

Parents survey responses – April 2024

1: Would you like to see us do more visits each year?

Yes 67.90% No 32.10%

This indicates that there isn't an overwhelmingly strong feeling either way, however if we are able to organise more visits at little or no additional cost, of course we will.

2: Do you feel that the visits your children have participated in have been good value for money?

Yes 96.40% No 3.60%

3: How much have your children enjoyed the visits that they have taken part in?

Loved them all 85.70% Most of them were good 14.30% Didn't enjoy them 0

4: Please tell us about any visit that your child has not enjoyed or that you felt was not good value.

Responses to this question were almost totally positive, with Leeds Castle, The British Wildlife Centre and the visit by MG Leonard being among the favourites.

A couple of parents stated that they felt the trip to RAF Hendon was not as successful for their child, as the coach journey was long. When planning trips for our pupils, we do consider the length of the trip and try to keep all journeys under an hour if possible. On this occasion, considering the age of the children, we felt that the benefits from visiting the venue far outweighed the longer journey. If we were to repeat this trip, we would certainly suggest to parents that children had an additional snack to eat on the way home as was suggested in the survey.

5: Has your child come home and talked about a visitor that we have had in school recently?

Yes 96.40% No 3.60%

That's encouraging and shows that your/our money isn't being wasted.

6: FOBS usually pay for visitors in school. Would you be prepared to pay a nominal amount (less than £5) so that we could have more visitors to enhance the children's learning?

Yes 91.10% No 8.90%

This response is great, as it gives us permission to find even more opportunities to bring our curriculum to life and plan those memorable learning experiences.

7: Please tell us what you think about our annual residential trip to Bowles and

8: Would you prefer a residential trip once every two years rather than every year so that pupils just go once?

We had a variety of interesting and helpful responses to this question, both positive and negative.

Most parents seem happy with their children's Bowles experience and although most mentioned the cost being high, appreciate that this is likely to be the case with any similar provider.

32.% said they would prefer a residential trip every other year, whilst 68.% said they would like it to continue each year so that pupils go twice. This is clearly not a clear cut decision to make.

In the past, we have researched many activity centres similar to Bowles and always found other centres to be lacking by comparison. The reasons that we have chosen to keep going to Bowles over the years and repeat the trip in year 5 and 6 are:

- The activities are high quality, both in terms of resources (real rocks to climb and a dry ski slope) and staff. The leaders are properly trained and qualified and offer teaching in each area to a high level. Other activity centres often employ teenagers without proper training and do not have the same range of physical resources.
- The living accommodation is far superior to many we have looked at.
- Compared with other providers that we have researched, pupils get more activity time each day. At Bowles the activities run until about 9pm whereas other providers usually finish at dinner time allowing “free time” during the evening.
- The location of Bowles means that children feel as if they are going away, but it is close enough so that if the need arises (and it has in the past), pupils can go each morning and return home each evening.
- As our year group cohorts are small, just sending one year group would likely mean our pupils being merged with, and overshadowed by, a bigger school.
- If we only sent year 6 each year, the cost to parents would be higher – the cost of the coach would be split between fewer children and parents would need to cover the cost of a supply teacher to teach the remaining year 5 pupils in Mill.
- For some pupils in year 5, one or two activities are very challenging and they may not get the most out of them at the first attempt. Returning as a year 6, gives another opportunity to overcome that challenge.
- In the situation described above, year 6 can (and usually do) offer support and encouragement to their year 5 friends.
- For those pupils who are nervous about being away from home, talking to pupils who have already been can ease those anxieties.
- If we were to go every other year, Bowles would not keep our regular time slot and we would have to negotiate a new 3 day booking each year. This could mean going at a more expensive time of year, or in the midst of winter weather.

One parent suggested that Bowles may not be suitable for all children as the 3 days are filled with outdoor and adventurous activities and don't cover any other areas of the curriculum. My experience is that most centres offering residential breaks for large groups of children are activity based - I am not aware of any offering computing or art for example.

Another parent rightly pointed out that when we ask parents of children in year 4 to initially pay the deposit for the trip in year 5, we do not send out much information about the trip. This point is very valid and although most parents seem to become aware of Bowles as children approach the upper juniors, we will make sure that more information is forthcoming when the time comes to think about paying the deposit. Unfortunately, this does have to be early as we have to pay Bowles to secure our booking, but we also take the point that straight after Christmas is probably not the best time to ask for the deposit to be paid. This will change going forward.

Although the majority of parents feel happy with the current organisation, as a large number are not, we will continue to look at other (cheaper) options for the future. As we become more involved with the other schools in the Hurst Educational Trust, it might be that opportunities arise to plan residential or day visits with them, lowering the cost and boosting the numbers. We may also have access to minibuses for some trips which would lower the cost to parents.

If we do decide to change to a trip for year 6 only in the future, we will try and arrange something for year 5 to lessen the inevitable disappointment that our younger pupils will feel.

9: How would you rate the range of clubs offered?

Excellent for a small school 48.20% Good 35.70% Could be improved by16.10%

10: Do you feel these activities are easily accessible for all students?

Yes 78.60% No 21.40%

Most parents who answered no to this, were parents of younger children wanting younger versions of the clubs for older children. Already, we have responded to this and now offer 2 art clubs for older/younger juniors and one for infants.

11: Are the clubs well-organised and communicated?

Definitely 41.10% Usually 51.80% Not really 7.10%

Most comments here were about the weather and late notice of cancellation or not knowing early enough about the following term's offering. In response to this, we now send out the club schedule at the end of term for the following one with early confirmation of places given. We will also continue to look for easier ways to manage the booking of clubs. We can't control the weather but do appreciate cancelling a club at short notice may cause difficulties, so will always make alternative arrangements for the child whilst awaiting collecting.

Unfortunately, STEM club hasn't been very well received. It was organised in response to parent request but was disappointing and not as we originally thought. We will not be running that again.

There were also lots of positive comments about the clubs we do offer, the booking/payment system and how much children are enjoying them.

12: Due to a lack of appropriate space and numbers of children required to make clubs viable, we are at capacity in terms of variety of clubs offered. Would you like to see any clubs discontinued and replaced with something different?

We try to keep a range of clubs each term, but as some of you rightly pointed out, we are somewhat limited by available space. Teachers are usually working in classrooms after school, so the only indoor spaces are the hall and library. These have to be shared with OV club, which we are very keen to continue, but obviously that also lessens the space available.

Some suggestions were concerning the use of more outside providers, particularly art. In response to this we have set up our junior art club twice a week with Andy Bartlett, a local artist.

Some parents asked for certain clubs like football to be held on more than one day per week, but unfortunately we cannot accommodate this as it would mean prioritising football over some other club activities.

Another suggestion was that more pupils did tennis at the tennis courts in the village and were escorted there after school if parents could not take their own child. Sadly, this is not something that we can offer, but if a group of parents were able to set up a rota, I'm sure this would work well.

Another suggestion was that we offer a choir club. This is something that we would love to offer and have been actively seeking a choir leader for years. If you know of anyone who might be able to lead a choir for us, please do let us know.

13: Do you support our charity events?

Yes 100% No 0

14: Does your child enjoy these events?

Yes 98.20% No 1.80%

15: What do you think about the number of events we do?

Too many 5.40% Not enough 1.81% About right 92.90%

16: Is your child a pupil leader?

Yes 42.90% No 57.10%

Question 17: Do you think that the introduction of Art Ambassadors, Captain of Media, Eco Warriors etc has been a good thing?

Yes 71.40% No 1.18% More details 26.80%

Responses about these roles were almost entirely positive, with parents either thinking it has been a good initiative or commenting about the positive impact on their own child. A couple of parents felt that the roles should only be for our oldest pupils, but we felt that all pupils deserved the opportunity to show us their commitment and ambition to give something back to our school community.

To those parents unsure about the details of these roles, please do look back at past newsletters which have featured our ambassadors, warriors, captains and leaders.

