

Polehampton CE Infant and Junior Schools

Focus on Feedback: Responses



Autumn 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

Mrs Helen Medcalf
Head of School

Mrs Liz Castell
Head of School



Perhaps a polite reminder to parents not to stand blocking the thoroughfare at drop off and pick up as other parents try to walk past. The new Y1 area is clogged with parents chatting, making it hard to get through. Ideally they'd stand along the fence like last year.

We hope this has improved and will can put reminders on the bulletin if this continues to be an issue.

My daughter is very wary to go to the loo at school. She comments on a number of issues: the toilets frequently blocking or overflowing, door locks not working and no toilet paper. I wonder if the standards of the toilets can be looked into?

Mr Rance met with the manager of the cleaning team at both sites before half term and there has been a change of cleaners (who are responsible for soap and toilet roll) so we hope these issues have been resolved. We wholeheartedly agree that toilets need to be in the best possible shape!

My daughter hasn't been drinking a lot at school. I wonder if it could be considered whether children are allowed bottles on their tables.

If you feel your child is not drinking enough at school, please do speak to your child's class teachers. Water bottles are no longer on tables as this can be very distracting as well as a high-risk factor for spillages! Teachers are very used to prompting certain children throughout the day, reminding them to drink so please do reach out.

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Could the school consider whether a Breakfast Club option could be considered on-site at the Infant school now it is run by the school? Always seems a bit cruel making the littlest ones walk across the block before their day of learning.

We are continuing to review this to see if it is viable and sustainable.

Really appreciated the organised collation and communication of dates for this term.

Would be helpful to be given an overview about what the SATs are and what are children will be working towards this year.

The Year 6 teachers will hold a SATs meeting in the spring term. This is standard practice for us; we tend not to focus too heavily on this at the beginning of the year and instead treat it like the start of any other.

It seems a shame that so many of the clubs at the Infant School aren't running this term due to numbers. I was sad not to enrol my daughter on a few of them, but I can't make the 4.15 pick up on multiple days. Perhaps it could be explored that more are run from the Junior School and the Infant school could walk across with the ASC, do their class, then either join ASC or be picked up as normal.

We are under no illusion about the impact this has on many families; we are looking at ways in which we make this viable.

I understand the policy about homework but can we have optional work to do for those families that are keen on daily work?

Parents are always welcome to do any home learning with their children, if this fits with their child and their family. We wrote expectations for the year groups on curriculum PowerPoints to families; as a way to help parents practise skills if they want. As a rule of thumb, basic number skills such as number bonds and timetables are essential practice as well as common exception words for your child's year group. There are resources on our website for maths and spelling.

Could we access ASC from the same entrance as breakfast club (the side by the youth centres/ doctors)

We continue to explore how this can be managed.

Please can fallen fruit be collected up more regularly from the infant fields. It really could attract unwanted pests. Many thanks

We have been working to improve this with our site team and are looking at improved systems to avoid this when the next batch of fruits fall!

Key info ie confirming which day PE would be for her class was quite late - the pictorial timetable is very helpful but about a week late in terms of being able to prep. The mum chat on what's app has been very helpful filling in these gaps for the new parents.

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This has been noted, and we can only apologise for this, we had hoped that this information would be out very early enough for everyone to manage so we will try and refine this further next academic year.

Very sad that half the extra curricular clubs had to be cancelled. Doesn't appear to have been well managed as there was a lot of confusion as to whether the child needed to be 5 to attend, which means sign up might have been a lot higher than actually was in the end. Maybe there is a way for the school to facilitate signup that doesn't involve individually contacting each club that makes it easier to gauge interest in numbers before payment has to be made, and now refunded?

All our clubs are external suppliers so this is not possible; they have their own booking systems and rules of which we have little influence. We of course try to use suppliers who accommodate under 5s.

I recently saw in the school bulletin that Polehampton has celebrated five years as part of the Keys Academy Trust. It's great to see this milestone recognised, and it made me reflect on what being part of the Trust has meant for Polehampton so far.

With Polehampton currently rated "Good" by Ofsted and Sonning recently achieving an "Outstanding" rating and being recognised as one of the top 300 primary schools in the country, this feels like a good moment to consider how we can continue to raise standards here too. As Mr Sherwood is Executive Head across several schools, it would be encouraging to understand how his expertise and leadership will be shared more widely so that all schools within the Trust can work towards the same level of excellence.

It might also be helpful for our school community to see more of Mr Sherwood in person. Increased visibility and engagement from the Executive Head could help strengthen the connection between the Trust and parents, and reassure us that every school is benefitting equally from being part of the Keys Academy.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and aspirations for our school community. Raising standards is a shared goal and it's important to acknowledge that school improvement is a journey that takes time. Each school has its own unique context, including demographics and specific challenges, which means progress can look different from one setting to another.

The role of an Executive Head is primarily focused on setting the strategic direction and ensuring alignment across schools within the Trust, rather than managing day-to-day operations. This often means their work is less visible, as much of it happens behind the scenes to support leadership teams and drive long-term improvement.

We appreciate the desire for greater visibility and engagement and we will explore opportunities for Mr Sherwood to connect more with the school community. Strengthening that link can help reassure parents that every school benefits equally from being part of Keys Academy.

We want to take an active part in our children's education, but don't have a good sense of lessons they are doing, the standards expected (including which books to be on) or how the day is structured. This would be incredibly helpful to engage with the children and make them more comfortable with school.

The best starting point is always your child's class teacher, as they can give you specific guidance on what your child is working on and how you can support at home.

Our timetables are available on the school website, which outline the structure of the day. We also encourage parents to ask about curriculum expectations, including which reading books or resources are most appropriate for your child's stage. If anything is

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unclear, please don't hesitate to reach out; teachers are always happy to explain how lessons are organised and share ideas for supporting learning at home.

The school puts a great emphasis on sporting achievement which is fantastic for children who enjoy and excel in those areas. Will there be opportunities for children who thrive in other areas of the curriculum such as maths, art, science and music? It would be really uplifting for those children to be able to share their passions in the same way Polehampton celebrates sport.

We celebrate other achievements in assemblies such as music, dance and art competitions that the children partake in. We also celebrate children who have taken part in maths challenges, for instance. We have several children who have showcased their trophies and medals from chess competitions and some who have shared their coding successes. Sport is so huge at Polehampton, mostly because of the number of children (and families) who engage with it. We'd like to take this opportunity to share that we do celebrate lots of other skills and interests with the whole schools.

The new Meditracker form does not state the time of injury. The time that the email is sent is not the time of the injury as I have received an incident report after my child has left school for the day. I have asked on numerous occasions for the school to record the time of the injury as a matter of urgency. Knowing the injury time will inform further treatment if needed. Not only that but if a child has more than one injury in one day, a timeline of events would be helpful for example, was the nose bleed a result of the head injury etc.

We have spoken to staff about stating the time on the Meditracker as there is no actual 'drop down' action to do so. We agree that for many injuries, it is important to be aware of when they happened so this should now be happening.

Is there any future plan to have a Head of the Infant School based at the school Monday to Friday all day everyday. It makes absolutely no sense having two heads as well as a deputy head at the Junior School with no-one at the Infant School to deal with the youngest children in the school. As parents, if we ever have any type of concern when dropping off our children we should be able to speak to someone face to face and not wait to get home in order to send an email to the school. Pleas could you advise us if this situation is ever going to change?

We'd like to clarify how leadership works at Polehampton. Our school has two Co-Heads of School, which together provide the equivalent of one full-time Head. Both Mrs Medcalf and Mrs Castell work three days each, sharing responsibilities equally across the two sites. Miss Ackerman, our Assistant Head, also splits her time 50:50.

Each site has a Phase Lead; senior staff who are class-based and well equipped to manage parental concerns. This structure ensures strong leadership while keeping leaders closely connected to teaching and learning.

Schools the size of Polehampton Infants would not sustain a full-time Head Teacher, and research shows that an isolated leadership model is less effective. Our distributed leadership approach is considered best practice and is widely used in schools of a similar size.

Because we operate across two sites, it's not always possible for a senior leader to be on the gate every day. However, we are often on the playground on Mondays and Fridays, depending on which site I'm based at. We encourage parents to speak directly with class teachers, who are best placed to answer questions about your child's learning and wellbeing. For anything else, please contact the school office, and your query will be directed to the most appropriate person.

We believe this model provides strong, collaborative leadership and ensures every child benefits from a team approach.

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Lastly, can I ask why all emails need to go via the office and then forwarded onto members of staff? I understand that it is to stop staff members from being bombarded excessively however I don't think that all emails should have to be read by office staff first before being forwarded onto other members of staff especially with regard to confidentiality or safeguarding issues. Not only that but at some point should a parent have a concern with a member of office staff then who are we required to email?

All staff adhere the staff code of conduct and safeguarding policies we have in school, and we therefore trust that the office staff treat emails with sensitivity and professionalism. It is common practice for this system to be in place. If there was a concern about a member of the office staff reading sensitive information, we would urge you to phone the school and ask to speak to a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Just wanted to recognise the efforts of Mrs Newman in taking on the Sports Coach role. I'm hearing of lots of additional extra curricular opportunities like Hockey festival and Rugby taster session and great that there will be a daily walk, run or jog on non-PE days like when running used to be a daily part of school life. Polehampton already has an amazing sporting record but great that the leadership team are pushing for more given the clear importance to wellbeing and health. Many thanks!

She is loving her new role!

According to the new guidelines on RSHE 15 July 2025 At which age will this be starting and at what age will parents be able to remove their children from these lessons?

Parents cannot withdraw their child from Relationships Education. This is compulsory in all primary schools and covers topics such as friendships, family relationships, respect, and online safety.

Parents can request to withdraw their child from any non-statutory sex education that is taught in primary school. This typically includes lessons about how babies are made and born, intercourse and contraception, if these are offered outside the science curriculum.

Parents cannot withdraw their child from statutory science lessons, which include some elements of human reproduction (e.g., learning about the life cycle and how animals, including humans, reproduce).

We inform parents before we begin teaching anything that children can be withdrawn from.

We are nearly 3 weeks into the new School Year and my child who is in Year 2 has yet to be read with by a member of staff as there is no comment in his reading diary. Nothing from school only comments from home. Is this a part of the new reading scheme? If yes, when can we as parents expect to receive informal feedback with regard to reading like we have had for the last two years I.e At least once a week from a member of staff in the reading record.

Listening to children is an essential part of our daily practice, even if their reading record isn't updated every day. During Read Write Inc. sessions, children take part in partner talk and read aloud to each other, giving them regular opportunities to share ideas and practise reading. Teachers also check in with every child during lessons to hear them read and respond to their progress. Our entire phonics scheme is centred around children reading every day and adults hearing this. We have only recently embedded this approach with complete fidelity to reading records are not given the same status that they once were, in terms of evidencing reading at school. They are, however, incredibly important to monitor a child's reading habits at home.

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Fairness . It seems that for sports teams teachers are picking the same children for the activity each year. When others may really be trying out side of school in clubs to improve but this is never recognised. I don't believe the school are inclusive and wanting to win overrides those that try.

Please email the school with further information so that we can unpick this. Thank you.

The school offers wonderful opportunities through sport and it would be great if children who are less inclined towards sports were also given opportunities to represent their house or school in other areas.

Activities such as quizzes, maths competitions, and music or art events would enable a wider range of pupils to feel involved in school life and proud to represent their houses. For example, Quiz Club runs inter-school competitions that I know some local state and prep schools have taken part in. Similarly, there are a number of maths competitions that the school could get involved in.

We do partake in these competitions; for example, we do the Primary maths challenge every year! In the past we have also entered chess tournaments. We would urge parents to send any competitions our way, in case we miss them! We know there are lots of children who would thrive in these.

We also attend TKAT North Hub events such as Equine Care, Task Master, Den Building etc.

The Junior School debate club was a great initiative and hopefully it continues this year too. Another idea could be a lunchtime Chess Club (which I believe was mentioned at one of the open evenings).

It will be! Mr Monnington has been focusing on his class and it will resume in due course.

Lunches for Year 2 - Firstly, to say I think the lunch staff do a fantastic job, and they all seem really caring towards my child. (We get lots of positive feedback from her). I've just noticed that there have been a few occasions where an option has run out for the Year 2s or that they may be only getting half of a jacket potato when they choose this option - which doesn't fill her up enough for the rest of the day, particularly when she has a club. I appreciate Years 2s need to eat lunch later, but please can they make sure they are getting filling portions (of what they wanted).

We have forwarded this feedback onto Caterlink!

Reading - can I confirm that Year 2s will still read with an adult at least once a week, whatever level they are at? I don't think my child has down so yet, and she seems to be visiting the library less, and I don't want her to lose this enthusiasm. [I'm currently fairly busy on a project, but hopefully when this settles down I'd be happy to come in and support reading on a regular basis for her teacher if that would be helpful/desirable - as I started doing at the end of Year 1]].

Volunteer listeners are always welcome, please email the school office.

Please see the information re: Read, Write Inc above. Children off of a phonics scheme take part in guided reading sessions daily.

Will there be an update evening/morning for Year 2 parents on plans for the year, curriculum, spellings etc and what will happen with Year 2 SATs?

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There are no longer SATs in Year 2; we replaced curriculum mornings with the curriculum PowerPoints that were sent at the beginning of term. This was for several reasons but mostly accessibility for all parents; on these were important curriculum objectives for Year 2 (and indeed every year group).

Some consideration of options around mini bus provision would be invaluable as we are struggling with a lot of the sports fixtures. Many thanks

We have also explored this option but finding minibus drivers is more of a challenge than located a minibus!

Peculiar that our reception child has more homework than our older child! Consistency across schools is paramount please.

We have spoken to the Reception team and they shared what the children have been introduced to for their phonics. They have stated that they are not setting homework, nor has there been an expectation for any work to be completed.

It is a concern that the junior reception phone doesn't get answered (during open hours) for an extended period and only gives the option of leaving a voicemail. This had happened on three differing occasions. Appreciate staff are busy but in an emergency this is problematic.

The office is manned for as much as is humanly possible, that said, there have been some issues with the phone system which we believe have been rectified. If this happens again, please email the office to let them know.

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