



King Edward's School, Birmingham

Feedback to parents on survey findings

1. Background

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the parents' survey last term for King Edward's School (KES). The aim of the survey was to assess parents' satisfaction with various aspects of school life, so that decisions about the future of the School can be taken in the light of parental opinion.

589 families (74% of families at the School) completed the online questionnaire, which is an excellent response rate, so we can be reasonably confident that the results are representative of the parent body. The response sample is also a good match with the School as a whole, in terms of the year groups and other characteristics.

The survey was completed in the second half of the Spring term 2013. We presented the results to the school staff at the start of the summer term and to the Governors just before half term. This is an independent summary of the findings.

2. Overall, parents are very happy indeed with King Edward's School

The levels of overall satisfaction are extremely good, amongst the very highest we have ever surveyed, with 82% of parents saying they are 'completely' or 'very' satisfied with the School.

When it comes to advocacy, this is equally impressive, with 96% of parents stating that they would recommend the School to others and the majority, 81% of the total parent body, stating this as a 'definite' intention.

On both counts, KES substantially out-performs our benchmark, which is the average score from over 60 other independent senior schools, all of which are highly respected independent schools around the UK.

When asked whether KES had met, exceeded or fallen below expectations, 33% felt it had exceeded expectations (compared with the average of 26%) and 59% that it had met expectations. 8% thought the School had fallen below expectations - the equivalent figure is, on average, 13%.

3. Image and reputation of the School

As parents might recall, there was a section in the questionnaire in which they were asked to select five words which together best describe the School. A list of 24 words was supplied and contained 8 critical and 16 positive or more neutral words.

The School was very strongly defined by parents as 'academic', chosen by 80% of all the parents. This was then followed by 'inspiring', 'diverse', 'intellectual' and 'friendly', each of which was selected by 40% to 50% of the respondents.

A low proportion of parents chose one of the negative words - fewer than 10% chose 'elitist' and slightly fewer still selected 'stressful'.

4. Rating the different school features – overall very highly endorsed with few exceptions

We asked parents to consider a list of 41 different school features and rate each one as 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'poor', 'very poor' or, if they did not feel able to express an opinion, they could pick 'not relevant/don't know'.

Again, the School's results were extremely positive, with very few exceptions. Some of the most impressive school features are described below:

- High praise for the extra-curricular opportunities. The provision for music and other creative and performing arts, sport, Friday afternoon activities, trips and visits and, in general, the "clubs and extra-curricular activities" were all recognised as significant strengths. All of these were rated as 'very good' or 'good' by 92% of parents or more.
- It is worth noting that despite the high praise for the extra-curricular side of things, "the School's results in public exams" were rated 'very good' or 'good' by 99% of parents. In fact, based on how many parents rated it 'very good', this was the most highly rated aspect of the School.
- Most other facets of the academic programme also scored very highly. For example, "the way your son is stretched and challenged academically" and the "quality of teaching" were both rated 'very good' or 'good' by 93%.
- Management, leadership and administration of the School are also significant strengths. The "admin and day-to-day running of the School" achieved one of the highest scores we have seen, with 96% rating this 'very good' or 'good', with similar scores for:
 - The School's state of repair and appearance
 - Academic facilities and equipment
 - General communication of events and news
 - The leadership of the School
- The School appears to have a good record in terms of pastoral care – 90% of parents gave one of the two top ratings to KES for "The way your son is treated as an individual" and 87% for "The School's concern for your son's well-being". Generally, the pupils' behaviour was also praised highly, as were the School's "disciplinary policies / attitudes", rated highly by 92%.
- There were many other aspects of the School which were either rated highly or for which there were almost no "poor" ratings. Chief among these were the friendliness between pupils, the social and ethnic diversity of the School, class sizes, pupils' appearance (unusual for an urban day school) and value for money (also unusual in today's climate).

All but one of the school features which can be compared with the benchmark were found to be above average by a statistically significant extent and, of these, an astonishing 28 were placed in the top three of the schools we have surveyed. This is

an outstanding achievement and demonstrates the high regard in which parents hold the breadth of the King Edward's educational experience.

5. Praise for the School and its ethos

There are a few aspects of the School which parents would like to improve, as we shall see in the next section, but there is no denying that most parents feel very warmly towards KES and are very appreciative of its ethos.

For example, 87% of parents felt the balance between "my child's academic achievement" and "non-academic pursuits" to be "about right".

When asked what "the Chief Master should not change, as he plans for the future", most comments referred to that same balance between academic quality and breadth of opportunity outside the classroom. Although parents showed throughout the survey that they were very pleased with their son's academic progress, it was interesting to see just how many parents, when asked what should not be lost at the School, focussed on the non-academic side of their son's education.

Several parents also commented on the quality and dedication of the staff, the open and friendly atmosphere of the School, the way in which pupils were treated as individuals and encouraged to aim high and the diverse and tolerant pupil body.

To quote directly some of the parents...

"I think that the Head should be careful not to change the core values which are so apparent to our family through our son: striving for both academic and personal excellence for each boy; a very, very strong sense of acceptance of each boy as he is, and tremendous encouragement of each boy to succeed in every way both within and outside the school. I have been deeply impressed by a palpable sense of fairness, inclusivity, inspiration, cheerfulness and friendliness within a framework of strong discipline which is driven by strong values of fairness and justice...I feel that the current values and ethos of KES shine through in the way that my son has been treated for the last 3 years, and I wouldn't change anything."

"King Edward's offers both a traditional academic education and excellent extra-curricular activities and opportunities. Boys develop into rounded individuals, having enjoyed and appreciated the experiences it offers. What really strikes you about King Edward's is the high-achieving but happy community. However it achieves this, it should make sure it continues to do so!"

"The diversity of cultures, and backgrounds and the fact that what the pupils are doing and achieving is what matters, not where they come from."

6. What could make King Edward's even better?

Not surprisingly, given the results already highlighted, the suggestions for improvement which follow should be considered in the context of a very high performing school, according to most parents. Nor should the following be considered to follow any particular order.

Food

The main issue for parents appears to be a response to the new system of paying for lunches and the view that this system is less flexible than what preceded it. There were also a few comments about the quantity of food provided, but there were almost no concerns expressed about the quality of the food or its nutritional value.

Inspirational teaching

83% rated the "teachers' ability to inspire your son" as 'good' or 'very good' and only 3% rated this 'poor' or 'very poor' so we should like to emphasize that this is NOT a cause of widespread concern!

However, when we asked parents to identify the school features which needed most time, effort or money spent on improving them, this specific aspect of the teaching was cited by 21% of the parent body. From the written comments, it would appear that the boys do benefit from a great deal of inspirational teaching but that a small number of teachers are less stimulating and stand out from the others in this regard.

Feedback and communication with Form Tutor

Quite a few parents suggested that they needed more frequent and more informative feedback on their son's progress, which is easier to understand and clearer as to what the boy needs to do in order to improve. Several parents also thought that some Form Tutors could be more communicative and proactive in this and other respects.

Value for money

Again, this was rated very highly at KES, but parents nonetheless picked it as a "priority for improvement" when asked. Parents highlighted the cost of school trips and, on a more general level, asked that their increasingly difficult economic circumstances should be borne in mind when setting future fee levels.

7. Summary

King Edward's School is regarded extremely highly by the parent body. Indeed, the parents are among the most satisfied we have ever surveyed.

With very few exceptions, parents are pleased with the way their sons are taught, the balanced and broad educational ethos of the School, the tolerant and diverse pupil body and the leadership of the School and its day-to-day running.

Please note that all responses remain totally confidential and anonymous. Although quotations have been used as part of this feedback, they are representative and cannot be attributed to an individual.

Written by Russell Speirs, RSAcademics Ltd, June 2013