



Service Children's Education: Survey of Parental Views

Final Report

**Karen White
Helen Marshall
Peter Rudd**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Service Children's Education (SCE) is responsible for the provision of education for the children of Ministry of Defence (MoD) personnel stationed around the world (not including those stationed in the United Kingdom). All of the schools and Foundation Stage settings run by SCE follow the National Curriculum for England and administer national tests and assessments. SCE schools are monitored and assessed by Ofsted. Teachers employed by SCE schools have been trained in the United Kingdom although SCE provide training updates to ensure schools are aware of changes in education in the UK.

The schools are situated in nine countries: Belgium, Belize, Brunei, Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Germany, Gibraltar, Italy and the Netherlands; and together are attended by more than 10,000 children (including more than 1,400 children in the FS1 settings). Each FS1 setting is linked to, and managed by, a primary school. In total, there are 34 FS1 settings, 33 Primary schools, one Middle school and six Secondary schools.

As outlined on their website¹, 'SCE seeks to provide a first class system of schools and educational support services and aims to provide an effective and efficient education service, from Foundation Stage through to sixth form, and to enable children to benefit from their residence abroad'.

SCE recognise the value of the views of the parents of pupils at the schools they are responsible for and as a result they have commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to conduct a yearly survey to gather the opinions of parents since 2004. Each year the survey has gathered the views of parents of pupils in all stages of SCE education from Foundation Stage 1 settings up to Sixth Form. SCE are also committed to achieving the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes: to be healthy, to stay safe, to enjoy and achieve, to make a positive contribution and to achieve economic well-being, and consequently in 2007 the survey was redesigned in order to gather parents' views on each of these outcomes.

This report contains the findings from the 2009 survey.

¹ <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Education/SCE/ServiceChildrensEducation.htm> (accessed on 12/11/09)

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this survey was to gather the views of parents of SCE pupils in the 2008/09 academic year in relation to their child's education and in particular how satisfied they were with the education their child received and how schools are progressing in terms of meeting the ECM outcomes. It also looked to identify any areas for improvement that SCE and schools could work on. The survey was designed to build on the 2007 and 2008 questionnaire so that time based comparisons could be made where appropriate. Two new statements were added this year in relation to the leadership of schools and parents' views on their child's enjoyment of school.

1.3 Research methods

The survey was carried out between June and September 2009. Copies of the questionnaires were sent to all 40 schools and 34 FS1 settings. Questionnaires were sent directly to the schools for distribution to parents of their pupils. Enclosed with each copy of the questionnaire were a newsletter explaining the purpose of the survey and a return envelope (postage paid) for parents to send the completed questionnaire directly back to NFER. Each school was sent enough copies of the questionnaire for every pupil, plus a number of spare questionnaires for any new pupils. Parents were asked to complete one questionnaire per family, in relation to their experience with the child that had attended the school the longest. The team at NFER used email and telephone reminders to check that the questionnaires had been received by schools, and to encourage schools to remind parents to complete and return the survey. Most schools said that they would remind parents via a school newsletter, as they had done last year.

Completed questionnaires were received from 39 of the 40 schools and 27 of the 34 FS1 settings. The total numbers of questionnaires despatched and received are shown in Table 1.1, along with the response rates. The response rates are lower than in 2008; this is likely to be because this year the project started later in the academic year than previous years, which meant that the period during which parents could return their questionnaires was shorter than in previous years. In addition, as mentioned above, some questionnaires did not arrive at the schools before the end of the summer term because they went by surface mail rather than air mail. In an attempt to remedy this and to improve the response rate, the survey period was extended so that parents

could return their completed questionnaire until the end of September 2009: this did result in slightly more questionnaires being received.

Table 1.1 Number of questionnaires despatched and returned

	Number of questionnaires despatched*	Number of questionnaires returned	% of despatched questionnaires returned
FS1 settings	1645	248	15
Primary schools	6546	1003	15
Secondary schools	2529	238	9

**The number of questionnaires sent was based on the number of pupils in the school, plus five spare questionnaires per school for each FS1 setting and ten spare questionnaires per school for secondary schools and primary schools.*

In line with the surveys in 2007 and 2008, three versions of the questionnaire were developed and distributed – one each for the FS1 settings, primary schools and secondary schools. The middle school was sent enough copies of the primary questionnaire for pupils up to and including Year 6, while pupils in Year 7 and above were provided with copies of the secondary school version of the questionnaire. In one school, owing to the high proportion of non-English speaking parents, the questionnaire was translated into their primary language, to ensure that all parents had an equal opportunity to provide their feedback.

As previously mentioned, the survey for 2009 was designed to build on the version circulated in 2007 and in 2008. All of the questions from the 2008 questionnaire were retained, and two statements were added at the request of SCE. These statements related to the leadership of the school, and parents' views on their child's enjoyment of school or the FS1 setting.

Most of the questions were closed, attitudinal scale questions. However two open-ended questions inviting parents to say what they thought the school did well, and what could be improved, were retained at the end of the survey. The NFER team conducted analyses of these open questions and the findings are presented in Sections 2.4, 3.4 and 4.4.

The findings presented in this report reflect the views of a sample of parents from most of the FS1 settings, primary schools and secondary schools supported by SCE. However, it is important to note that we do not have information on how representative the parents who responded are of all parents of SCE children, and

therefore we cannot be certain that the findings presented reflect the views of non-responding parents.

The results are presented by school phase, with the percentage response to each question displayed in tables throughout the report. The percentages shown in the tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Where figures have been presented in the text, they are based on those shown in the tables and consequently are also rounded values.

In addition to producing this report, NFER also produced feedback for each school and FS1 setting so that they could see how the views of responding parents of children at their school compared with the views of all responding parents.

1.4 Structure of the report

The report presents the findings from each school phase separately: FS1 settings in Chapter 2; primary schools in Chapter 3 and secondary schools in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 summarises the key issues that emerged from the questionnaires and provides some recommendations based on the findings.

2. Parents' views: Foundation Stage 1 settings

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we present the findings from the survey of parents of children at SCE Foundation Stage 1 (FS1) settings. Questionnaires were returned by 248 parents from 27 FS1 settings.

Parents provided some background information about their child at the FS1 setting. The average (median) reported age of children was four. Most of the parents (188 parents) said that their child had joined the FS1 setting within the last academic year (since September 2008).

2.2 Partnership between parents and the FS1 setting

Parents were asked about their experience when their child began attending the FS1 setting. As Table 2.1 shows, almost all of the 188 parents who said that their child had joined within the most recent academic year were positive about the information they had received about the FS1 setting when their child started (95 per cent). Most of these parents also felt that the FS1 setting had helped their child to settle in quickly (95 per cent).

Table 2.1 Parents' experiences of their child starting at the FS1 setting (if started within last academic year)

Parents' experiences	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
I received sufficient information about the FS1 setting when my child started	46	49	4	1	0	1
The FS1 setting helped my child to settle in quickly	63	32	1	1	3	1

N = 188

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those parents who indicated that their child had started at the FS1 setting within the 2008-09 academic year

A total of 187 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Overall parents were very happy with the communication they had with the FS1 setting (Table 2.2). Most felt that they could easily access a teacher to talk about their child's education when they needed to do so (94 per cent) and the majority felt that the setting listened to and responded to parents' suggestions and concerns (85 per cent). Almost all of the parents felt that they were made to feel welcome when they visited the FS1 setting (98 per cent). For the first time, this year parents were asked whether they felt the FS1 setting their child attended was well led and managed. The parents generally agreed that it was (91 per cent). Although most parents were satisfied with how the FS1 setting worked in partnership with them, in line with the 2007 and 2008 survey findings, still around one in ten parents felt that the FS1 setting did not keep them informed about their child's progress (nine per cent) or behaviour (10 per cent).

Table 2.2 Views of the partnership between parents and their child's FS1 setting

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
If I need to talk to a teacher about my child's education, it is easy to do so	60	34	4	1	0	0
The FS1 setting takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the FS1 setting	39	46	4	<1	10	<1
I am made to feel welcome when I visit the FS1 setting	62	35	2	0	<1	0
The FS1 setting keeps me informed of my child's progress	49	40	7	2	2	0
The FS1 setting keeps me informed of my child's behaviour	47	41	8	2	3	0
I am satisfied with the FS1 setting's building and facilities	51	43	3	<1	2	0
I am satisfied with the FS1 setting's equipment and resources	56	40	2	0	2	<1
The FS1 setting is well led and managed	58	33	5	1	3	<1
N = 248						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 248 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Three out of five parents (60 per cent) said that their child would be moving to Foundation Stage 2 in the next academic year. As Table 2.3 shows, most of these parents (91 per cent) felt that the FS1 setting had prepared their child well for this transition; notably, around half (53 per cent) strongly agreed that it had. Most of the parents were also very positive about the information they had been given about the new school (89 per cent).

Table 2.3 Parents' views on how their child has been prepared for the move to Foundation Stage 2

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
I have been provided with sufficient information about the new school	41	48	5	1	1	3
My child has been well prepared and supported for the move to the new school	53	38	3	1	3	1

N = 148

A filter question: all those parents who indicated that their child would be moving to FS2/reception in September 2009

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 148 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Seventeen parents (seven per cent) stated that their child had special or additional needs. Almost all of these (15 parents) said that their child received support from a specialist who was not a member of FS1 setting staff. The majority of these parents were either very or fairly satisfied with how the FS1 setting had met the special or additional needs of their child (15 parents).

Around a fifth of all responding parents (18 per cent, 44 parents) indicated that they had raised a concern with the FS1 setting over the last year. Two thirds of these parents stated that they were satisfied with the way that the FS1 had responded to their concern (66 per cent, 29 parents). The most common reasons parents gave for being satisfied were that:

- the school dealt with the concern and took appropriate action (12 parents)
- the school acted quickly (nine parents)
- the school listened to the concern and discussed it with the parents (eight parents).

A smaller number of parents said that they were not satisfied with the way that their child's school had dealt with their concern (12 parents; 27 per cent). The most common reasons given for this were:

- the parent felt that the school had not addressed or dealt with their concern (five parents)
- the parent would have liked more feedback from the school (two parents)
- the parent did not agree with the way the problem had been handled or the solution used (two parents).

Table 2.4 Parents' satisfaction with their child's FS1 setting

Satisfaction with...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
the progress your child is making in communication, language and literacy	62	27	6	<1	2	2
the progress your child is making in numeracy development	53	35	7	1	3	2
the opportunities for your child to be creative	71	24	2	0	1	2
how the FS1 setting helps your child to learn more about others and the world around them	61	31	2	0	4	2
the FS1 setting's outdoor learning environment	65	28	4	0	1	2
how the FS1 setting supports you to enable your child to learn at home	40	39	10	3	6	2

N = 248*Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100**A total of 244 respondents answered at least one item in this question**Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009*

On the whole, parents stated that they were satisfied with the progress that their child was making at the FS1 setting (Table 2.4). The majority of parents were satisfied with their child's progress in the areas of communication, literacy and language (89 per cent), and numeracy development (88 per cent). A high proportion of parents were also satisfied with how the FS1 setting helped their child to learn more about others and the world around them (92 per cent), and were satisfied with the setting's outdoor learning environment (93 per cent). Parents were particularly satisfied with the opportunities for their child to be creative (95 per cent); notably, 71 per cent expressed that they were very satisfied with this aspect of their child's education. As found in the 2007 and 2008 surveys, parents were slightly less satisfied with how the FS1 setting supported them to enable their child to learn at home (79 per cent), which suggests that this is still an area of support that FS1 settings could improve in the future.

2.3 FS1 settings' achievements towards the Every Child Matters outcomes

Parents were asked how they felt the FS1 setting was working to support their child to achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes: to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve and make a positive contribution.

Parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the support and opportunities the FS1 setting gave their child to be healthy and active (Table 2.5). Nearly all felt satisfied that the FS1 setting encouraged their child to have a healthy and active life style (96 per cent). Most also felt that the FS1 setting encouraged their child to eat healthily (96 per cent) and that it provided good provision for sports and recreation activities (93 per cent).

Table 2.5 Parents' satisfaction with the FS1 settings' provision for pupils to 'be healthy'

Satisfaction...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
that the FS1 setting encourages your child to have a healthy and active lifestyle	63	33	1	0	2	1
that the FS1 setting encourages your child to eat healthily	61	35	2	0	2	<1
with the FS1 setting's provision for sport and recreation activities	58	35	3	1	2	1

N = 248

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 247 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Most parents were also positive about the FS1 setting's provision for pupils to 'stay safe' (Table 2.6). Almost all of the parents felt that the FS1 setting their child attended provided a caring and supportive environment (97 per cent) and an environment that was safe and secure (96 per cent). In line with last year's findings, parents were a little more uncertain about whether the setting dealt appropriately with bullying, with around one in five parents stating that they were 'not sure' (22 per cent). As suggested in last year's report, this may be because these parents have not had any experience of the way the FS1 setting dealt with bullying. Around one in five parents were also unsure whether the FS1 setting had clear procedures for making complaints (17 per

cent). These findings suggest that information about the FS1 setting's procedures for dealing with bullying or complaints may still need to be made more accessible to parents and this is something that FS1 settings may wish to consider reviewing.

Table 2.6 Parents' views on the FS1 settings' provision for pupils to 'stay safe'

The FS1 setting...	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
provides a safe and secure environment for my child	64	32	2	<1	1	<1
provides a caring and supportive environment for my child	66	31	2	0	1	<1
deals appropriately with bullying	40	33	4	0	22	<1
has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints	38	38	6	2	17	<1

N = 248

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 247 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Most parents were very pleased with how the FS1 setting supported their child to 'enjoy and achieve' (Table 2.7). Nearly all felt satisfied with the progress that their child was making at the FS1 setting (94 per cent), and felt that the FS1 setting promoted good behaviour (95 per cent), helped to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem (95 per cent) and was helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development (95 per cent). Parents were particularly happy with how the FS1 staff supported and treated their child (97 per cent), with seven in ten parents indicating that they were 'very satisfied' with this (70 per cent). For the first time, this year parents were asked whether they felt that their child enjoyed attending the FS1 setting. The majority of parents indicated that their child did enjoy it (98 per cent), with four in five parents stating that they were 'very satisfied' that this was the case (81 per cent).

Table 2.7 Parents' satisfaction with the FS1 settings' provision for pupils to 'enjoy and achieve'

Parents' satisfaction...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
with their child's progress at the FS1 setting	63	31	2	2	2	<1
that their child's achievements are recognised and praised	65	28	2	1	4	<1
with how the FS1 staff support and treat their child	70	27	1	1	1	<1
that the FS1 setting promotes good behaviour	63	32	3	1	1	<1
that the FS1 setting is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem	65	30	2	1	2	<1
that the FS1 setting is helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development	65	30	1	1	3	<1
that their child enjoys the FS1 setting	81	17	1	0	1	<1

N = 248*Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100**A total of 247 respondents answered at least one item in this question**Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009*

Most parents also felt positive about the provision the FS1 setting made for their child to 'make a positive contribution', as shown in Table 2.8. Around nine in ten parents agreed that the FS1 setting enabled their child to contribute their opinions and ideas (89 per cent) and almost all felt that the setting supported their child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children (97 per cent). Around nine in ten parents also felt that the FS1 setting provided their child with opportunities to help and support other pupils (91 per cent).

Table 2.8 Parents' views on the FS1 settings' provision for pupils to 'make a positive contribution'

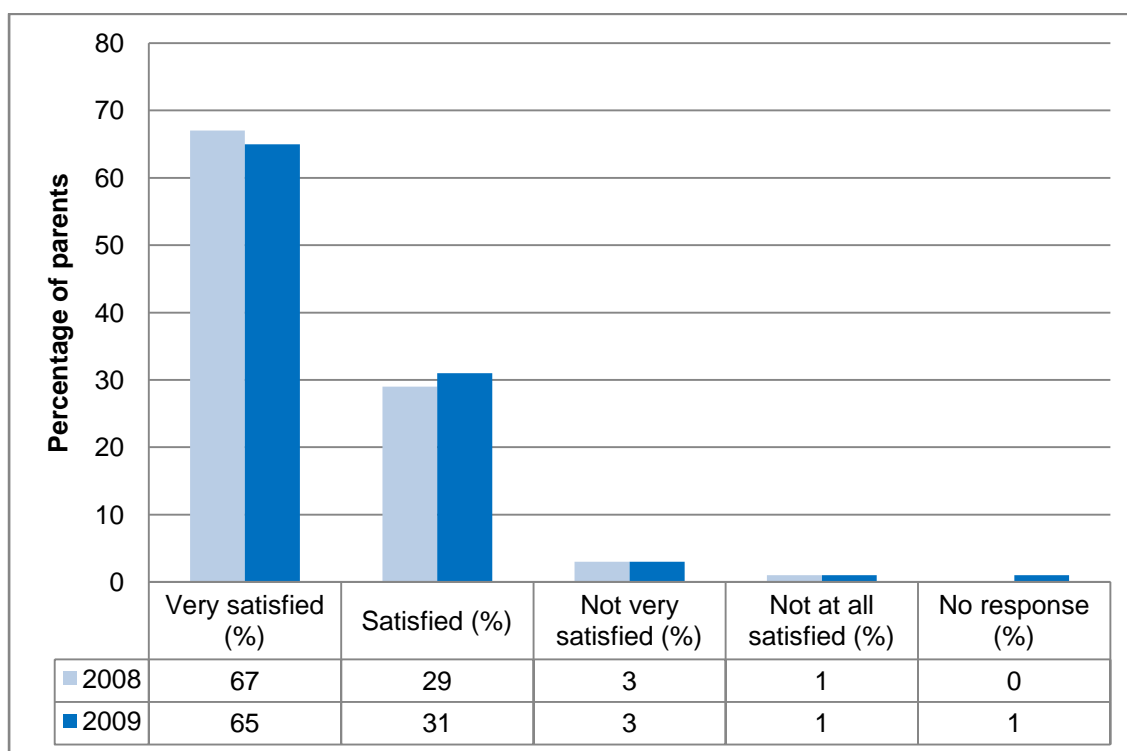
Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
The FS1 setting provides good opportunities for my child to contribute his/her opinions and ideas	48	41	2	0	9	<1
The FS1 setting helps my child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children	59	38	<1	0	3	<1
The FS1 setting provides opportunities for my child to help and support other pupils	52	39	2	0	7	<1

N = 248*Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100**A total of 247 respondents answered at least one item in this question**Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009*

2.4 Overall parental satisfaction

Parents expressed high levels of overall satisfaction with the education their child received from the FS1 setting (96 per cent were very satisfied or satisfied), with around two-thirds of parents stating that they were very satisfied (65 per cent), as shown in Figure 2.1. Only four per cent of parents expressed some dissatisfaction with the education that their child received. These findings are in line with last year's survey results, which suggests that high levels of overall parental satisfaction have been maintained over time.

Figure 2.1 Levels of satisfaction of parents of pupils at FS1 settings



Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Values shown have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009 and FS1 survey 2008

Parents were given the opportunity to express any concerns that they had with the education their child was receiving at the FS1 setting. Only 15 per cent of parents chose to state a concern (Table 2.9), and this was fewer than last year when around four in ten parents expressed at least one concern about their child's education. As was found in the survey in 2008, the most common concern was about the level of communication or feedback that the parent received from the FS1 setting (19 per cent). The next most common concerns were about their child's progress (11 per cent) or the teaching methods in the FS1 setting (nine per cent).

Table 2.9 Parents' concerns about their child's FS1 setting

Parents' concerns	%
The level of communication with, or feedback from, their child's FS1 setting	19
Concerns about their child's progress	11
Teaching methods or standards in the FS1 setting	9
Concerns about pupil discipline or FS1 policies on pupil behaviour	8
Concerns about the level of support provided for their child	6
Other	16
No response	62
N = 248	

A multiple response item: more than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 94 respondents answered this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Over two-thirds of parents took the opportunity to state what they thought the FS1 setting did well (Table 2.10). The most common responses were that parents felt that it had a good ethos, atmosphere or environment (23 per cent) and that there was a good focus on personal development (19 per cent). Many parents also felt that the FS1 setting provided good support for pupils (18 per cent). A number of parents also stated that the setting provided a good curriculum (15 per cent) and used good teaching methods and approaches (15 per cent). More than one in ten parents felt that the FS1 setting did well in most areas (13 per cent). These findings are similar to last year's, although there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of parents stating that the setting provided good support for pupils from a quarter of parents last year to less than one in five this year.

Table 2.10 Parents' views on what their child's FS1 setting does well

What the FS1 setting does well	%
It has a good ethos/atmosphere/environment	23
The focus on personal development	19
It provides good support for pupils	18
It has good teaching methods/approaches	15
It provides a good curriculum	15
It has good staff	15
The FS1 setting does well in most areas	13
It has good facilities/resources	11
It is a happy FS1 setting	11
It has good communication with parents	6
It has good discipline policies and praise strategies	4
It encourages parental/family involvement	4
I am happy with my child's progress	4
It has good healthy eating/exercise policies	4
It provides good extra-curricular activities/school trips	1
Other	<1
Nothing/not sure	<1
No Response	32

N = 248

An open-ended, multiple response question

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 170 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

Around half of the parents suggested improvements that could be made in the FS1 setting their child attended (Table 2.11). In line with last year's findings, most commonly, parents suggested that the FS1 setting could improve communication with parents (15 per cent). This suggests that this is still an area that FS1 settings could consider reviewing and enhancing to better meet parents' needs. The other most common suggestions for improvement were better resources or facilities (10 per cent) and the provision of more support for pupils (eight per cent). One in ten parents, however, felt that no improvements were needed (10 per cent).

Table 2.11 Parents' views on improvements that their child's FS1 setting could make

Improvements	%
Better communication with parents	15
Improve facilities/resources	10
Provide more support for pupils	8
Improve teaching approaches/the attitudes of teachers	7
Provide more structured learning	3
Improve discipline and reward policies	2
Improve school policies	2
Improvements to the curriculum	2
Already taking steps to improve	2
Ensure adequate staffing	2
Improve school meals/healthy eating policies	2
Provide more opportunities for parental involvement	1
Use more learning through play	<1
Other	4
Not sure	2
No improvements necessary	10
No Response	51

N = 248

An open-ended, multiple response question

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 122 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2009

3. Parents' views: Primary schools

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the survey of parents of children attending SCE primary schools around the world. Responses were received from 1003 parents across 32 of the 33 primary schools and the middle school run by SCE.

Parents provided some background information about their child who attended the SCE primary school. The average (median) age of children was seven. As Table 3.1 shows, parents of children in all year groups were represented. On average (median), parents reported that their child had attended one school prior to this one, but this ranged between none to six. Just under half of the parents (46 per cent, 457 parents) stated that their child had joined the primary school within the last academic year (since September 2008).

Table 3.1 Year group of children of responding parents

Year group	%
FS2/Reception	15
Year 1	18
Year 2	15
Year 3	13
Year 4	14
Year 5	12
Year 6	13
No response	1
N = 1003	

A single response item

A total of 997 respondents answered this question

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

3.2 Partnership between parents and the primary school

Most of the 457 parents whose child had started attending the primary school within the last academic year were satisfied with the support the school had provided when their child started (Table 3.2). Almost all of these parents felt that they received sufficient information about the school (92 per cent) and almost all felt that the school

had helped their child to settle in quickly (93 per cent). Slightly fewer, however, were satisfied that the school had provided a good continuity of learning from their child's previous school (79 per cent) and this is in line with last year's findings when the figure was 81 per cent.

Table 3.2 Parents' experiences of their child starting at the primary school (if started within last academic year)

Parents' experiences	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
I received sufficient information about the school when my child started	43	49	5	1	1	1
The school helped my child to settle in quickly	53	40	3	1	2	1
The school ensured good continuity of learning for my child	36	43	7	3	10	2
N = 457						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those parents who indicated that their child had started at the primary school within the 2008-09 academic year

A total of 455 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Most parents were happy with the relationship they had with their child's school (Table 3.3). Around nine in ten said that if they needed to talk to a teacher about their child's education, it was easy to do so (93 per cent). Almost all of the parents felt that they were made to feel welcome when they visited the school (95 per cent). Slightly fewer, however, felt that the school took account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school (77 per cent).

The findings suggest that communication with parents about their child's progress and behaviour could be improved in some schools, as around one in nine parents (11 per cent) did not agree that they were kept informed about these aspects of their child's education. As a new question this year, parents were also asked for their opinions about the leadership of the school. The majority of parents responded that their child's school was well led and managed (87 per cent), but around one in ten did not agree that this was the case (eight per cent). This suggests that, although the vast majority of parents are satisfied, there may still be some scope for management and leadership practices to be improved in some schools.

Table 3.3 Views of the partnership between parents and their child's primary school

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
If I need to talk to a teacher about my child's education, it is easy to do so	49	44	4	1	2	<1
The school takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school	27	50	9	2	11	<1
I am made to feel welcome when I visit the school	50	45	3	1	1	<1
The school keeps me informed of my child's progress	36	49	9	2	3	<1
The school keeps me informed of my child's behaviour	33	51	10	1	4	<1
I am satisfied with the school's building and facilities	41	49	6	3	2	<1
I am satisfied with the school's equipment and resources	43	49	4	1	2	<1
The school is well led and managed	45	42	5	3	5	<1

N= 1003*Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100**A total of 1,002 respondents answered at least one item in this question**Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009*

Around one in ten parents (9 per cent; 86 parents) indicated that their child would be moving to secondary school in the next academic year (September 2009). As Table 3.4 shows, the majority of these parents felt that they had been provided with sufficient information about the new school (75 per cent) and that their child had been well prepared and supported for this transition (78 per cent). These results are, however, slightly less positive than last year, when almost nine in ten parents (85 and 86 per cent respectively) expressed satisfaction with how they and child had been prepared for this change.

Table 3.4 Parents' views on how their child has been prepared for the move from Year 6 to secondary school

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
I have been provided with sufficient information about the new school	40	35	5	3	13	5
My child has been well prepared and supported for the move to the new school	42	36	5	3	10	3

N = 86

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those respondents who indicated that their child would be moving to secondary school in September 2009

A total of 84 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Almost one in ten parents (nine per cent, 90 parents) stated that their child had a special or additional need. Just over half of these parents indicated that their child received support from a specialist who was not a member of the school staff (53 per cent). Around three-quarters were satisfied that the school met the special or additional needs of their child (78 per cent), with more than half stating that they were very satisfied with this (57 per cent). However, around one in five felt that their child's special or additional needs were not met by the school (18 per cent) and this is a slight increase in dissatisfaction from last year when 12 per cent expressed this view.

In line with last year's findings, one quarter of parents responding to the survey reported that they had to raise a concern with the school in the last year (25 per cent, 249 parents). Again, as found last year, more than half of these parents were satisfied with the way that the school had dealt with their concern (57 per cent, 142 parents). The most common reasons given for being satisfied were:

- the school dealt with the concern or took appropriate action (50 per cent, 71 parents)
- the school listened and discussed the concern (34 per cent, 48 parents)
- the school dealt with the issue quickly (25 per cent, 36 parents).

Around a third of parents who had reported a concern to the school were not satisfied with how the school dealt with it (35 per cent, 86 parents). The most common reasons given for being dissatisfied were:

- the problem was not addressed or dealt with (33 per cent, 28 parents)
- they were made to feel uncomfortable about complaining (16 per cent, 14 parents)
- the issue was not dealt with in a sensitive or appropriate manner (15 per cent, 13 parents).

3.3 Primary schools' achievements towards the Every Child Matters outcomes

The majority of parents of primary school children were happy with the schools' provision for meeting the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Most parents were satisfied with the opportunities the school gave their child to 'be healthy' (Table 3.5). Almost all parents felt satisfied that the school encouraged their child to have a healthy and active lifestyle (95 per cent) and that the school encouraged their child to eat healthily (94 per cent). Around nine in ten parents were pleased with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities (88 per cent).

Table 3.5 Parents' satisfaction with schools' provision for pupils to 'be healthy'

Satisfaction...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
that the school encourages your child to have a healthy and active lifestyle	60	35	3	<1	1	<1
that the school encourages your child to eat healthily	58	36	3	2	2	<1
with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities	49	39	9	2	1	<1

N = 1003

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 1,002 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Parents' views on the school's provision for their child to 'stay safe' were a little more mixed (Table 3.6). Most parents felt that the school provided a safe and secure environment for their child (93 per cent) and that the school environment was caring and supportive (95 per cent). In line with last year's findings, fewer parents, however, agreed that the school dealt appropriately with bullying (71 per cent) or that it had clear procedures for making complaints (77 per cent). Furthermore, a noticeable

number of parents were unsure about whether the school dealt with bullying appropriately (21 per cent) or about the procedures for making complaints (15 per cent). This may be because these parents had not had any direct experience of how the school dealt with these issues, but, even so, these findings suggest that some primary schools may wish to consider reviewing their bullying and complaint policies and how they inform parents about these.

Table 3.6 Parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to 'stay safe'

The school...	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
provides a safe and secure environment for my child	54	39	4	1	1	<1
provides a caring and supportive environment for my child	54	41	3	<1	2	<1
deals appropriately with bullying	34	37	5	2	21	<1
has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints	33	44	7	2	15	<1

N = 1003

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 1,002 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Generally, most parents felt satisfied that the primary school enabled their child to 'enjoy and achieve' (Table 3.7). Around nine in ten parents were pleased with the progress that their child was making at the school (91 per cent) and were happy with how the school staff supported and treated their child (92 per cent). Most also felt that the school promoted good behaviour (93 per cent), helped to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem (91 per cent) and aided their child's personal, social and moral development (91 per cent). In this year's survey, for the first time, parents were asked whether they were satisfied that their child enjoyed school, and most parents were overwhelmingly positive that their child did (95 per cent). Notably, nearly two-thirds of parents were very satisfied that their child enjoyed school (61 per cent), suggesting that parents were particularly happy with this aspect of their child's educational experience.

Table 3.7 Parents' satisfaction with schools' provision for pupils to 'enjoy and achieve'

Parents' satisfaction...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
with their child's progress at school	52	39	5	2	2	<1
that their child's achievements are recognised and praised	56	33	6	1	3	<1
with how the school staff support and treat their child	57	35	3	1	3	<1
that the school promotes good behaviour	58	35	3	1	3	<1
that the school is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem	55	36	5	1	2	<1
that the school is helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development	53	38	4	1	3	<1
that their child enjoys school	61	34	3	1	<1	<1
N = 1003						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 1,001 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Parents were generally also satisfied with the opportunities the school gave their child to make a 'positive contribution' (Table 3.8). Parents were especially positive that the school enabled their child to contribute their opinions and ideas (88 per cent) and that it helped their child to develop positive relationships with other children and adults (91 per cent).

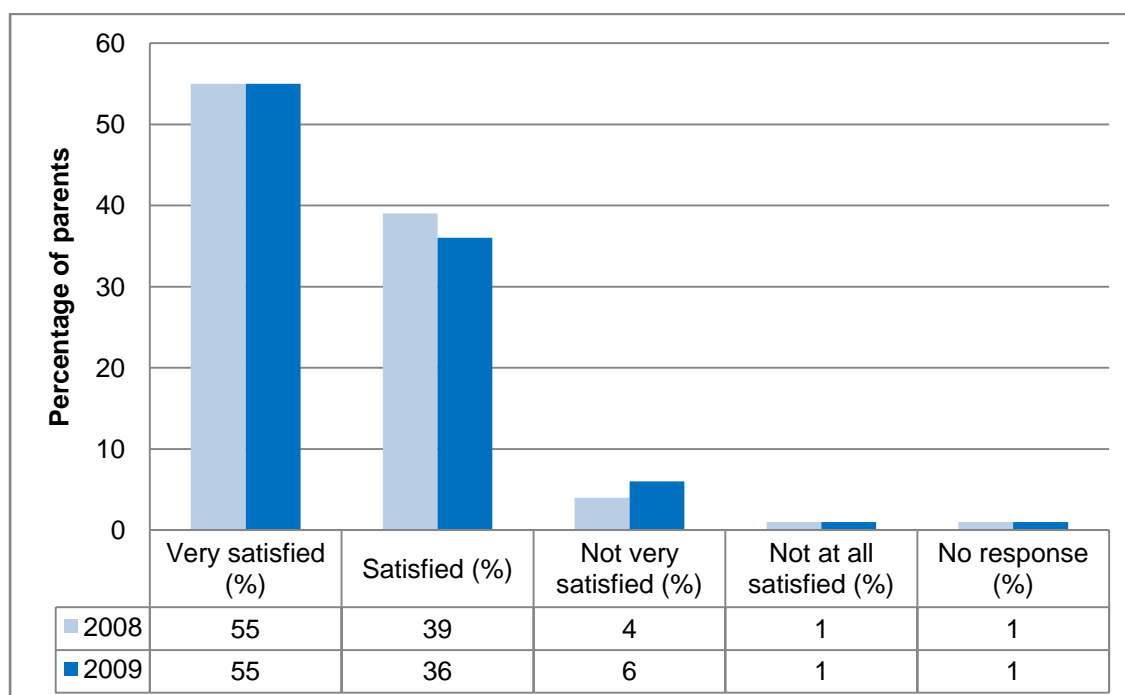
Table 3.8 Parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to 'make a positive contribution'

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
The school provides good opportunities for my child to contribute his/her opinions and ideas	39	49	2	<1	9	<1
The school helps my child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children	43	48	2	<1	6	<1
The school provides opportunities for my child to help and support other pupils	41	44	2	0	12	1
The school encourages pupils to become involved in decision-making (e.g. through School Council)	38	44	2	<1	14	1

N = 1003*Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100**A total of 999 respondents answered at least one item in this question**Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009*

3.4 Overall parental satisfaction

Generally, parents expressed a high level of overall satisfaction with their child's education, as shown in Figure 3.1. Over half stated that they were very satisfied with the education their child was receiving (55 per cent), and around a third of parents stated that they were satisfied (36 per cent). Only a minority expressed some dissatisfaction with their child's education (seven per cent). These findings are largely similar to last year when 94 per cent of parents expressed satisfaction with the education their child was receiving.

Figure 3.1 Levels of satisfaction of parents of pupils at Primary schools

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Values shown have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009 and Primary School survey 2008

Just under half of the parents surveyed took the opportunity to state a concern about their child's education (46 per cent). In line with last year's results, as Table 3.9 shows, the most frequently cited concerns were about the level of communication they had with the school (19 per cent) and the nature or amount of homework their child was set (18 per cent). These findings suggest that these are areas that some primary schools might wish to consider reviewing.

Table 3.9 Parents' concerns about their child's school

Parents' concerns	%
The level of communication with, or feedback from, their child's school	19
Concerns about the nature or amount of homework their child is given	18
Concerns about their child's progress	15
Concerns about pupil discipline or school policies on pupil behaviour	11
Teaching methods or standards in the school	10
Concerns about the level of support provided for your child	10
Other	14
No response	54
N = 1003	

A multiple response item: more than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 465 respondents answered this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Almost two-thirds of parents provided comments on what they felt their child's school did particularly well (63 per cent). As found last year, the most common response from parents was that the school provided good support for pupils (21 per cent). Other positive aspects highlighted by parents were that the school had a good ethos or atmosphere (14 per cent) and a good curriculum (10 per cent). In line with last year's findings, around one in ten parents stated that they felt that the school did well in most areas (11 per cent).

Table 3.10 Parents' views on what their child's primary school does well

What the primary school does well	%
It provides good support for pupils	21
It has a good ethos/atmosphere/environment	14
The school does well in most areas	11
It has a good curriculum	10
It has good communication with parents	9
There is a focus on personal development	9
It has good staff	8
It is a happy school	8
It has good extra-curricular activities/school trips	7
It has good discipline and praise strategies	7
It has good facilities/resources	5
It encourages parental involvement	5
I am happy with my child's progress	5
It employs good teaching methods/approaches	4
There is a good healthy eating focus	3
Other	5
Nothing/Not sure	2
No response	37
N = 1003	

An open-ended, multiple response question

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 635 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

Around half of the parents took the opportunity to make suggestions about improvements that their child's school could make (49 per cent). In line with last year's results, parents most commonly felt that the school could improve communication with parents (13 per cent), suggesting that this is still an area that some primary schools could review and change to better meet parents' needs. Some parents also felt that the school could provide more support for pupils (eight per cent) and improve teaching methods or the attitudes of teachers (eight per cent). It is worth noting that six per cent of parents felt that no improvements were necessary.

Table 3.11 Parents' views on improvements that their child's primary school could make

Improvements	%
Better communication with parents	13
Provide more support for pupils	8
Improve teaching approaches/attitudes of teachers	8
Make improvements to curriculum	7
Improve facilities/resources	7
Improve homework policies	6
Offer more extra-curricular activities/trips	5
Improve school policies	4
Improve discipline and reward policies	4
Provide more opportunities for parental involvement	3
Better recruitment of teachers	3
Improve school meals/healthy eating policies	2
Improve staffing	2
Provide more support for parents	1
Other	4
Not sure	1
The school is already taking steps to improve	1
No improvements necessary	6
No response	51
N = 1144	

An open-ended, multiple response question

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 495 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2009

4. Parents' views: Secondary schools

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the survey of parents with children in SCE secondary schools. A total of 238 parents completed the survey, with responses received from parents in the middle school and parents in all of the six secondary schools.

Parents provided some background information about their child who attended the secondary school. The children were aged between 10 and 18 and were on average (median) reported to be 13-years-old. As Table 4.1 shows, the majority of the parents who completed the questionnaire had a child in Year 10 or below. Fewer questionnaires were received from parents with children in Year 11 or receiving post-16 education at the school. It is therefore important to bear in mind that the views of parents with children in Year 11 or above might not be fully represented in these findings. Most of the responding parents had children who had started at their current secondary school within the last three academic years (since September 2006).

Table 4.1 Year group of children of responding parents

Year group	%
Year 7	22
Year 8	23
Year 9	21
Year 10	18
Year 11	7
Year 12	4
Year 13	4
Year 14	<1
No response	1
N = 238	

A single response item

A total of 235 respondents answered this question

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

There was wide variation in the number of schools parents stated that their child had attended before coming to their current school. The majority of the pupils had attended either one (22 per cent) or two (33 per cent) primary schools, but the range

was between one and six schools. This reflects, of course, the geographical mobility that can often be experienced by service families. A third of parents (32 per cent) said that their child had previously attended at least one middle school. Almost half of the parents reported that their child had attended at least one other secondary school prior to joining their current school (45 per cent), with a maximum of three prior secondary schools reported. Overall, the total number of schools attended by a child before their current school ranged from one to nine schools and the average (median) number of schools attended was three.

4.2 Partnership between parents and the secondary school

Parents of children who had started at the secondary school within the last academic year were generally satisfied with how the school had supported this transition process (Table 4.2). Most parents felt that they had received sufficient information about the school when their child started (93 per cent) and most felt that the school had helped their child to settle in quickly (91 per cent). Fewer parents, but still a large majority, felt that the school had ensured good continuity of learning for their child (81 per cent). Parental satisfaction with continuity, however, has improved slightly since last year when 73 per cent of parents agreed that the school had provided a good continuity of learning.

Table 4.2 Parents' experiences of their child starting at the secondary school (if started within last academic year)

Parents' experiences	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
I received sufficient information about the school when my child started	38	55	2	2	2	0
The school helped my child to settle in quickly	34	57	4	1	4	0
The school ensured good continuity of learning for my child	24	57	11	2	5	0

N = 82

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those parents who indicated that their child had started at the secondary school within the 2008-09 academic year

A total of 82 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

As Table 4.3 shows, parents were on the whole pleased with the partnership they had with their child's school. The majority of parents, for example, stated that it was easy for them to talk to a teacher about their child's education if they needed to (85 per cent). Parental satisfaction with this aspect of communication has improved since last year, when only 77 per cent of parents agreed that it was easy for them to discuss their child's education with a teacher. Around seven in ten parents felt that the school took account of parents' suggestions and concerns (68 per cent) and this is also an improvement from last year when only 59 per cent of parents felt that this was the case.). While this has improved, there was still a relatively high degree of uncertainty among parents this year about this (21 per cent), so some schools may still wish to review how they use feedback and ensure that parents are aware of the school's responses. The proportions of parents agreeing that the school kept them informed of their child's progress (86 per cent) and their child's behaviour (86 per cent) have not changed since last year, suggesting that while many parents are satisfied with these aspects of parent-school relationship, they could also still be improved in some schools. Almost all parents, however, felt that they were made to feel welcome when they visited the school (93 per cent).

Most parents were happy with the school's building and facilities (91 per cent), and the school's equipment and resources (93 per cent). For the first time this year, parents were asked if they agreed that their child's school was well led and well-managed. The majority of parents felt that it was (84 per cent), but around one in ten said that they were not sure (11 per cent).

Table 4.3 Views of the partnership between parents and their child's secondary school

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
If I need to talk to a teacher about my child's education, it is easy to do so	26	59	10	1	3	0
The school takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school	18	50	8	3	21	1
I am made to feel welcome when I visit the school	34	59	2	1	4	1
The school keeps me informed of my child's progress	29	57	8	3	2	1
The school keeps me informed of my child's behaviour	29	57	8	3	3	1
I am satisfied with the school's building and facilities	32	59	6	1	1	<1
I am satisfied with the school's equipment and resources	35	58	4	<1	2	<1
The school is well led and managed	32	52	3	1	11	1
N = 238						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 238 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

Around one in ten parents had a child with special or additional needs (25 parents, 11 per cent). Only seven of these parents said that their child received support from a specialist who was not a member of the school staff. More than two-thirds of the parents of children with special or additional needs indicated that they were satisfied with how the school met the needs of their child (17 parents, 68 per cent). Seven parents, however, were not satisfied with the support their child received from the school (28 per cent).

One in three parents who completed the questionnaire had raised a concern with the secondary school during the past year (34 per cent). Around three in five of these parents were satisfied with the school's response to their concern (49 parents, 61 per cent). The main reasons parents gave for being satisfied were:

- the school dealt with the concern or took appropriate action (18 parents)
- the school dealt with the issue quickly (14 parents)
- the way the school communicated with them: the school kept them informed (eight parents) and the school listened to and discussed the concern (eight parents).

Almost a third of the parents who had raised a concern, however, were dissatisfied with the way the school had dealt with it (24 parents, 30 per cent). The reasons given for being dissatisfied included:

- the problem was not dealt with (three parents) or the school did not do what they had promised to do to resolve the problem (three parents)
- the issue was not handled in a sensitive or appropriate manner (three parents)
- parents would have liked more feedback from the school (three parents) or felt that there was poor communication within the school about the problem (three parents)
- the school did not understand the problem or the issue (three parents).

4.3 Secondary schools' achievements towards the Every Child Matters outcomes

The majority of parents were pleased with how the school was working towards the 'be healthy', 'enjoy and achieve', 'make a positive contribution' and 'stay safe' outcomes. Parents were slightly less satisfied with the school's provision in terms of the 'achieve economic well-being' outcome.

As Table 4.4 shows, parents were, on the whole, happy with the secondary schools' provision for their child to 'be healthy'. Around nine in ten parents said that the school encouraged their child to have a healthy and active lifestyle (89 per cent) and that the school had good provision for sports and recreation activities (88 per cent). Fewer parents, however, felt that the school supported their child to eat healthily (75 per cent). Slightly fewer parents also felt satisfied with drugs awareness (77 per cent) and the sex and relationships (80 per cent) education that their child received. Further, around a fifth of parents were uncertain about the whether the school provided appropriate education in these areas (22 per cent and 17 per cent respectively).

Table 4.4 Parents' satisfaction with schools' provision for pupils to 'be healthy'

Satisfaction...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
that the school encourages their child to have a healthy and active lifestyle	34	55	6	1	5	0
that the school encourages their child to eat healthily	20	55	11	3	10	<1
with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities	42	46	6	2	4	1
that the school provides appropriate drug awareness education for their child	28	49	1	0	22	<1
that the school provides appropriate sex and relationships education for your child	25	55	2	0	17	2
N = 238						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 238 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

The majority of parents were positive about secondary schools' provision for pupils to 'stay safe' (Table 4.5). Almost all parents felt that the school provided a safe and secure environment for their child (96 per cent) and most were satisfied that the school provided a supportive and caring environment for their child (87 per cent). Compared with last year, a slightly higher proportion of parents expressed satisfaction with how the school dealt with bullying this year (72 per cent compared to 64 per cent last year) and the school's procedures for children and parents to make complaints (79 per cent compared to 68 per cent last year). This is an improvement, however some schools may still wish to consider whether there is a need to improve parents' knowledge of these policies, as a number were still uncertain about their child's school's procedures for these, as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to 'stay safe'

The school...	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
provides a safe and secure environment for my child	43	53	3	<1	1	0
provides a caring and supportive environment for my child	34	53	3	<1	8	1
deals appropriately with bullying	29	43	6	2	20	1
has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints	26	53	5	1	15	<1
N = 238						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 238 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

The figures presented in Table 4.6 show that parents were very positive about the school's provision for their child to 'enjoy and achieve'. Parents were particularly pleased with the progress that their child was making in the school (94 per cent), with half stating that they were very satisfied with this (50 per cent). Almost all of the parents were also satisfied that the school promoted good behaviour (92 per cent). For the first time, parents were asked in this year's survey about whether they were satisfied that their child enjoyed school. Nine in ten parents reported that they felt that their child did enjoy school (91 per cent), and 45 per cent were very satisfied that this was the case.

Table 4.6 Parents' satisfaction with schools' provision for pupils to 'enjoy and achieve'

Parents' satisfaction...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %	No response %
with their child's progress at school	50	44	5	0	1	0
that their child's achievements are recognised and praised	52	36	8	1	3	<1
with how the school staff support and treat their child	42	48	5	1	3	<1
that the school promotes good behaviour	47	45	3	0	4	<1
that the school is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem	45	42	6	2	5	1
that the school is helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development	40	49	3	2	5	1
that their child enjoys school	45	46	5	3	<1	1
N = 238						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 238 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

Parents were generally pleased with the opportunities the school offered their child to 'make a positive contribution' (Table 4.7). The majority of parents felt that the school enabled their child to contribute his/her ideas and opinions (87 per cent) and to develop positive relationships with adults and other children (86 per cent). Four in five parents expressed satisfaction with the opportunities that the school provided for pupils to take part in voluntary activities to support the community (80 per cent), and parental satisfaction with this has increased since last year when only two thirds of parents felt that the school provided such opportunities (66 per cent).

Table 4.7 Parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to 'make a positive contribution'

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
The school provides good opportunities for my child to contribute his/her opinions and ideas	32	55	3	<1	10	0
The school helps my child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children	32	54	3	2	9	<1
The school provides opportunities for my child to help and support other pupils	30	53	3	1	13	<1
The school encourages pupils to become involved in decision-making (e.g. through School Council)	32	50	4	<1	13	<1
The school provides opportunities for pupils to take part in voluntary activities to support the community (e.g. voluntary work, fundraising)	30	50	5	<1	14	<1
N = 238						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 238 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

There were more mixed views among parents about the secondary school's provision for their child to 'achieve economic well-being', although parents with positive views still outnumbered those with negative views (Table 4.8). In line with last year's findings, approximately six in ten parents agreed that the school provided good opportunities for vocational studies (62 per cent). Slightly fewer parents this year than last year felt that the school offered good work-related learning and work experience (55 per cent compared to 61 per cent last year).

Provision to help pupils achieve economic well-being is an area that a relatively high proportion of parents were uncertain about. Almost three in ten parents stated that they were unsure about the school's provision relating to preparing their child for various aspects of the world of work, such as opportunities for vocational studies (29

per cent) and preparing their child well for further education or training (28 per cent). An even higher proportion of parents were unsure if the careers education and guidance provided to their child was helpful (39 per cent) or about how well the range of learning activities provided post-16 meets their child's needs (41 per cent). As suggested in last year's report, schools may wish to review their careers education, information, advice and guidance policies and how these are communicated to parents.

The 108 parents with children in Year 9 and above had mixed views about whether or not their child had received enough information about the choices that will be open to them when they finish Year 11. In line with last year's findings, around two in five parents agreed that their child had been provided with adequate information (42 per cent, 45 parents) and the same proportion indicated that they felt that their child had not been provided with adequate information (42 per cent, 45 parents). Some schools might therefore wish to consider reviewing and improving the provision of careers information, advice and guidance for students at this stage in their schooling.

Table 4.8 Parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to 'achieve economic well-being'

Parents' views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Not sure %	No response %
The school provides good opportunities for vocational studies	15	47	7	1	29	<1
The school provides good opportunities for work-related learning and work experience	19	36	14	1	28	2
The school provides my child with access to a range of learning opportunities post-16 to meet his/her needs	9	32	8	4	41	6
The careers education and guidance provided to my child is helpful	10	38	8	2	39	4
The school supports my child to develop team-working and enterprise skills	18	48	4	<1	26	3
The school is preparing my child well for adult and working life	18	43	7	1	29	3
The school is preparing my child well for further education or training	17	44	7	1	28	3
My child is encouraged to take some responsibility for his/her own learning	30	57	2	1	9	1
N = 238						

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 237 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

Only 16 parents with children who boarded at their school responded to the questionnaire. As Table 4.9 shows, these parents were mostly satisfied with their child's boarding accommodation. For example, 12 parents were pleased with the standard of the accommodation and nearly all of the parents felt that it had a good standard of behaviour (14 parents). Only around half of the parents (nine parents), though, were happy with the recreational facilities and activities available to their child.

Table 4.9 Parents' views on the boarding house their child attends

Parents' satisfaction that the boarding house...	Very satisfied (no.)	Fairly satisfied (no.)	Not very satisfied (no.)	Not at all satisfied (no.)	Not sure (no.)	No response (no.)
provides a satisfactory standard of living accommodation for their child	2	10	4	0	0	0
provides an appropriate standard of supervision for their child	8	5	1	1	1	0
keeps them informed of any issues concerning their child	10	5	1	0	0	0
supports their child to have an active and healthy lifestyle	3	10	1	2	0	0
provides appropriate medical support for their child	11	5	0	0	0	0
provides a safe environment for their child	10	5	0	1	0	0
provides appropriate after-school recreational facilities and activities for their child	2	7	2	4	1	0
has a good standard of pupil behaviour	6	8	2	0	0	0

N = 16

A filter question: all those respondents that indicated that their child boards at the school

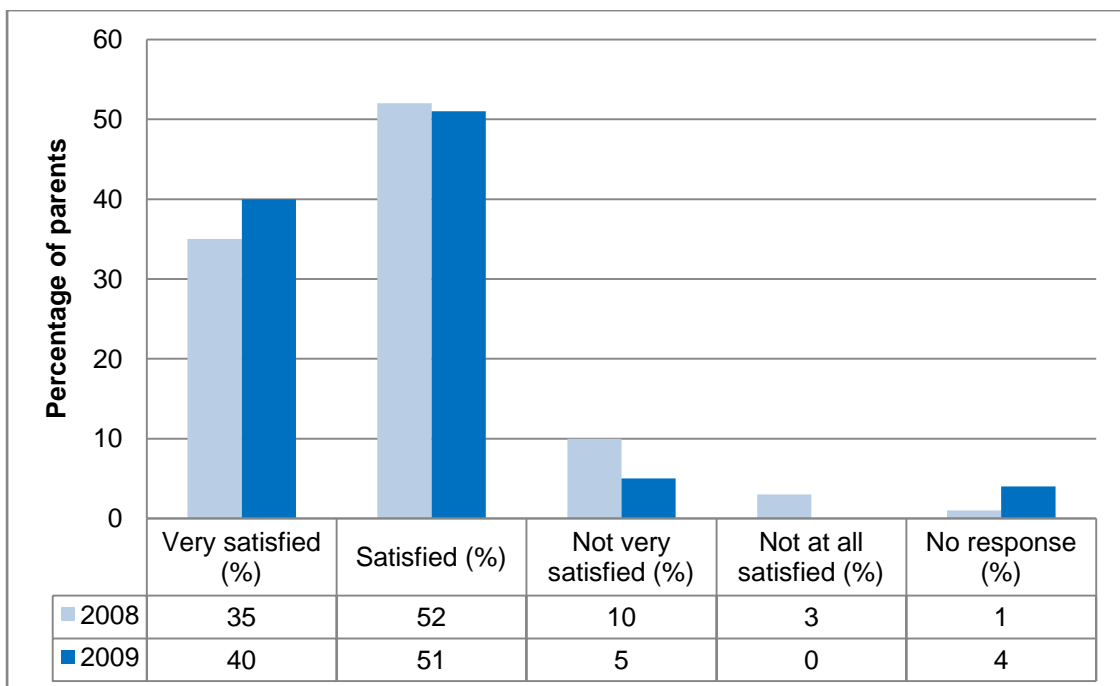
A total of 16 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Due to the small response to this question, values are reported rather than percentages

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

4.4 Overall parental satisfaction

Nine in ten parents stated that they were satisfied overall with the education their child was receiving at the secondary school (91 per cent), with two in five saying that they were very satisfied (40 per cent), as shown in Figure 4.1. Only five per cent were not happy with the education their child was receiving. Satisfaction levels have increased since last year, when 87 per cent of parents expressed overall satisfaction, and 35 per cent said that they were very satisfied.

Figure 4.1 Levels of satisfaction of parents of pupils at Secondary schools

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Values shown have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009 and Secondary School survey 2008

Around half of the parents who responded to the secondary school survey took the opportunity to express a concern about the education their child was receiving (53 per cent). As Table 4.10 shows, the most common concerns raised were to do with communication and feedback from the school (22 per cent), the nature or amount of homework their child was given (18 per cent) and the teaching methods or standards in the school (17 per cent). A similar proportion of parents stated these concerns last year; although fewer parents this year than last year were concerned about the teaching methods used (23 per cent last year compared with 17 per cent this year).

Table 4.10 Parents' concerns about their child's school

Parents' concerns	%
The level of communication with, or feedback from, their child's school	22
Concerns about the nature or amount of homework their child is given	18
Teaching methods or standards in the school	17
Concerns about their child's progress	13
Concerns about the level of support provided for your child	11
Concerns about pupil discipline or school policies on pupil behaviour	9
Concerns about the curriculum their child is following	5
Other	17
No response	47

N = 238

A multiple response item: more than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 126 parents answered this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

More than half of parents provided feedback about what they felt the school did particularly well (60 per cent). As Table 4.11 shows, most commonly, parents stated that the school provided good support for pupils (20 per cent) and a good curriculum (16 per cent). Around one in ten parents also complimented the school's communication with parents (12 per cent) and the school's positive ethos and atmosphere (11 per cent). These findings are largely similar to last year, but more parents this year felt that the school was particularly good at communicating with parents. Fewer parents this year, however, praised the school's extra-curricular activities, which last year featured highly as an aspect that parents felt was especially good.

Table 4.11 Parents' views on what their child's secondary school does well

What the secondary school does well	%
It provides good support for pupils	20
It offers a good curriculum	16
It has good communication with parents	12
There is a good ethos/atmosphere/environment	11
It employs good teaching methods/approaches	7
It has good staff	6
It has good discipline and praise strategies	5
There is a focus on personal development	5
The school does well in most/all areas	5
It has good facilities/resources	4
It has good extra-curricular activities/trips	3
It is a happy school	2
Other	6
Nothing/not sure	2
No response	40

N = 238

An open-ended, multiple response question

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 142 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

Over half of the parents highlighted areas that they felt their child's school could improve (56 per cent). As Table 4.12 shows, the most common aspects that parents felt could be enhanced were the school's communication with parents (12 per cent), making improvements to its curriculum (11 per cent) and the provision of support for pupils (10 per cent).

Table 4.12 Parents' views on improvements that their child's secondary school could make

Improvements	%
Better communication with parents	12
Improvements to curriculum	11
Provide more support for students	10
Improve teaching approaches/teachers attitudes	7
Offer more extra-curricular activities/trips	6
Improve facilities/resources	5
Improve discipline and reward policies	5
Improve school policies	3
Provide more opportunities for parental involvement	3
Better recruitment of teachers	2
Improve school meals or healthy eating policies	2
Improve homework policies	2
Improve staffing	1
Other	5
Not sure	1
No improvements necessary	5
No response	44

N = 238

An open-ended, multiple response question

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 134 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2009

5. Conclusions

In their survey responses, parents of children in FS1 settings and primary and secondary schools expressed high levels of satisfaction regarding various aspects of their children's educational experiences. For example, the findings from responses to a key question about overall parental satisfaction with the education that their child was receiving were as follows:

- 96 per cent of parents with children in FS1 settings were very satisfied or satisfied (65 per cent very satisfied and 31 per cent satisfied).
- 91 per cent of parents with children in primary schools were very satisfied or satisfied (55 per cent were very satisfied and 36 per cent satisfied).
- 91 per cent of parents with children in secondary schools were very satisfied or satisfied with the education their child was receiving (40 per cent were very satisfied and 51 per cent satisfied).

The combined satisfaction figure for parents of FS1 children was exactly the same as last year (96 per cent); and for parents of primary children there was a slight decline (from 94 per cent in 2008 to 91 per cent in 2009). For parents of secondary school children, encouragingly, there has been a continuous improvement in satisfaction levels, from 83 per cent in 2007, to 87 per cent in 2008 and 91 per cent this year.

There were improvements in satisfaction levels with some aspects of schooling, and some declines, though none of the latter should give cause for concern – they tend to be small changes which are not likely to be statistically (or educationally) significant. Selected changes in levels of satisfaction perhaps worthy of note included the following, all to do with the primary – secondary transition:

- there was a decline in the proportion of parents of final-year primary school children expressing a view that they had been provided with sufficient information about their child's new secondary school (from 85 per cent to 75 per cent)
- there was similar decline for this parent group in terms of expressing a view that their child had been well prepared and supported for the primary secondary transfer (from 86 per cent to 78 per cent)
- conversely, the parents of first year secondary school pupils expressed levels of satisfaction with the primary – secondary transition that were slightly higher than last year (the proportion of parents who said that the secondary school had provided good continuity of learning improved from 73 per cent to 81 per cent this year).

These changes raise the question of whether there were any changes in transition preparation in 2008-9 on the part of one or more primary schools, and whether these could have resulted in higher levels of dissatisfaction amongst parents.

For secondary schools in particular, the following positive changes in parental levels of satisfaction may be worth consideration:

- a slightly higher proportion of parents this year (72 per cent) expressed satisfaction with the means by which the secondary school dealt with bullying, compared to last year (64 per cent)
- 80 per cent of secondary parents expressed satisfaction with the opportunities that the school provided for pupils to take part in voluntary activities to support the community, compared with 66 per cent last year.

The areas where parents were unsure about an aspect of their child's education, across all ages, tended to be linked in some form to school to parent communications. While there have been some improvements in these communications, and these have been acknowledged by parents, it still seems that parents would like more information, not less, from the school, for example on their child's progress.

It should be reiterated, however, that the overall picture arising from these surveys of parents in FS1 settings and primary and secondary schools is one of high levels of parental satisfaction. The usual general pattern, on a range of indicators including the Every Child Matters outcomes, is for somewhere between 75 per cent and 95 per cent of parents to express a view that they were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their child's education. This is a very positive overall finding which indicates that SCE schools are managing to meet and, in some cases, exceed parental expectations for their children's education. This is a remarkable achievement, especially given that these schools are often operating in different contexts, and usually with higher levels of pupil mobility, than equivalent UK-based schools.