

School Review 2013

The school review was carried out in May 2013. The review was due to be done in term 3 2013, however was conducted earlier in the year so the school could participate in a trial of a Government-provided online tool for creating, completing and analysing school surveys. The earlier review date also provided an opportunity to seek feedback from the school community following an increase in numbers in the junior school and a change in staffing.

The review consisted of a survey of staff, students and carers/parents. The survey questions were largely unchanged from previous surveys. Staff and carers/parents were given the option of completing the survey online, or a written survey for staff and a phone questionnaire for carers/parents. Students completed a written survey with younger students receiving assistance from a non-staff adult.

Previous reviews have been conducted in term 3. Some of the responses to this review may have been affected by the earlier time frame for this survey, as parent interviews and student semester one reports had not been done, and understanding of some of the activities of the school tends to increase as the year progresses.

Student Review

70 students were surveyed as part of the school review.

In part A the students were asked to respond to statements using a scale of responses.

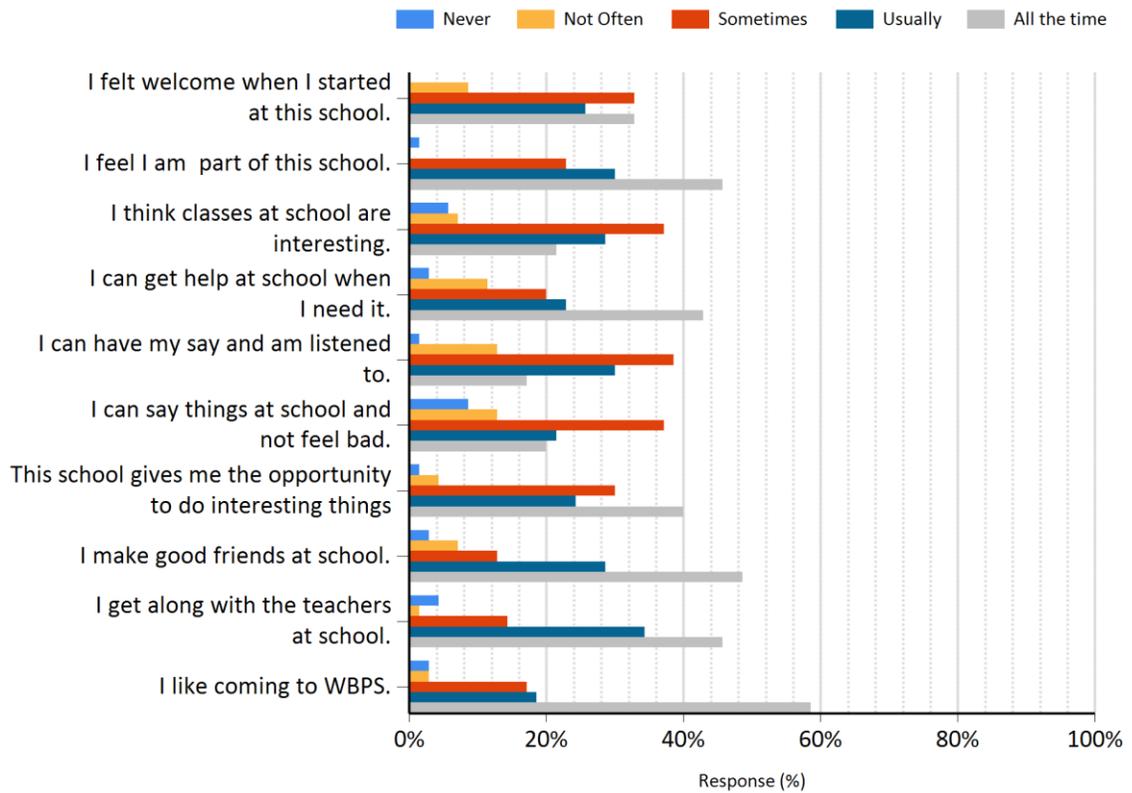
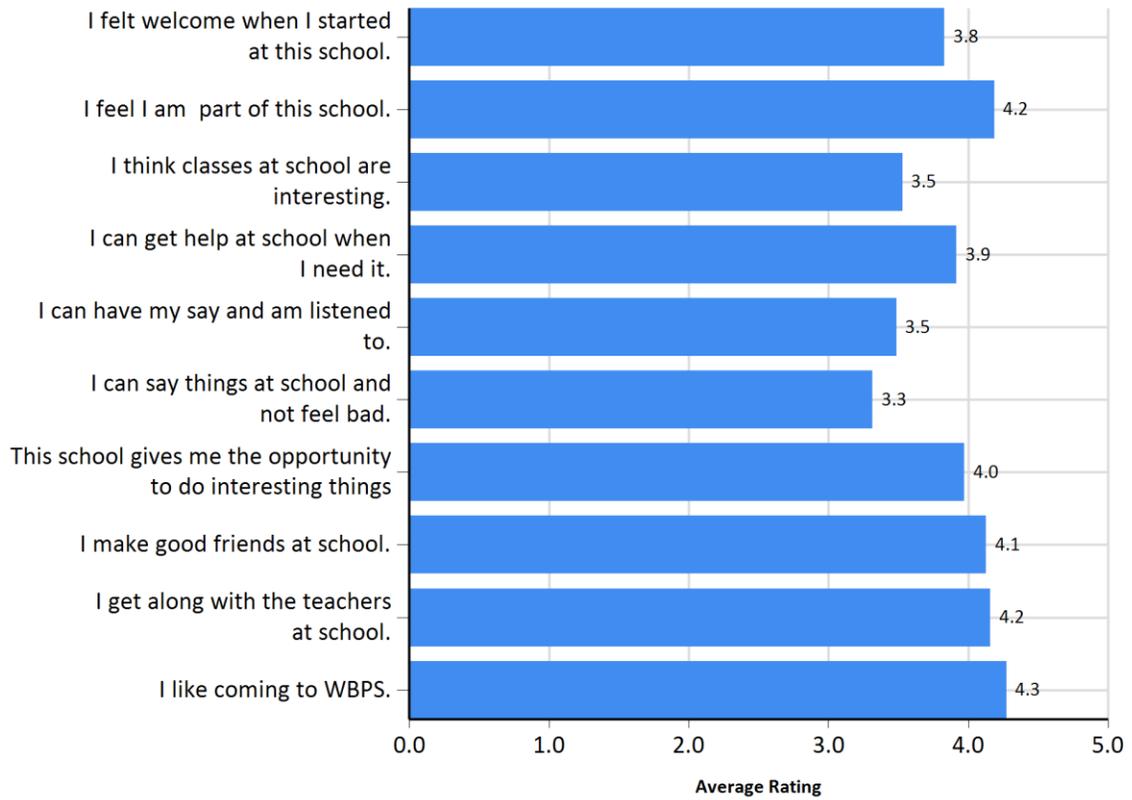
The response options were:

1. Never 2. Not Often 3. Sometimes 4. Usually 5. All the time

The ten statements were:

1. I felt welcome when I started at this school
2. I feel I am a part of the school
3. I think classes at school are interesting
4. I can get help at school when I need it
5. I can have my say and am listened to
6. I can say things at school and not feel bad
7. This school gives me an opportunity to do interesting things
8. I make good friends at school
9. I get along with the teachers at school
10. I like coming to WBPS

Graphed results and a summary of the responses is given below, for each statement.



As can be seen from the second graph, responses were mostly in the sometimes/usually/always (positive end of scale). In each case there were more responses here & fewer in the never/not often (negative end of scale).

Although there are fewer of the negative responses, this is still considered important feedback to receive, and it would be useful to look across responses & see if for one or several students there were consistently negative responses made to each question.

1. I felt welcome when I started at this school

Overall rating 3.8

None said never

6 (9%) said not often

23 (33%) said sometimes

18 (26%) said usually

23 (33%) said always

2. I feel I am a part of the school

Overall rating 4.2

1 (1%) said never

None said not often

16 (23%) said sometimes

21 (30%) said usually

32 (46%) said always

3. I think classes at school are interesting

Overall rating 3.5

4 (6%) said never

5 (7%) said not often

26 (37%) said sometimes

20 (29%) said usually

15 (21%) said always

4. I can get help at school when I need it

Overall rating 3.9

2 (3%) said never

8 (11%) said not often

14 (20%) said sometimes

16 (23%) said usually

30 (43%) said always

5. I can have my say and am listened to

Overall rating 3.5

1(1%) said never

9 (13%) said not often

27 (30%) said sometimes

21 (30%) said usually
12 (17%) said always

6. I can say things at school and not feel bad
Overall rating 3.3
6 (9%) said never
9 (13%) said not often
26 (37%) said sometimes
15 (21%) said usually
14 (20%) said always

It was noted that this question is unclear – unclear about the context of what sort of things, and to whom they are said. Several of the younger children, who were giving their answers verbally, asked if it meant saying “bad things”. This question should be reviewed for future surveys.

7. This school gives me an opportunity to do interesting things
Overall rating 4.0
1 (1%) said never
3 (4%) said not often
21 (30%) said sometimes
17 (24%) said usually
28 (40%) said always

8. I make good friends at school
Overall rating 4.1
2 (3%) said never
5 (7%) said not often
9 (13%) said sometimes
20 (29%) said usually
34 (49%) said always

9. I get along with the teachers at school
Overall rating 4.2
3 (4%) said never
1 (1%) said not often
10 (14%) said sometimes
24 (34%) said usually
32 (46%) said always

10. I like coming to WBPS
Overall rating 4.3
2 (3%) said never
2 (3%) said not often

12 (17%) said sometimes
13 (19%) said usually
41 (59%) said always

In part B students were asked the following open-ended questions:

The things I like best about school are...

Things I would like to see changed are...

Things I need more help with are...

Things that I am good at are...

The subjects I like best are...

Do you have any further comments?

A summary of the responses is given below.

The things I like best about school are...

Some children responded “everything” (3) or listed lots of things (9). For example “you can say what you need to and you can make REALLY good friends. The teachers are really kind and they help you when you get hurt or need help with sums, and they listen when you talk.” “I can be free and I am supported. My school is adventurous. The teachers are helpful. Everyone will support me. Teachers understand “

Some common themes mentioned were

- playing (16)
- friends & teachers & people (15)
- getting help & support (7)
- learning (10)
- Parliament/boys circle/girls circle/Monday Milo (7)
- Out & About (5)
- camps (6)
- swings (6)
- freedom (4)
- trees & bush (8)

Things I would like to see changed are...

It was noted this is a complex question for the younger children, who had some difficulty – though not with understanding the concept of change, as for example they answered that the changing colours of the trees were beautiful, or that it would be nice to change the drinking water into juice or milk. This question should be reviewed for future surveys.

Many respondents said nothing needed to change and they like it as it is (16). Other themes mentioned were

- more space (4), this may have been a reaction to building projects taking up playground space currently.

- more plants and garden (2)
- having toilet closer to class (1),
- concern about one other child's behaviour (1)
- request for specific play equipment (6) e.g. flying fox, trampoline, skate park, motor x track, water slide and pool.
- fixing the net and poles (2),
- comments related to the curriculum include less writing (3), more science (1), more sport (1), iPads (1), more walks (1)

Things I need more help with are...

The most frequent response (24) was they didn't need more help. Some responses related to

- classroom work (7)
- maths (5)
- reading (2)
- writing (5)
- spelling (2)

Some responses focused on social issues

- finding friends (5),
- sorting out problems (1)
- cubbies (2)
- getting on the ball swing (2)

The younger children highlighted needing help if they were hurt (6)

Things that I am good at are...

Many responses involved being a good friend/nice (16), leading (1) and solving problems (1).

Other responses include

- spelling/writing (17)
- maths (17)
- reading (7)
- art/drawing (7)
- music (5)
- sport (5)
- climbing (9)
- active games (14)
- sailing (2)
- playing (5)
- cubbies (4)

One child indicated there was nothing they were good at.

The subjects I like best are...

Three children responded 'everything'. Most children listed several different subjects.

- maths (20)
- reading (12)
- writing (11)
- spelling (3)
- science (10)
- PSP (5)
- Geography/history (3)
- computer (2)
- art (15)
- music (4)
- sport (6)
- other physical activities (4) e.g. walking, swimming
- dance (4)
- cooking (2)

Do you have any further comments?

Most children (35) had no further comment. Other comments were about

- school is fun (8)
- more play equipment wanted (6) e.g. swings, archery, climbing, new net.
- comments relating to personal experience and friends (4)

Parent Review

34 responses were received which is 68 % of the families at the school.

Parents were asked to respond to the following:

What are three things that you think the school does well?

What are three areas that the school could improve on?

Do you feel sufficiently informed about your child's academic and social development and does this meet with your expectations?

Do you feel sufficiently informed about the school management and does this meet with your expectations?

How does your child feel about their school experience?

Have you seen change in your child/ children over time in this school and how would you describe that?

Have you seen change in the school over your time at this school, and how would you describe that?

What changes do you think the school should consider making over the next five to ten years?

Any other comments?

A summary of responses is given below.

1. What are three things you think the school does well?

Responses frequently identified valuing children as individuals and providing opportunities for children to have increased responsibility. Inclusion of both children and families, creating a sense of community was also frequently emphasised, with parents aware of the efforts of staff to foster this environment.

Many parents emphasised the importance of the bushland setting the school is in and the inclusion of nature based play. The continued importance the school places on utilising natural places in camps and excursions was also identified.

Several responses identified the passionate teachers and the respect shown to the children.

“1) They actually listen to parents and respect their opinions about their child's education.

2) Treats children like humans that deserve to be listened to and respected equally to adults.

3) Provide outstanding delivery of education across all programs. With teachers that are actually passionate about teaching. Is amazing the amount of work that is completed.”

2. What are three areas the school could improve on?

Responses to this question were very diverse. The largest group of responses (9) related to communication between teachers or the school and parents. This may relate to the timing of the survey, coming as it did before student reports and parent interviews. Other responses related to resources such as more computers, books and reliable internet access. Several responses related to human resources such as extra time for special needs and kindy children, especially at the beginning of the year.

Several parents commented on the need to maintain the ethos of the school especially through teaching practises such as outside learning, cross classroom activities, NVC (non-violent communication) and utilising more sustainable systems such as vegetable gardens. Several parents indicated they would like to see more team sports to emphasise participation, team values and cooperation. One parent commented on improving physical access for people with young children. Several comments related to the bus and wanting the school to have more control over the operations of the bus.

The second largest group of comments (5) indicated all was OK with the school and didn't list any areas for improvement.

3. Do you feel sufficiently informed about your child's academic and social development and does this meet with your expectations?

The responses were mainly positive. Some parents clarified their “yes” with comments relating to timing of feedback and more teacher initiated feedback. The parents who responded negatively (7) indicated they would like more feedback more often with one response also wanting ideas on things to work on. As with question 2, the number of negative responses may reflect the timing of the survey.

4. Do you feel sufficiently informed about the school management and does this meet with your expectations?

Responses were overwhelmingly positive. Comments found the newsletter and AGM good ways to impart information about management issues. One parent would like more information in the newsletter specifically about the Governing Body meetings. One parent responded that they didn't feel informed and would like more information to everyone.

5. How does your child feel about their school experience?

The responses were overwhelmingly positive, and quite descriptive in conveying how much the children loved school and how they felt. One parent of a kindy child indicated their child struggled a little early on with staying.

“All my children love Woodbury Boston School. They notice how much of a good fit it is for them academically and socially and have never been happier in a school environment. They report loving their teachers and feeling that they have real relationships with their teachers rather than the teacher just being someone who bosses everyone around.”

6. Have you seen change in your child/ children over time in this school and how would you describe that?

Respondents frequently emphasised improvements in self-esteem, confidence and assertion. Some comments simply stated “for the better”, others included improved communication, feeling happier and growing up. One respondent felt one of their children had a decrease in confidence and happiness.

“They are more confident. Always happy to go to school and are motivated to get out the door in the morning to the bus which wasn't previously the case. They are happier. There have been very significant improvements in them academically. They are more likely to take risks and be independent

with an attitude of optimism. They are more settled emotionally. They are better able to communicate their needs and feelings to others. “

“My children have become confident in themselves and know how to relate to other children and adults, effectively in most situations. They have a confidence I don't believe they would have, if they continued attending a public mainstream school. I love the variety of extracurricular skills they have acquired. It has had a positive influence on them wanting to attempt new things in and out of school. They also feel happy and proud of their achievements in the classroom and believe they can choose whatever career they would like, without being daunted by any study needed to attain it, because they don't believe it to be an obstacle. Anything can be achieved if they work at it.”

7. Have you seen change in the school over your time at this school, and how would you describe that?

A significant number of respondents (13) said “no” as they felt they hadn't been at the school long enough to comment. Many respondents felt overall the change was positive and they were happy with the direction of the school.

Some respondents mentioned the increase in numbers of students and felt this was OK as long as the school didn't get too big (some cited as up to 100 as OK), and ratio of adults to children was maintained. One respondent commented that the increased numbers may have resulted in less outdoor teaching activities. The increase in numbers was indicated to be a great benefit by some as it increased diversity and created more opportunity for interaction between age groups.

Several respondents indicated the school grounds or the changes to school buildings as being positive. The changes to the junior school in staff and size was seen as positive. One respondent felt communication had got less and another that the use of NVC had decreased. One respondent noted the increase in external regulation and the challenge to meet these while maintaining the school ethos.

“I have loved watching the increase of families coming to Woodbury and increase of teaching spaces. The direction the school is taking is positive and current.”

“I believe it has become friendlier and more diverse with the larger number of families. Teacher choices have continued to maintain the schools ethos and even add a little 'fresh' enthusiasm. “

8. What changes do you think the school should consider making over the next

five to ten years?

Twelve respondents felt the school was operating well and didn't need to make change. Many respondents (6) felt the school should increase to include high school. Several parents identified physical resources such as a toilet block near the kindy side of school, quiet/art space, more outdoor equipment for the junior students and improved IT particularly toward the senior room. One respondent didn't want a focus on IT in primary school. Several respondents didn't want the school to get too big and one wanted more students. Several parents noted maintaining the ethos of school in amongst change to be important along with future planning. Other changes included adding specialist teachers particularly for special needs, increase marketing to the broader community, having boys groups and an optional t- shirt uniform.

9. Any other comments?

Comments were largely positive (16 of 26) with comments including thanks to the staff, children feeling happy and families welcomed.

“Overall we are very happy with our child’s schooling experience. Thanks so much to all the staff for their hard work and passion!”

“After just having a very brief experience in the public school system this year I'm so glad to have had Woodbury Boston as an option for my children. The difference between the two systems is stark and the effort, care, attention and respect that is given at Woodbury is very noticeable in contrast.”

Other feedback included investigation of IT needs; increasing help from the school community for grants/funding opportunities, looking at healthier food choices particularly with artificial additives, and including extracurricular work when children need extra help.