



Year 7 Parent Questionnaire: Results

Background

In December, we asked parents of Year 7 students to complete an online questionnaire providing feedback on how well the school managed the transition from primary to secondary school for their child. 148 parents were kind enough to complete the questionnaire and the results are summarised below, along with a brief commentary in response to the main points.

Things to be pleased with

Overall, the results of the questionnaire were very positive and we are pleased that the hard work that has gone into making the transition process as smooth as possible seems to be paying off. Lots of parents left some very encouraging comments, with typical examples including: “preparation (for starting) was excellent”; “very informed and very open process”; “extremely well-managed”; “very impressed”.

The statistics for the key, overview questions were excellent. For example:

97% of parents said we prepared their child well for starting in September (71% saying ‘Very Well’)

97% say their child has settled in well since September (70% ‘Very Well’)

90% said our processes for transition were either ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very Good’ and only 4% less than good

98% would recommend Lymm High School to other parents

Suggestions for improvement

Nearly all of the comments about how we might have done better were very specific to individual children – very few were echoed by others. On the one hand, this was very encouraging because it supports the figures quoted above in terms of suggesting we are getting most things right for most students. On the other hand, it is always frustrating to know we might have done something better for any individual and we will keep trying our best to improve.

The table below summarises any points that were made by more than one or two parents, along with a brief response.

Point raised	School response
Although 91% of respondents said we have communicated well with them since September, only 37% said we have communicated ‘Very Well’. This is clearly an area	Consistent and effective communication with families is always a major challenge for any secondary school. For us, being such a large school and with so much going on, it is perhaps a greater challenge than most. This has been an area of focus for us and we are cautiously optimistic that 91% said we have communicated well, even if it is clear we can still improve.



<p>in which we can still improve. Specific issues relating to communication are addressed in points below.</p>	<p>As always, there were some very contradictory messages in this section. For example, many parents said they really like the text message system whereas others say they get too many messages and would prefer emails. Some said they realise students need to take more responsibility at secondary age, with other parents saying we shouldn't ever rely on students to pass messages on. To an extent, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, this is an area in which it will always be difficult to 'please all the people all of the time'!</p>
<p>Some parents asked us to use email rather than text messages.</p>	<p>There was a question asking for the preferred method of communication and text messages was by far the most popular option (selected by 72% of respondents). Taking this together with other feedback, we will continue to use text messages, with links to the website where appropriate, as the main method of communication. This seems to be the majority view. In addition, those of us with experience of working in schools where email is used as the primary method know that this causes at least as many problems as it solves – there are always a significant number of issues with email addresses not being recognised, messages going to junk mail, inboxes being full and so on.</p>
<p>The most common complaint regarding communication was that information about sports fixtures is not always timely and/or that information relating to sport on the website is not always up to date.</p>	<p>We take this point on board and will re-double our efforts to improve this. We only ask that parents appreciate that at least some of the issues are unavoidable – for example, there is little we can do if opposition teams cancel at short notice. This is also an area in which we will always have to rely on students themselves to pass on messages reliably!</p>
<p>A handful of parents asked for more 'information' to be sent home more regularly, (although they did not often leave any specific examples of what this might be.)</p>	<p>In other questionnaires we have done, a few parents have complained that we send too many text messages and/or that the weekly headteacher's bulletin can be too long. There is clearly a balance to be struck here and we shall keep trying to find the right balance.</p> <p>It might be worth pointing out that, where examples were given, this information had almost always included in the headteacher's bulletin. We really encourage all parents to get into the habit of reading the bulletin each week.</p>
<p>A very small number (fewer than 5) said that teachers do not always reply promptly to emails.</p>	<p>Parents are, of course, entitled to receive a reply to any communication and we are disappointed to hear of this not happening. If you do not get a reply to an email within 48 working hours, we encourage you to contact Student Services.</p> <p>There may be a good reason why the message hasn't got through (for example, we sometimes have problems with emails going to junk mail folders or addresses being mis-typed) but, either way, please do not be afraid to follow anything up.</p> <p>Our communications policy can be found by clicking here and provides details of the 'service standards' we aspire to. Staff email addresses can be found by clicking here (towards the end of the document).</p>
<p>Most parents (well over three quarters) said they agree that they know who to contact if they have any particular concerns about their child. However, this still leaves too many who are unsure.</p>	<p>We cannot stress enough that we want parents to contact us if you have any concerns at all and, if you are at all unsure as to who might be the most appropriate person to contact, then please just phone reception or Student Services and they will point you in the right direction. We completely understand that, in comparison to most primary schools, the high school can seem rather daunting but please don't be afraid to get in touch!</p>



	<p>We have a FAQ document on the website (click here to read) which provides more details of who the best person to contact in any given situation might be.</p>
<p>A small number said that they'd have preferred their child to be in a tutor group with a friend from primary school.</p>	<p>As you will have heard us say at various transition events, there are several reasons why we do not aim to put friends with one another in tutor groups. There are many positive reasons for not doing so (providing a fresh start, encouraging students to make new friends etc) but it is also quite simply impossible to organise on a practical level whilst remaining fair. And, as we always say, they can still see their old friends and break and lunchtimes!</p>
<p>A few parents asked for more transition events in the summer term of Year 6.</p>	<p>With 300 students in each year group, it is difficult to run too many events in one term without impacting negatively on the running of the school for other students. However, we have deliberately put on more and more events for Year 4 and 5 students from partner primaries over the last year or so (although obviously the new year 7 haven't benefited from those). The intention is that, by the time they do join us, students have visited a few times already and are comfortable in the environment.</p>
<p>A handful complained that our detention/sanctions system is a little too harsh and that Year 7 students should be given longer to adapt.</p>	<p>This is one where we shall have to beg to differ. We do have very high standards for behaviour and very clear systems to support this. We think it very important that students understand our expectations from the start.</p> <p>As ever, if there are concerns, please do contact Student Services; they provide fantastic pastoral support, especially for those students who are a little more vulnerable or anxious.</p>
<p>Finally, there were a few points raised about Year 7 students needing to know a little more about certain things before starting (e.g. how the lunch queues work, when the enrichment fair takes place, what exactly is needed for PE kit).</p>	<p>We shall keep trying hard to provide as much detail as possible. One parent suggested asking Year 7 parents to talk to Year 6 parents about some of these kinds of things, which we think is a good idea and will endeavour to do next year.</p> <p>On the other hand, several parents made comments such as "my child wasn't quite sure of X or Y at the beginning but they soon got the hang of it".</p>