



# The Two Way Street

We would like to thank all the parents and carers who attended the Open Evening a few weeks ago. From this evening, we received 128 completed questionnaires (a separate one was carried out for Early Years as their evening was a month ago and 58 people responded, although 3 came in after the newsletter had gone out, but you can read the results from this in the Two Way Street letters section on the website). Results have been analysed, and we would like to share the feedback and answer some questions/issues that have arisen. Many were completed anonymously, but one ticked the box that they would like further discussions, however, without the name, this is difficult to do. Let us know if it was you!

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
My child is happy at St Johns	96	30	2		
My child feels safe at St Johns	99	27	1		1
My child is making good progress at St Johns	88	38	2		
My child is well looked after at St Johns	101	27			
My child is taught well at St Johns	105	22	1		
St Johns makes sure that pupils are well behaved	93	33	1		1
St Johns deals effectively with bullying	68	32	4	1	23
St Johns is well led and managed	91	30	2		5
St Johns responds well to any concerns I raise	90	34	3		1
I receive valuable information from St Johns about my child's progress	74	51	2	1	
I think the emails I receive from school are useful	87	38	1	1	1
Do you ever access the school's website?	Yes - 104			No - 24	
Do you use St John's Twitter feed?	Yes - 29			No - 99	



The data – It is pleasing to see that the vast majority of parents are happy with the school and it is extremely heart-warming to hear that all parents feel that their child/children were well cared for here at St Johns. Obviously, it concerns us when a parent ticks the disagree box. We would like the opportunity to address these concerns and know more details, but unfortunately, the parents chose to be anonymous. If you or your child is not happy to come to school, or if you feel your concerns are not addressed as you would like, PLEASE come in and talk to us. We do our best to sort most situations, but we are well aware that we may not get it right to your liking first time and if we do not have the opportunity to try to talk to you, then we never will. The statements regarding school communication and bullying will be answered later in the newsletter.

## Positive Comments Summary (Similar comments and those that involve a specific topic have been listed together)



## Suggestions as to how we could improve and our responses; -

(Similar comments and those that involve a specific topic have been listed together)

### ❖ *The children had more maths homework.*

Research shows that sending worksheets home for homework does not always add academic value. We are also aware that when we did, some would do it, some lost it and some did not complete it, which added another layer of anxiety for children. At St Johns, we ask that parents work on rapid recall of the 'Learn Its' – being able to mentally recall number facts helps them significantly, as it reduces the time it takes to answer a question, and in turn, takes away one of the processes needed to solve a problem. Purple Mash is also an excellent way of practising specific skills taught in school. Homework should be to revise, recap and review, so once a topic has been covered in school, every child has a Purple Mash log in and can access this at home. This programme does not only cover maths – it has a wealth of learning activities! We are currently in the process of reviewing our homework policy and this will be shared with you in the New Year.

### ❖ *Target charts for each child for parents to follow. / Copy of termly progress, e.g. results from assessment data./ More information for parents with progress of child, any additional help needed by parents.*

We give targets at parents evening as we assess 3 times yearly and children's progress is shared. Verbal feedback to the children is carried out daily to move children forward and again, research shows that this is the most effective way. We also have parents meetings around February time in Years 2, 4 and 6

to inform parents of the assessments coming up. We are also in the process of reviewing our creative curriculum and so information regarding your child's school learning will be more actively shared – this will be rolled out as soon as we are happy with it!

Instead of having specific individual subject targets, there are much better ways of helping your child at home that will benefit all areas of the curriculum. As stated in the previous question, the Purple Mash programme provides a wealth of fun activities to aid children's learning across the curriculum and they are all given in age appropriate sections.

However, the best thing that you can do for your child is to **share books** with them no matter what age. Read with them and let them read to you and talk about the content!

- Do they know what the book may be about from the front cover (prediction)?
- Are there any words that they do not fully understand after reading each page (clarification)?
- Can they predict where the story is going (prediction)?
- Can they answer questions on the story (comprehension)?
- Can they give an opinion as to why something happened in the story (inference)?
- Can they tell you what the book was about at the end and express a view on it (summarising)?
- Use non-fiction books based on the topic that they are covering that term and find out as much as you can about it.
- **Children will be exposed to new vocabulary and this could be used in their stories (reading, writing, speaking and listening), sentence construction, grammar and spelling will be visited more often to help with work (reading and writing), notes can be taken (writing), models can be made (design technology), pictures can be drawn/painted/collaged (art), relevant days out could be taken (history/geography) and photographed and used in a piece of software (IT) and children could share all their newly acquired knowledge in school (speaking and listening). This will in turn help with their own self-esteem, confidence, interest level, grades etc.**

**Using books opens up so much to children (and adults!) and could get children away from the TV and gaming for longer. This is the best target to have at any age for any child.**

- ❖ *A link on class Dojo to homework and tasks set. / More use of Dojo. / More Dojo updates. / More messages from teachers.*

As you can imagine, putting messages and photos onto Dojo is time consuming when we are trying to teach too and this was not the purpose for adopting it! We are aware that the teachers in Early Years and Key Stage 1 use it more than the higher Key Stages. This is done as we are aware that the younger children are less likely to answer questions that parents ask regarding their school day, however, more onus is put onto the older ones as they are more able to answer questions. However, with this aside, if you did send a Dojo message to any staff member with a concern (please only use for concerns, it is not an avenue to, for example, request a change of address at the office, or distribute birthday party invites!) your question would be answered at the first available opportunity. Some staff members like to answer early evenings, but do not expect everyone to answer immediately out of school hours, or during teaching time.

- ❖ *Dojo points given equally across all year groups. Having siblings sometimes the system can be unfair if the teacher doesn't give Dojo points as often and the others do./Dojo points would be better if all teachers used them consistently.*

Dojo was introduced into school as a class reward system to make it more personalised. Each year group uses it according to the needs of the children and the academic focus for that term (for example, reading at home). Each year group decides on how they are going to use it and what rewards are given out when a target number is reached, and each class should not be compared. We appreciate that if you have more than one child in school, it may be deemed as unfair, however, it was not set up as a competition between children, it was set up as a year group reward system that all children could contribute to in order to meet a collective, collaborative goal. We also have to keep in mind that some children prefer house points to Dojo's – we prefer to individualise rewards to the needs and preferences of the children.

❖ *Don't rely on disorganised kids to pass on information. / Tell children to remind parents about events etc. Some parents are very busy and can't be on top of everything./ One form of agreed communication./ The communication can be a little frustrating. I think important information should be sent out on letters.*

I do not think we will ever satisfy everyone on this topic! The questionnaire proves that the vast majority of parents like Dojo and ParentMail. Some prefer paper copies due to limited internet access, and this is fine, but we cannot guarantee your child will give it to you! We want to be as paperless as possible for environmental reasons, and at least with an email, you have the details for future reference. We do not rely on the children to pass on important information as a rule, and even if a ParentMail or Dojo is sent out, we do remind them verbally as well so that they can begin to take some responsibility for their own life, be involved to the full, and for preparation for secondary school. We also need to appreciate that teachers are also busy with many children in their classes and they also have home lives as you do. Regarding the volume of emails, we have so many things we want to share with you, which include safeguarding alerts from Walsall council and the police, events that you may like to go to, after school clubs, trips, what is happening in school such as fayres and dress up days – the list is long, but we do try and keep the emails as brief and as informative as we can. It is better to have all the information than to be in the dark.

❖ *We were allowed to keep our child's schoolwork at the end of the school year instead of ending up in the skip.*

We can understand why some parents may want to keep their children's work. Key pieces of work are given to the children to take home if, for example, it has been displayed, or if a piece of work is exceptional, it is copied and sent home. However, at the end of each academic year, we need to keep a sample range of books in school for external moderation purposes and in the case of Year 6 pupils, for transferring up. It would be very unfair to say to one child 'we need your books' and to another 'yes take them home'. So, as a compromise, we will in future let the children select one or two books that they feel they are proud of. We can then hold onto the necessary evidence that we are obliged to keep and no child will be disadvantaged.

❖ *Send weekly spellings home (Yr 1).*

Year 1 generally start bringing spellings home after Christmas. When they first start, we settle them into the new Key Stage, which is very different to the Reception year, and then concentrate on phonics. Rest assured the spellings will be with you soon! If you want to start with your child now, you can access age related spellings on Purple Mash – all children have their own individual logins.

❖ *Class term newsletters.*

Year group letters are sent out each term, highlighting the topic that is going to be covered in the following term. Dojo should keep you updated on the highlights of the school day as it happens.

❖ *Time to speak with teachers with any concerns./ Aside from parents evening, I don't feel there is much communication.*

We have 3 parents evenings a year, and a report at the year end. Some more vulnerable children and those who have a special educational need have more meetings for statutory reasons. Although I appreciate that parents evening slots are short, if you come with your questions and ask those first, then I am sure the time could be used effectively and you will leave with the answers you need. We have set up Dojo messages for quick responses; however, if you feel you do need more time with a teacher regarding any aspect, you can make an appointment to see him/her. We never turn parental concerns away!

❖ *We could give permission for movie night etc on ParentMail.*

ParentMail is used generally for transactions over £5. For every transaction, we are charged and so when we do movie nights for a school fund raising event, having money taken from us defeats the object. These are fun events that provide entertainment and food for minimal cost and it works out cheaper than childcare. The money raised is used for a variety of purposes in school, all of which benefit the children who attend St Johns.

❖ *More notice r.e parental communications./ On occasions perhaps give us with a little more time of certain events.*

We do try to make sure key events are planned ahead of time, but sometimes, because of clashes with other things out of our control (or rain for sports day!) we do have to reschedule, but wherever possible, we try not to. We are aware that sometimes this does not go according to plan and we are really trying to address this!

❖ *Bullying was addressed effectively.*

On the questionnaire, 5 parents felt that bullying was not handled appropriately. Although this number is low, it still concerns us, and so we are going to review our behaviour policy to see if there is anything more we can do. We are also actively seeking the views of the children, as often, one off squabbles are deemed as bullying and as we all know, there are two sides to every story and sometimes misconceptions or assumptions are involved! All cases are dealt with on an individual basis, however, our door is always open for you to come in and discuss any incident involving behaviour that we are unaware of. We do ask that you do not handle matters yourself and approach other parents in the playground (or vent on Facebook!) as this is not productive. Let us deal with it holistically to prevent further fallout. Let all adults set the example for our children on dealing with concerns.

❖ *More outdoor forest led activities.*

In order to carry out Forest School activities, school staff members need to be trained by a Forest School Leader. It is something that we are already looking into and emails have already been exchanged between school and Walsall Council. There is a significant cost implication and so once our current

school development plan has been achieved, we can try and access training and implement Forest School activities in school.

❖ *Parents evening not very private. Everyone can hear progress/issues discussed.*

We fully understand this, especially as we are an open plan school with very few doors! If you request somewhere more private to talk to the teacher, I am sure we could arrange this and as this aspect was only raised through one questionnaire, the best option is for us to deal with individual cases as requested.

❖ *More effort made into occasions like sports day. It could make a great fundraising event for the school.*

Over the years, we have had raffles at sports day in order to raise funds. We have been criticised over the years for asking for money too often for events such as red nose day, movie night tickets, trips, cake sales, sponsored events, etc. So we made the decision to keep this event purely as a fun session where you can see your children without having to bring cash! We are also mindful that we need all staff hands on deck during an event such as this to safeguard all participating children. However, if a group of volunteer parents came to us with a plan and were willing to organise it, then we would most certainly not say no!

❖ *All leaves were swept up around the school.*

Walsall Councils Grounds and Maintenance takes care of the school grounds under a purchased contract. We do buy extra visits in order to collect up the leaves. We just wish our trees would all shed their leaves at the same time! Since the leaves have been swept up, a parent has expressed that the floor is still slippery – so you can see, we can't win!

However, we rely on those trees to provide shade during the summer months and they are used extensively for Science lessons and for other curriculum areas. We have a team of children who love to sweep during break times and our caretaking team collect them too until the bins are full.

❖ *Walking from class in Juniors to Nursery via the back instead of all the way round school – too slippery in winter with the leaves.*

We do understand that this is a bit of a pain and it would be much easier to cut through the playground. However, we hope you can understand our reasons for not allowing this. The main concern is the safeguarding aspect. All our parents know which entrance and exit to use, so should we see anyone round the back of the school, we wonder why and will check. Also, the gate between the Nursery and the school railings is kept locked, also for safeguarding reasons, except for when the area is used during teaching time. When Nursery staff open the gate and door in the morning, they do not need to be worrying about who may come from the back of school!

❖ *Perhaps you could use the experiences of the children to help give greater depth to certain topics.*

We do this wherever we can when we are aware of the child's experiences. Any child that is willing to share their knowledge can do so.

- ❖ *An app for school dinners and being able to select children's dinner would be good./ School meals payment online facility would be great.*

Walsall Council provide the lunches for our school dinners (and a few other schools) on our premises. We do not have a say in how it is run or how payments are made unfortunately. A menu is sent out regularly so that you can see what is available to eat on any given day and if you sent your child in with a piece of paper containing the food selection, the staff would be able to oblige.

- ❖ *Dinnertimes more relaxed, it sounds rushed and I never hear anything good about the staff.*

A few years ago, we changed the lunchtimes for most year groups (staggered them) so that there were less people in the dinner hall at any one time and less children on the playground so more space to play. We also reduced the time for Years 1 and 2 to 45 minutes (complaints from parents saying their children were too cold during the Winter and too hot during the Summer). The lunchtime for Reception children is an hour long as they tend to take longer to eat! When children get their lunches, they can stay in the hall until they finish, they are never rushed. Many children, especially the older one, rush their eating so that they can get onto the playground quicker to play football, or play with friends. Midday supervisor try to ensure that all children eat well, however, on occasions, we find that some try to throw their sandwiches away so they can get out quicker, and sometimes because they do not like the sandwich filling sent in! The Midday supervisor's job is more complex than you think and they do have to speak to children if behaviours being shown are not appropriate (they are then deemed as the bad guys, so this is probably the story you are told!).

Their jobs includes; -

- Organising which classes go down to lunch on a rota basis to make it fair (the children like this!)
- Keeping the hall safe, mopping up spills, picking up things from the floor to avoid potential slips.
- Supervising children who wish to use the salad bar (in support of the children and for hygiene reasons).
- Taking cutlery and trays back to the kitchen so that they do not pile up.
- Cleaning tables and disposing of rubbish left from the sandwiches (cling film, yoghurt pots etc.).
- Administering first aid for any concerns (all staff are first aid trained) and logging them, and in the event of a serious/head injury, calling home or sending home a letter.
- Dealing with children who feel poorly or who have been sick or who have had a toileting accident.
- Encouraging children to eat appropriately – using a knife and fork and not fingers, not rushing it, but not throwing food away either, sorting alternatives for children who do not like what they have brought in and generally trying to encourage good mealtime social skills.
- Supervising the playground during play.
- Sorting squabbles between children and ensuring any child who is alone, has someone to play with.
- Working 1:1 with some children who have additional needs.

....this list is the condensed version-there are lots of incidental tasks too!!!

We are aware that parents, if they are passing by the school, call their children to say hello through the playground railings– an understandable thing to do, however, sometimes, this can cause problems, so please don't! The children can get upset and want to go home, they can encourage others to come over too in order to talk to you (a big safeguarding concern for our Midday supervisors if they do not know who you are and have concerns that you are engaging with children that are not yours!), it stops them

from playing with their peers and often the children then have a conflict of interest as they want to 'show off' in front of parents, but have to abide by the school rules! We have had a few complaints over the years regarding lunchtimes, but more often than not, once investigated, things were not as they seemed – remember, first impressions can be very wrong and there is usually a back story!

If you are concerned, come in and speak to us via the Reception area! DO NOT confront our Midday supervisors or call them over. School policy states that acts of aggressions will not be tolerated and when they are talking to you, they cannot effectively do their jobs. Any complaint will always be investigated and taken seriously.

❖ *Use Rockstar app.*

School does subscribe to Times Tables Rock Stars and this can be accessed at home too in the app or on a pc. Children in Key Stage 2 all have log in details, so if you child has forgotten it, (or they say they have forgotten it!), send a Dojo message to the class teacher and this will be sent to you!

❖ *Texting very important reminders as we don't always have time to keep looking at emails, also if you run out of data you don't get to know everything. /Communicate by text.*

We can use ParentMail to text parents, however, sending texts does have a significant cost implication to the school if used daily. We use this method of communication in urgent cases such as school closures, children missing from school etc. Emails and Dojo are far more cost effective – we are sure that you would rather we spent the money on the children and all these methods involve looking at your phone. If you are worried about missing information, you could switch to paper copies, but then you have to rely on children bringing the letters home. We also put all school emails regarding events on the website under 'Parents' then 'Correspondence' and a copy of the letters go onto the Reception area noticeboard for you to see. I do not feel we could do anymore!

We **DO NOT** put school trips on there for data protection and safeguarding purposes. As the letters are dated, and some of our vulnerable children need to be protected, we do not broadcast when any of our children will be off site for the day or where they are going.

**Thank you all once again for your feedback and we hope that  
all the concerns you raised have been addressed.**

If you have any comments, concerns or questions, please email us using the address below, and put 'Two Way Street' in the subject line.

**Email address:**

[office@st-johns.walsall.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-johns.walsall.sch.uk)

Thank you.

