

Riverside School Parent and Carer Survey 2009/10 Summary of Findings and Action Plan

Towards the end of last year a questionnaire was sent to you as a parent or carer of a pupil at Riverside School. Thank you very much for the response to this survey. We received 66 completed questionnaires, which is just over 40% of pupils. We had an excellent spread of responses from families new to Riverside School and those who previously attended Rectory Paddock School and Woodbrook School.

Many of you spent a lot of time providing us with feedback and this has been extremely useful to us in our planning. This letter is a summary of the key findings from the questionnaire and the actions that are proposed. Riverside School's Senior Leadership Team has created a 'Riverside School Family Pledge', attached to this letter. Debby Battista (Head of Additional Needs for Children and Young People within Bromley Primary Care Trust) and her team have created a similar pledge from the therapy and nursing teams working within the school. These pledges are effective from September 2010. If you have any comments on anything within this report please do get in touch. Contact details can be found on the final page.

School Feel and Qualities

Whilst creating Riverside School, one of our aims was to ensure we retained the best parts of Woodbrook School and Rectory Paddock School. We are pleased that you feel that the majority of attributes have continued into the new school. In particular you value the welcoming, happy and upbeat atmosphere; the safe and caring environment and the broad curriculum.

"A really welcoming, positive environment/atmosphere. We always feel comfortable there and confident with the place we leave our most valuable asset (our child)."

Relatively speaking, the one attribute that you feel is not quite as evident in the new school is the family, close-knit feel. However, saying this, 8 out of 10 of you agree that Riverside does have a family, close-knit feel. We will ensure we focus on this and will be organising at least one whole school event and two fundraising events each year. We would also like to introduce events for siblings, grandparents and other family members.

In terms of the most important quality of Riverside School that you would like to see continue, there were a number of different answers. The majority of comments centred around the special atmosphere of the school; the dedication of Viv (the Head Teacher) and his staff as well as the great communication with parents and families.

Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

Almost all of you (94%) believe that your child/young person enjoys school. Similarly, a very high percentage of you are satisfied with teaching and learning within the school. These factors are very important to us.

"I am very pleased that my child is getting on really well in everything."

A few of you would like to see more of a 'traditional' and even more challenging curriculum for some of the more able students. The curriculum continues to be reviewed and debated as matter of course and a lot of emphasis is being placed on the curriculum as part of our Specialist School status. The Governing Body's Curriculum Committee meet termly to discuss all aspects of the curriculum offered to our pupils. Individual Education Plans will continue to include targets agreed by parents, carers and all staff involved in your child/young person's education and care. We want to ensure that your views on curriculum are at the forefront of target setting.

Additionally you have told us that you would like to have more advice from nurses/therapists/teachers as to how you can further help your child/young person at home.

"I could benefit from more advice as to how I could help my child at home (e.g. switches, etc) but I know I also need to make the effort to ask for advice."

As a School we are very conscious of the time and effort that looking after children takes, so we do not want to overburden you with homework(!) This is an area that needs to be explored in more detail and a termly plan will be

produced highlighting what your child/young person will be learning at school and suggesting activities that you may like to try at home. Similarly, the therapy teams will continue to offer therapy-related advice, including specific targets and annual reports. Sometimes the contact book is not the right forum for advice so please feel free to contact your child/young person's teacher or therapist directly.

“On the technology side, if we had access to the teaching via IT we could possibly reinforce the learning at home, (e.g. software / programmes or websites)”

Riverside already provides Makaton training for parents and in addition to this will now be offering further training sessions. Speech and Language along with Technology are the topics you would most like to see. As a result Riverside will hold one training session per term on an aspect of 'speech and language therapy and communication development' and one session per term on 'ways to support your child through the use of technology'. If you have any particular suggestions within these areas, please do get in touch with Steve Solomons.

Welfare

Overall, the level of satisfaction with welfare is very high. A positive, caring atmosphere is important to you and over 90% of you are satisfied with the level of welfare your young person receives. Additionally, there is a lot of positive support for the keyworker scheme. This scheme was introduced for some pupils with complex health needs.

“We are pleased with our child's keyworker as we only have to mention something once that we'd like to be looked into and she is on the case straight away. We hope that she can continue to be our keyworker next year as we have trust in her and that is very important when you have a child with such complex needs”

The intention is to pilot this service with other students, including those with challenging behaviour. Katie Cornell, Head of Sixth Form and Transition, now has responsibility for this. Riverside's aim is to keep you fully updated with the keyworker scheme and ensure that the system is fair and transparent. Watch this space!

A small minority of you (less than 10%) commented on school catering, transport arrangements and continuity of care between school and after-school facilities. These are all taken very seriously within the school. Staff at the Beckenham ASD Centre have been working with catering to provide a service that has received very good feedback from parents and carers. In terms of continuity of care, Riverside pledges to liaise even more closely with after-school/respite staff by sharing IEPs and behaviour management plans with the relevant personnel. This will ensure that your child/young person's abilities as well as targets are shared. Similarly, Hollybank staff have pledged to continue to work closely with families, the school, school nurses, therapists and SEN transport to ensure a smooth, safe and consistent handover of care.

Riverside has invited partner agencies to the Parent Evenings in July. We hope that a number of partner agencies will be present hosting stalls, e.g., Bromley Mencap, Bromley Autistic Trust, Hollybank, SEN Transport, Bromley Family Link, etc. Please do take the opportunity to meet with them.

Specialist Services

These include services provided by the various therapy and nursing teams. Examples include physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy, etc.

“Hydrotherapy and swimming have increased my child's abilities and confidence to try new things”

The majority of you are satisfied with these services, particularly in hydrotherapy and music therapy, however, it is clear from responses that some of you are unsure of the services provided to your child by specialists. Rightly, we believe, a lot of 'therapy' input is now given as part of multi-disciplinary target setting and school staff are trained and encouraged to integrate this specialist knowledge into day-to-day activities. This makes it difficult to separate out specific therapy input. However, if you would like more information on the specific input from therapists, please do

contact them directly or through the class teacher.

A few of you commented on nursing services and it is clear that this is an area that is very important to many of you.

“I think it may be difficult for the nursing team to know where to intervene and what should be the remit of parents, but making suggestions and offering help to sort problems out, should the parents want to go that way, is great for me”

At a recent training day, the nursing team looked in detail at all the feedback given by you. Please see the Nursing and Therapy Team Pledge for more information on some of the activities the nursing team is putting in place, including enhanced communication, clear guidelines and specific advice on toileting where appropriate.

Communication, Involvement and Decision Making

Overall you gave some very positive comments on how the school communicates with you and vice versa. All of you are satisfied with the welcome you receive when you telephone or visit the school. Almost all of you are satisfied with the way your views and those of your child/young person are sought.

“Good communication between home and school and friendly reception by all staff when visiting [should continue].”

One key suggestion from you is to know even more about the kind of work/activities that your child/young person does at school. In response to this, Riverside School will ensure that you receive regular (weekly) feedback about your child or young person's specific achievements at school.

We know that you would like even more opportunities to get involved with the school and attend events. You mention how sometimes this is difficult with transport issues and when your child/young person is not well.

“I would love to get more involved, but for some reason there's always other commitments or sickness gets in the way. If there were more opportunities I'd get more of a chance to make an event - hopefully!”

You will note that Riverside has repeated the 'Accessing Services' Information Forum, first held in 2009. This time it was hosted at Riverside's ASD Centre in Beckenham. These forums are open to all parents and carers, regardless of the site that your child or young person attends. Additionally, the suggestion of a Positive Parenting Course was mentioned. I hope you received a flyer about this course. Mums, Dads and carers recently attended a very useful Information Forum focused on Puberty, if you were unable to attend, but would like more information, please get in contact with Clare Chalaye.

Technology

As you may be aware, Riverside is looking at the evolving use of technology within the school and additionally how the school communicates with you. We know from our survey that over 90% of you have access to an internet connection at home but only a minority of you have access to a webcam. We know that almost 90% of you have access to email, even if it is your child who helps you access it. Some of you access email more frequently than others and there is a large spread in your technology skills. All of this information, coupled with the responses to a recent letter, have helped us plan what to do next. I hope the introduction of emailed information is of benefit to you.

Some of you also visit the website, but have suggested it could be updated more regularly. Riverside School pledges to continue to update the website on a monthly basis.

Extended School Services

If you commented that you would like to have more after school and/or holiday clubs then you would not be alone! We received very positive feedback on the current after school clubs and enormous support for the introduction of more activities in the holidays.

“After school clubs are good. My child likes it”

“The after school club has been a great help to us and we always find the staff very helpful”

Holiday club opportunities, in particular, were rated more highly than the possibility of other opportunities such as Breakfast Clubs. Some of you mentioned that cost and transport may be barriers to your child accessing these out of school services. Additionally some of you mentioned how important it is to you that the staff working in these clubs know your children well, including their capabilities and their little foibles. Riverside School is very excited to have been chosen to host the Borough’s Holiday schemes and will be taking your points into consideration.

“Absolutely would want these opportunities. Would absolutely love weekend respite. Nothing could be more reassuring than to know our child was at Riverside!”

Riverside School pledges to be at the forefront of developing extended services (after school clubs, Saturday Clubs and Holiday Play Schemes) and keep you fully informed of all developments.

I’d like to finish this summary with a very heartening comment from a parent.

“Overall Riverside is a fantastic school. We wouldn’t want our child to be anywhere else. We count our blessings knowing he is there. We are very grateful to every member of staff who enable the school to work in such a positive way”

Thank you once again for the time taken to complete the parent/carer survey and for your input in helping make Riverside School a very special school. If you have any further comments please do get in touch.

Deirdre Brockhouse
Chair of Riverside School
Governing Body

Contact Details

Deirdre Brockhouse (Email: deebrook_2@msn.com)
Viv Hinchcliffe (Email: viv.hinchcliffe@riverside.bromley.sch.uk)
Steve Solomons (Email: steve.solomons@riverside.bromley.sch.uk)
General Enquiries (Email: admin@riverside.bromley.sch.uk)

Riverside School (Telephone: 01689 870519)