Headteacher



Mr. M. Cutting
Deputy Headteacher



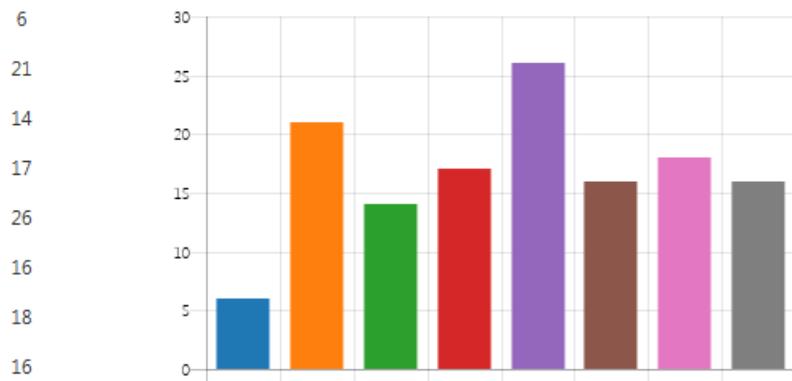


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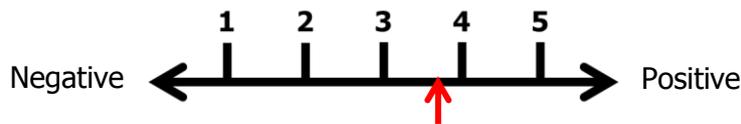
Summary of responses and feedback

1. In which year-group(s) do you have children at Thornton Primary School?

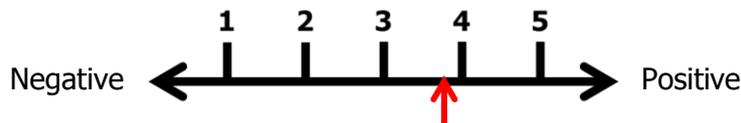
- Nursery
- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Year 6



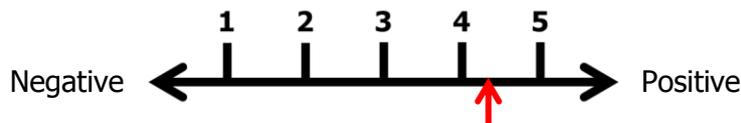
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you feel about the progress your son/daughter made in school last year?



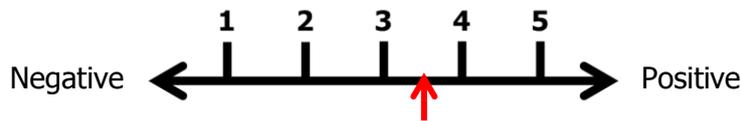
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, how happy has your son/daughter been in school over the last year?



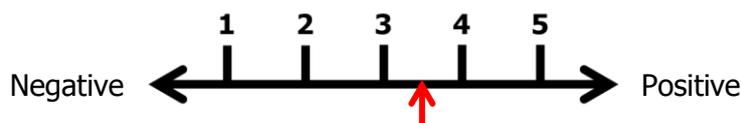
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, how safe do you feel your son/daughter is in school?



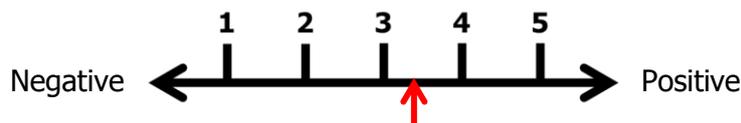
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well led and managed do you feel the school is?



6. If applicable, how effective have the school been at following-up any concerns or issues you have raised last year?



7. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective do you feel the school have been at communicating with parents/carers last year?





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Summary of responses and feedback

2.1: If you have any comments about the progress your son/daughter made, please add them below:

I felt they were just left to fall behind. More should be done to help struggling children.

Toward the end of the year (my child) made much more progress than the start. I felt disappointed however when the reports came out in July informing me that (my child) wasn't achieving. I should have been informed sooner so I could have intervened at home.

My child has come on leaps and bounds due to last year's teacher and this year it appears to be the same: a really positive attitude to learning.

Some negative feedback on the end of year report, but this was never mentioned at Parents' Evening or at any other time.

My child's reading has come on brilliantly.

I think my child needs pushing a bit harder academically.

I am thrilled with how far she has come along. The teachers are brilliant! She adores school.

Very happy about progress made last year and this year to date.

Positive attitudes, and recognition of good behaviour/progress are important.

My son was promised extra help but this didn't seem to happen - apart from a class helper doing some reading with him. When we got the end of year report, I found it very concerning that my son was below average on everything and yet nothing had been highlighted to me. I also thought the report was basic and had very little use to me as a parent. There was nothing personal regarding my son and it felt like a very negative report regarding my child.

My children have made amazing progress within this school.

3.1: If you have any comments about how happy your son/daughter has been, please add them below:

My daughter has been upset by other students and my youngest child is not settling well at all.

It isn't easy being a child in a school so I'm pleased they have friends and are happy.

I've got one child who loves school and another who hates school.

The teachers and teaching assistants are always so positive and encouraging.

My child has had problems making friends since starting and I have been told this every year at Parents' Evenings. The school just doesn't seem to follow up on this. I can't do anything while my child is at school.

My children absolutely love coming to school. Think that speaks volumes.

She doesn't really want to come into school most days because she said the work was too easy and boring.

4.1: If you have any comments about how safe your son/daughter is in school, please add them below:

I have never considered the school to be unsafe.

My child has been affected by the challenging behaviour of other children in class - outbursts can be very intimidating for children around them.

I feel the school spend too much money keeping staff cars safe and not enough energy keeping children safe.

You can never guarantee 100% safety, but I feel the school is a safe place.





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Summary of responses and feedback

5.1: If you have any comments about how well-led and managed the school is, please add them below:

I feel staff need a vast improvement in many aspects.

I feel the school is led as a business as opposed to a school as the children themselves are not considered when certain decisions are made.

There is a lack of communication between school and parents.

From the short time we have been at the school everything seems well organised and structured.

I have been told my child would receive extra help from support teacher but I haven't heard anything since.

I know there are always differing opinions when it comes to staff, usually because the parents with children with more challenging behaviour have more interaction with the leadership team. If they want to blame the school instead of bad parenting then they will dislike the leadership. I value and respect the head teacher and have seen the improvements that have been made since she arrived.

There was a big improvement in the treatment of parents when the current head teacher started. Previously parents were frequently criticised, but now they are included in their children's education, invited into school for activities and meetings, and informed/involved in decisions and changes.

Everything in school is targeted towards parents without jobs. I hate seeing my son's face when I tell him I can't come, again.

The managers are visible, but in meetings with leaders and governors there is always an air of 'we know things aren't right yet but much of it isn't our fault'. That's not a great attitude for a school that has notice to improve three times in a row

I feel there has been a slight dip since Thornton Primary became an academy.

The school is amazing, although organisation can be poor for small events and a lack of communication i.e. which doors to go to for events, which causes stressful situations. I think if there are class open days of bookworm sessions, it would be helpful if the letters or e-mails advised where to queue up for these.

The leaders of the school I find are always very visible and approachable both to parents and to the children. They seem to be very involved with the school day and know all children really well which I think is an important model to follow. Thornton is a large school intake and I think the school manage this very well in that they allow children in all school years to mix and do joint activities. I think this helps the younger children settle in and builds a good community spirit within the school.

I feel the school needs to spend more energy and time on children the try hard and not rewards for children who are generally disruptive.

I think that when you organise events where parents can attend, we should be given more notice. It is very difficult to change rota days or take holidays from work at only two or three days' notice.

The only problem sometimes is the short notice and warning for things parents could attend.





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Summary of responses and feedback

6.1: If you have any comments about how effective the school have been following-up concerns or issues, please add them below:

Nothing has been done (about my concern) which is very disheartening as a parent.

I raised an issue with the teacher regarding another child not being very nice to my child and this was dealt with very swiftly and the issue didn't arise again.

When I have had a meeting at school and have been told someone would come back to me with the outcome of what had happened, I never heard anything unless I contacted school again.

I raised one issue and it was addressed by the end of the day.

After I received my son's report I filled in the feedback form and asked for a meeting to discuss what we could put in place how to move my son's level of achievement forward. No contact was made with me. You need to ensure that you deliver on promises.

Whilst replies and contact is made, I feel that the response to concerns is deflective. I'm not sure that concerns are heard but are met with some conflict and sometimes unnecessary comments.

When I have phoned, the communication with the teacher you wish to speak to is poor. I waited over a week and wanted to deal with the problem straight away. I'm still waiting for a phone call now about another issue.

I've found my daughter's teachers have always taken my concerns seriously. A couple of times when she's been a little out of sorts at home, after speaking to teachers to make sure everything was okay at school, they've taken it upon themselves to have a little chat with her to try find out if anything is bothering her and then spoken to me at the end of the day.

I have had both good and bad experiences.

7.1: If you have any comments about how effective our communication has been, please add them below:

The school is extremely poor regarding speaking with parents to resolve issues. Nobody seems to have time to sit down and discuss things. Everything is done either via text or letter. I don't think that is remotely good enough. I do understand staff can be busy, but it shouldn't be at the expense of the children.

Communication is still very poor and a lot of things are found out by speaking to other parents.

Communication is disorganised. Information is received by letter, e-mail or text, but is never consistent, so parents cannot be sure if they have received everything, and not all letters are on the website so you can't double-check there.

Communications are not always clear enough or timely enough.

For events and what happens in school it has been fab, but not for getting back to parents.

Communications have improved.

The communication has been a bit hit and miss, with some dates incorrect or not enough notice given for events. Maybe get someone to double-check all communications that go out to parents to avoid any further texts having to be sent out to clarify or change dates. The newsletter is really good and informative.

Communication seems to be unclear. Whilst some people know about things via letters etc. many others do not. Some things are communicated last minute.

No messages get passed on.

I think communication could be timelier, particularly for the detail of trips. It seems like a trip is flagged as a date for the diary but then nothing else comes out until immediately before. This means that if an activity requires something to be purchased, we do not have much notice. Quite a few of the letters could do with proofreading as well.

Letters can come out at short notice. Sometimes letters are contradictory and e-mails are inconsistent.





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Summary of responses and feedback

8: What do you feel are the school's key strengths and areas we need to develop?

The individual teachers are brilliant; however the running of the school needs addressing in that it feels very much business-driven as opposed to being led by what is best for the children.

Start putting the children first and listening to them. Look at what they want instead of focusing on how to make the school better. It's the children that make the school at the end of the day!

There is a proactive head teacher who has started to turn the school around.

The staff need to be more approachable and management need to be visible and present around the school grounds.

With such big class sizes, it would be nice to see pupils working in smaller groups from time to time to ensure that each child gets individual attention.

All the teachers put in 100% but obviously have limited time and resources. You need to work more with individual parents to help bring on underperforming children to the right level of achievement. Allow volunteering days to help the community. If you have jobs that need doing, pull on some of these free hours. Sport is definitely improving with all the clubs and tournaments. Build on this, it can only improve further.

As a working parent, it would be nice for the school to take that into consideration, I have received letters about several meetings and things happening in the school but in the middle of the afternoon. I understand that some activities that allow parents to join in class activities need to happen in school hours but it would be nice to be able to attend other meetings that seem to be regularly held at 2:30pm.

Homework menu is excellent!

A good community spirit with some fabulous staff. Communication needs to be worked on in all areas.

Strengths: school is a welcoming place and has a sense of community. Areas to develop: homework. I feel the takeaway menu is not working as it is not compulsory so it can be hard to make children do it.

To improve: ensure good teaching throughout school.

A strength, from my experience, is the effort the teachers put into their pupils. My sons have had the most amazing teachers.

More support is needed for children who struggle.

School is very lucky to have a lot of outdoor space but could it be used better? Especially the woodland. The children aren't able to use the new play equipment which is a shame. The garden area hasn't had much attention over the last year or so - could the garden club be restarted?

9: If you have any further comments, please use the space below:

I'm really happy with the school and the way it's run. I know everyone works very hard and I appreciate it.

I do think the school is failing a lot of the children and is more concerned about results than the children enjoying school.

I am really, really thankful that I sent my daughter to Thornton Primary. I have nothing but praise.

I feel the school needs a new management and leadership.

Not keen on the new initiative for increasing reading skills: the bookworm sessions on a Thursday. I understand why it has been introduced, but it is impossible for most parents to attend every week.

