

Polehampton CE Infant and Junior Schools

Focus on Feedback: Responses



Spring 2025

Below are the comments and our responses for this term's Focus On Feedback. Please note that, where similar questions/comments have been raised, we have used one parent feedback comment/blended a few comments to illustrate the general view, rather than duplicating. There were also some questions which were answered in the previous feedback surveys, so we have not added those again.

Thank you all for engaging in the latest round of Focus on Feedback– we have found it very useful and appreciate your comments.

Mr Phil Sherwood
Executive Headteacher



Helen Medcalf
Head of School



Liz Castell
Head of School



[From infant site] "I'd like to request that you bring back spellings to be learnt at home. It would be really helpful if she could come home with a list to practice to supplement her learning at school."

Parents are more than welcome to ask the class teacher what spellings would be beneficial to practice at home. We will take on board your feedback and consult with teachers, and consider sending out the national curriculum spelling lists again, in addition to medium and high frequency words, and common exception words.

"While the school is making great efforts to make children learn effectively, I would suggest small amount of written homework to be assigned daily to children based on the topics being covered at school. This would not only make parents aware of the specifics done at school, but also challenge the child to solve /answer questions independently at home."

"Research from Johns Hopkins University highlights that small amounts of curriculum-based homework can reinforce learning through repetition, which aligns with the school's emphasis on Times Tables Rockstars. While I understand the school's no-homework policy is based on research, introducing a small amount of homework could support retention."

Homework is a topic that schools will be pondering forever more! The evidence base is predominantly for secondary aged children. A study by Hull University in 2022 found, "...it is less clear that homework is useful for children at primary

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school (ages 5 to 11) or in early years education (ages 3 to 5)" and little research has been undertaken for primary aged pupils.

When deciding whole school approaches like this we, must consider the best-fit as well as what evidence tells us about children's learning. We look to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) for a lot of education-specific research: the EEF report the following four key considerations for homework, based on current research:

1. Homework has a positive impact on average (+ 5 months), particularly with pupils in secondary schools.
2. Some pupils may not have a quiet space for home learning – it is important for schools to consider how home learning can be supported (e.g. through providing homework clubs for pupils).
3. Homework that is linked to classroom work tends to be more effective. In particular, studies that included feedback on homework had higher impacts on learning.
4. It is important to make the purpose of homework clear to pupils (e.g. to increase a specific area of knowledge, or to develop fluency in a particular area).

We have also considered homework clubs, but again these are more effective for secondary-age pupils who are more independent. A club of 20 pupils from all different ages requiring support would not be able to be staffed effectively to provide the right help for each pupil. With regard to homework linked to in-class learning, this is applicable only if the pupils are at a similar level. Otherwise, it requires a significant amount of adaptation.

[YR parent] "A written schedule of the typical weekly pattern somewhere would be useful. For instance, PE changed dates at some point last term but none of the Blueberries parents were clear whether this was a permanent or temporary measure. A high-level timetable - just with PE, forest camp, any other regular activities which parents should be aware of would be very useful."

We agree! We will ask that teachers communicate this with parents.

"Our children participate in a few extracurricular activities (PE, football.) The provision provided, particularly from Safeguarding perspective at pick up is mixed. Some of the supervisors always ask for a pin, others don't (including to be clear supervisors who I have never met before - so it isn't just a case of familiarity.) This system is inadequate as consistency is key. Either a pin is required or it isn't."

These are down to the safeguarding policies of these extracurricular clubs. All the safeguarding procedures are reviewed by school, and we are satisfied that, although each different, procedures are evident for collection. That said, we will feed this back to the clubs as we agree that relying on familiarity when staff change is not as robust as it could be.

"Could you comment on the amount of homework that children receive in year two please. Aside from reading, there has been no homework for year 2 children this term and we think it would be good to have regular homework which could be optional if it doesn't suit all families. Many thanks for all the hard work!"

Thank you. Children in Year 2 should be reading 5 x a week and completing NumBots 3 x a week for 5 minutes. This was the information sent at the beginning of the school year.

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“After the impactful assembly regarding exercise which had the parental WhatsApp buzzing, could the school consider more frequent PE lessons for the kids to help families keep them fit (perhaps twice rather than once weekly)? Or, if not, reinstate some form of daily physical activity like the field run or equivalent? I realise there is likely a lot to cram in the day but this would seem to be in line with the message so passionately delivered”

We are keen to continue to promote physical exercise and, with our current offer, meet or exceed the government’s guidance for time physically active. Unfortunately, there are around 13 subjects to teach each week and we have them competing for time, so are unable to change the timetable from one afternoon to two. The Daily Mile (the field run) had little impact on pupils and reduced our morning learning time, so we have prioritised Phonics, English and Maths at this time slot instead. To counterbalance the removal of the Daily Mile, we have ensured regular movement breaks for pupils in class.

“It’s such a shame that presence on the gate is possible for when ofsted visited the juniors but not regularly.”

We understand that presence is important, and we strive for this too. To dispel any confusion, senior leaders were not out on the playground during Ofsted, but do make it out when possible at other times. During Ofsted, senior leaders were in meetings with the Ofsted Inspector at the gate opening time, and the other inspector was out on the gate for one morning. In addition, all class teachers must be in their classrooms to greet pupils and, therefore, cannot be out in the playground or on the gates. As senior leaders, we must cover four different entrances (across infants and juniors) each day, which is not physically possible. Therefore, as much as we would like, we cannot always be on the gate. We will continue to work hard to be out as much as possible, but if we are not, it is because we are inside the building ensuring the education for your children is the highest quality possible.

“When will parent feedback be visible on the website please?”

All Focus on Feedback responses can be located here: [Polehampton C of E Infant & Junior School - Parent Feedback](#)

[no year group provided] “Can spare trainers be kept at school? Appreciate storage may be tricky but would be helpful.”

Yes, the juniors have storage for this. If this is for infants, please speak to your child’s teacher.

“Why are bulletins sometimes delayed?”

Fridays are often a challenging day for getting communications out, as a number of events can occur (including high-priority safeguarding meetings). Therefore, on occasion, bulletins have had to go out on the following Monday. We have discussed sending all bulletins on a Monday, but previous feedback suggested that a Friday was best. However, we will continue to review this. Please rest assured that it is not through want of trying if the bulletin does not make it out on a Friday.

“RE. Polecats: I have noticed the menus in school containing processed foods such as Frankfurters/processed meats . I am aware these are a favourite of children, but nutritionally they offer very little. Could revisions be made?”

We appreciate the comments on this, and will take into account your suggestion for revisions. We are currently advertising for a Polecats OSC Cook, so when this post is filled we can discuss new menu ideas as the Polecats Cook

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will have additional dedicated time to prepare meals. If anyone knows of someone interested in this role, the vacancy details can be located on our website: [Polehampton C of E Infant & Junior School - Vacancies](#)

“It was very disappointing that the communication regarding the opening times of polecats breakfast club (that was sent out at the end of the summer term wasn't what was actually offered) - i.e. it was suggested that it would be opening earlier.”

The initial poster sent out to parents in April 2024 stated a 07:40 time to open, but this was not possible due to our duty to keep working hours the same when we followed the TUPE process and brought staff from the previous provider over to Polehampton's team. The time was amended from V1 to V2 of the poster and was clearly stated with a number of months' notice before the club started. We will continue to take staff availability and user demand into account when considering start times, but at the moment we must remain with our start time of 07:45. Sorry that we cannot adjust the opening hours at this time.

“It seems a mixed message to be suggesting screen time should be kept to a minimum at home, then also suggesting the regular use of apps such as Numbots, Letterjoin and Purple Maths. This causes bad behaviour at home. It also appears there is quite a reliance on Youtube during school, particularly PE (DannyGo, yoga etc).

It seems sad that all PE is indoors, couldn't some sessions be outdoors so the children can get fresh air?

We understand the idea of 'mixed messages' with technology, but the proven effectiveness of games such as Numbots dramatically improve pupils' skill in core mathematical concepts. These are chosen carefully to support learning and all have an educational value. In school, YouTube and other online videos may be used to enhance lessons and provide expert teaching. When doing Yoga for example, having an engaging and highly-skilled athlete demonstrating the moves for pupils allows them to see the expectation much more clearly than our staff having to be experts in reading, writing and maths as well as yoga, street dance, fine art and some of the other aspects of the curriculum we teach. We are always mindful of the use of technology in school and would like to reassure families that it is used appropriately and with consideration. With regards to PE, the gymnastics unit needs to be taught indoors so there will always be some units that are taught indoors. Rest assured, we are always keen to get the children outside.

My child is very happy at the school, and we get the sense the teachers really care about making the children happy little people. We viewed four prep schools when searching for a school, and felt Polehampton was overall superior to all of these.”

Thank you – we appreciate your support of us at Polehampton.

“I wanted to share some thoughts on how the school could improve communication with parents to better support our children's learning:

Assessment Feedback

It would be helpful if assessment results and papers were shared with parents. This would give us a clearer understanding of our children's progress and areas needing support. With only two short parent-teacher meetings a year, more transparency would allow parents to stay better informed without needing to ask questions at pick-up.

Assessments papers are only a third of our assessment processes, so we would be a little reticent to provide this information without context. This is also reliant on parents themselves having the understanding and/or time to do this, which could make it inequitable for our school community. This is also why we provide a report after autumn and

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spring terms (and then a full, final written report at the end of summer term), which provides additional information to parents.

Homework and Curriculum Updates

The annual curriculum email is useful but doesn't provide enough detail about what's being taught and when. Regular termly updates on key subjects like English and maths would help parents support their children's learning at home, particularly in the absence of homework. Overall, I believe more regular updates on assessments and the curriculum would help parents feel more involved and reduce the need for frequent ad-hoc questions.

We will liaise with other schools to see if and how they do this and make a point of considering this as a senior team. Thank you for suggesting this.

Thank you for considering these suggestions, and I appreciate all the work you do to support the children."

Thank you for your engagement with this process.

"Could you look into using accelerated reader renaissance please?"

We have investigated Accelerated Reader with a local partners and it is unlikely that we will roll this out for all pupils due to the effective and comprehensive nature of our current school reading system.

"Do all year group teachers require notification as to who their child is going home with if not their own parent/carer?"

Yes, we can confirm they do. However, if a parent calls late in the morning/day, it is always more challenging to get these messages to class as there could be a number of parents all doing the same. Therefore, we ask that parents let us know who their child is going home with (if different to usual) as soon as possible, and ideally the day before. That way, any last-minute emergency changes are the minority of communications and can be prioritised accordingly.

"Some parents are using infant school car park for dropping children off, is there a way to make this request please?"

For some very specific cases (e.g. a child has broken their leg), we can make arrangements to support this. Please do email the school office about this if you feel you would like to make a request.

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