

December 2021

Dear parents and carers

Parent and Carer Survey

Thank you to the 158 parents and carers who completed the survey during November. Your feedback is important to us and helps us to continue to focus on ways to improve both our education provision and communication with parents/carers. We also appreciate the positive feedback that accompanied the survey and this will be shared with staff. If there are specific points raised and a name given, we will aim to get back to you in the New Year with further feedback.

Curriculum

97% of our parents and carers agreed that Thornden has a broad and balanced curriculum. We will continue to review this on an annual basis, considering whether any courses need to be introduced the following year. Our aim is to ensure that all students can access pathways that enable them to go on to the next stage of their preferred education or employment.

Just over half of parents and carers agreed that the school provided good quality information about the progress their child is making, with just under 40% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This is an area that we have previously identified, and we are currently focussing on. We are looking to introduce a new system for providing much better information on the progress students are making, as well as other school related information. I hope to be able to launch this, with parent and carer guidance, close to the Easter holidays. To ensure that we have the best system for school, parents and carers, we have been researching a range of platforms and visiting schools to appreciate what is available nationally. We will have at least one report issued for each year group over the next term and I hope to see an improvement the next time we conduct a survey!

Homework / Home learning

We continue to receive a mixed response to the question regarding the amount of homework, with similar responses to our survey in March. 74% of parents/carers agreed or strongly agreed that their child received the right amount of homework, with 18% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. However, 84% disagreed with 'too much' and 79% disagreed with 'too little', suggesting it is a challenge to find the right balance.

Knowledge Organisers for Years 7, 8 and 9 and the Broadening Horizons document for Years 10 and 11 can supplement any areas where parents/carers and students feel that too little homework is set. If you feel that too much homework is set and this exceeds what is on the homework timetable, please contact your child's tutor in the first instance. We aim to ensure that at least 48 hours is available for students to complete any homework task and we also aim to avoid homework in school holidays as well.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a high priority in school and ensuring parents/carers feel that their child is safe in school. 93% of parents and carers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (3% did not know).

Many of our parents and carers felt that staff were supportive if children wanted to talk about something, with 66% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Over 25% did not know, and this may reflect on the timing on the survey or that children have not sought support. We will continue to communicate with students about the range of options available to them to discuss issues or concerns with staff.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Two thirds of parents and carers felt that behaviour was consistently well managed by staff, with 18% being unsure. We continue to focus on this and have delivered assemblies, tutorials and discussions regarding what is expected in terms of 'Good Behaviour' and why this is important. We will revisit this on a half termly basis and remind students of our expectations and why this supports their development.

I am very pleased that 94% of parents and carers felt that the school encouraged good attendance, with 5% of parents/carers stating that they did not know.

Personal Development

88% of parents/carers agreed or strongly agreed that their child is happy at school, with 10% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. We aim to ensure that every child experiences positive aspects of attending Thornden and will continue to focus on this, whether it is in lessons, extracurricular activities or spending time with their peers.

The vast majority of parents/carers commented that their student is taught to respect different people's faith, feelings and values, with 1% disagreeing.

SEN Provision

40% of parents/carers were unable to comment on SEN provision, however the majority of comments received were positive. The main area for the school to focus on links with the 'curriculum' section above and the provision of information regarding the progress made. We hope that our new system will provide better information for all parents and carers. The majority of parents/carers that could respond felt that they could approach staff if they had any concerns.

Leadership and Management

I am delighted that over 93% of parents/carers felt that the school's ethos encouraged good learning and progress, with 3% disagreeing. We hope to make this 100%. We aim to set high and aspirational standards throughout all areas of school life, providing our students, your child, with the best possible platform for the next stage of their education.

With regards to communication, this is an area that we have received lots of positive comments, but also a few concerns about the information that we are providing which, at times, some parents/carers feel is too much. As we start the New Year, we will inevitably share information at the beginning of term, but would like as the term settles down to reduce the newsletter to once a fortnight on a Friday, then only sending out essential and urgent information as and when it is required. This may be dependent on the current situation, particularly in relation to Covid guidance, and what we are required to share.

Thank you to all the parents/carers that have taken the time to send messages of 'thanks' and support to the school. This is always appreciated. We are also happy to receive constructive feedback on things that have not gone so well, so that we can reflect on these areas and to continuously improve our provision for the benefit of the students, as a whole.

Although this has not come through individual questions, I would like to thank parents/carers for their additional comments in the 'greatest strengths' section which includes:

- The focus and provision of extra-curricular activities following two disrupted years, enabling students to reinvigorate their love of performing arts, sport and many of the clubs available.
- The impact of our teachers on making students experience of school as positive as possible, and the encouragement that they give.
- The Remote Learning provision over the last two years, including the pastoral support, enabling all students at the school to progress with their learning.

I have also taken account of some of the comments regarding mental health and wellbeing that have been raised in the survey and we will continue to support students in this area, using the resources that we have available.

As a school we value your feedback and hope that you will continue to experience high quality learning for all students, with the school focussing on making further improvements.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and look forward to seeing our students in the New Year.

With best wishes

Steve Hicks
Head of School

