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Service Children's Education: Survey of Parental Views

Final Report

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Service Children's Education (SCE) is an agency of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) that is dedicated to the education of children of service families and MOD personnel serving outside of the United Kingdom. SCE has responsibility for, and represents the interests of, children in Service schools in the following nine countries around the world: Belgium, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Falkland Islands, Belize and Brunei. These schools follow the National Curriculum (England), administer national assessments and public examinations, and are inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI).

SCE operates 43 schools (35 primary, six secondary and two middle), attended by approximately 10,000 pupils in total. There are also 41 Foundation Stage 1 (FS1) settings, which are managed by primary schools (either on the school site, or on a separate site), and are attended by approximately 1,800 children in total.

The mission of SCE is to provide an effective and efficient education service for children in service schools, and it has a range of methods by which it monitors and evaluates standards in schools. The Standards and Assessment Directorate of SCE, for example, is responsible for monitoring educational performance and standards in schools, supporting schools in assessing pupils' progress, analysing and using results, and managing educational performance data from schools. It also supports schools in delivering the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes[1].

In addition to its own monitoring procedures, since 2004, SCE has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake a questionnaire survey of parental satisfaction with the FS1 setting, primary school, middle school or secondary school that their child attends.

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[1] *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people.

This report presents the findings from the 2007 questionnaire survey of parents.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of the survey was to explore the views of parents with children in Service schools, in order to examine the level of parents' satisfaction with the education their children are receiving. This research aimed to help inform schools and SCE of any areas for which there was a high level of satisfaction, as well as areas where improvements could be made. This year, the questionnaire was redeveloped, so that it also explored the views of parents in regard to how well SCE schools were achieving the five ECM outcomes.

1.3 Research methods

The survey of parents, which was undertaken between May and August 2007, involved parents in all 43 Service schools and 41 FS1 settings. Questionnaires were sent, in bulk, to the schools in May, and schools were asked to arrange for the onward distribution of the questionnaires to the parents of all their pupils. Each school received enough questionnaires for each pupil in their school (according to the pupil figures provided by SCE), plus a small number of spare questionnaires for any new pupils. Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire (one per family) and return it to their child's school sealed in the envelopes provided (to ensure the confidentiality of their responses). The schools then returned the completed questionnaires in bulk to NFER. A reminder letter was sent to non-responding schools three weeks after the questionnaires were originally despatched, followed by an e-mail reminder, and telephone reminders to any remaining non-responding schools.

By the end of the summer term 2007, 42 of the 43 Service schools, and 34 of the FS1 settings, had returned parental questionnaires. The total number of questionnaires despatched, and the number of questionnaires returned by the deadline (end of July 2007), are presented in the table below.

Table 1.1   **Number of questionnaires despatched and returned**

	Number of questionnaires despatched*	Number of questionnaires returned	% of despatched questionnaires returned
FS1 settings	2025	574	28
Primary schools	6914	1946	28
Secondary schools	2907	382	13

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

Three separate versions of the questionnaire were developed – one for FS1 settings, one for primary schools and one for secondary schools. Middle schools were sent primary questionnaires for parents of pupils up to and including Year 6, and secondary questionnaires for parents of pupils in Year 7 and above. In one school, which had a high proportion of non-English speaking parents, the questionnaire was translated into the primary language of the parents, to ensure that all parents in the school were given the opportunity to participate in the survey.

Although this parental survey has been conducted for the past three years, this year, the questionnaire was redeveloped, in consultation with SCE and a small group of headteachers of Service schools, to reflect the ECM agenda. The questionnaire, therefore, included questions relating to each of the five ECM outcomes, which asked parents' views about schools' provision for:

- **Being healthy** – for example, their views on schools' healthy eating policies and provision for sport
- **Staying safe** – for example, the extent to which schools provide a safe and secure environment and deal appropriately with bullying
- **Enjoying and achieving** – for example, parents' satisfaction with their child's progress and with how staff support and treat their child
- **Making a positive contribution** – for example, the extent to which children are provided with opportunities to contribute their opinions and ideas
- **Achieving economic well-being** (secondary schools only) – for example, the extent to which schools provide good opportunities for work experience and careers guidance.

In addition, each of the questionnaires included two open-ended questions, which gave parents the opportunity to comment, in their own words, on what they thought their child's school does well, and what improvements they thought their child's school could make. The NFER research team conducted a specific analysis of these open-ended responses, and the findings are presented in Sections 2.4, 3.4 and 4.4.

The questionnaires used in the different phases of education (FS1, primary and secondary) had a large degree of overlap, and indeed most of the questions asked were common to all phases. The only differences were that the FS1 setting questionnaire contained a question relating to transfer to FS2, the primary questionnaire included a question relating to transfer to secondary school, and the secondary school questionnaire contained two questions relating to preparation for further education and employment, and one about boarding facilities.

The findings presented in this report reflect the views of a sample of parents across nearly all the FS1 settings, primary, middle and secondary schools supported by SCE. However, it is worth noting that, as we do not have information on how representative the responding parents are of all parents, we cannot be certain whether the findings presented in the report fully reflect the views of non-responding parents.

In addition to producing this report, the NFER also compiled feedback for each responding FS1 setting and school. This individualised feedback was based upon the questionnaire responses given by the parents of children in the school, compared with all responding parents. The provision of aggregated feedback means that staff in individual schools can examine how their parents' views differ from those of parents with children in SCE schools overall.

1.4   Structure of the report

The findings from the surveys of parents are reported separately for FS1 settings (Chapter 2), primary schools (Chapter 3) and secondary schools (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 concludes by presenting an overview of the findings from each phase of education, and identifies the key issues that have emerged from the research.

2. Parents' views: Foundation Stage 1 settings

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire survey of parents of children in FS1 settings. As reported in Chapter 1, questionnaires were received from a total of 574 parents across 34 FS1 settings.

The responding parents were asked to provide some background information about their child who was attending a FS1 setting. This revealed that the average (median) age of the children of responding parents was four years. The length of time that the children had reportedly been in their current FS1 setting ranged from one term to ten terms, with an average (median) of two terms per pupil.

2.2 Partnership between parents and the FS1 setting

Where children had started in their current FS1 setting within the last academic year, parents were asked to comment on their experiences of this process. As Table 2.1 illustrates, nearly all the parents were positive about the support provided by the FS1 setting to help their child settle in quickly (92 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement) and were happy with the information they had received about the FS1 setting when their child started (90 per cent agreed or strongly agreed). Only very small proportions of parents disagreed with these statements.

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 %	Not applicable %	No response %
I received sufficient information about the FS1 setting when my child started	42	48	2	1	1	1	6
The FS1 setting helped my child to settle in quickly	60	32	1	<1	1	1	6

N = 436

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A filter question: all those parents who indicated in question 3 that their child had been at the FS1 setting for three terms or less
A total of 410 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

Table 2.2 shows that the majority of parents who responded to the survey were positive about their relationship with their child's FS1 setting. A total of 99 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel welcome when they visit the FS1 setting, with two-thirds strongly agreeing with this statement. Nearly all responding parents also agreed or strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the FS1 settings' equipment and resources (98 per cent), and that it is easy to talk to a teacher about their child's education when they need to (96 per cent). In addition, the majority of parents appeared to be happy with the level of communication with their child's FS1 setting as most parents agreed or strongly agreed that they are kept informed of their child's behaviour (89 per cent) and progress (86 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	61	35	3	<1	1	0
The FS1 setting takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the FS1 setting	37	47	3	<1	12	1
I am made to feel welcome when I visit the FS1 setting	66	33	1	0	<1	0
The FS1 setting keeps me informed of my child's progress	44	42	10	1	2	<1
The FS1 setting keeps me informed of my child's behaviour	42	47	7	1	3	1
I am satisfied with the FS1 setting's building and facilities	52	42	3	2	2	0
I am satisfied with the FS1 setting's equipment and resources	57	41	1	<1	1	0
N = 574						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 574 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

Table 2.3 presents the experiences of parents whose children will soon be moving from FS1 to FS2. This shows that most of the parents who responded to this question (361 parents) were satisfied that they had been provided with sufficient information about FS2, and that their child had been well prepared and supported for the move. It is worth noting, however, that nine per cent of parents (50 individuals) felt that they had not been provided with sufficient information, and a further three per cent were unsure.

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	20	28	7	2	3	40
My child has been well prepared and supported for the move to the new school	26	26	4	<1	6	38
N = 574						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 361 respondents answered at least one item in this question
*This figure includes those parents who indicated that this question was not applicable to them
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

A total of 13 per cent of parents who responded to the survey stated that they had raised concerns about their child's FS1 setting over the last year, while 85 per cent had not. Of those 75 parents who had raised concerns, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) were satisfied with the way the FS1 setting had dealt with their concern. Most commonly, these parents reported that:

- the FS1 staff had been supportive (27 parents)

- staff had taken appropriate action to deal with their concern (18 parents)

- the FS1 staff had listened to them and discussed their concerns (15 parents)

- staff had dealt with their concern in a sensitive manner (13 parents).

However, 31 per cent of parents (23 individuals) who had raised a concern were not satisfied with how the FS1 setting had dealt with this. Most commonly, these parents indicated that the FS1 setting had not addressed their concern (14 parents), that the issue was not handled in an appropriate or sensitive manner (seven parents), and that the FS1 setting was slow to respond to their concern (five parents).

Overall, large majorities of parents were satisfied with the progress their child was making at their FS1 setting. For example, as illustrated in Table 2.4, the majority of parents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the progress their child is making in communication, language and literacy (96 per cent)

and in numeracy development (92 per cent). Most parents also indicated that they were very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities for their child to be creative (95 per cent), and with how the FS1 setting helps their child to learn more about others and the world around them (94 per cent). However, a slightly lower proportion of parents (84 per cent) were satisfied with how the FS1 setting supports them with their child's learning at home, suggesting that parents might benefit from some additional guidance and support with this.

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	63	33	3	0	1	<1
the progress your child is making in numeracy development	53	39	4	<1	4	<1
the opportunities for your child to be creative	71	24	3	<1	1	1
how the FS1 setting helps your child to learn more about others and the world around them	65	29	1	<1	4	1
the FS1 setting's outdoor learning environment	63	33	1	1	2	<1
how the FS1 setting supports you to enable your child to learn at home	43	41	9	1	5	1

N = 574

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 573 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

2.3   FS1 settings' achievements towards the Every Child Matters outcomes

Table 2.5 presents the findings relating to parents' views on the provision for pupils to **be healthy**. This shows that the majority of parents were satisfied that their child's FS1 setting encourages their child to have a healthy and active lifestyle (96 per cent), and encourages healthy eating (94 per cent). Most parents, albeit a slightly lower proportion (93 per cent), were also satisfied with the FS1 settings' provision for sport and recreation activities.

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	66	30	1	0	2	<1
that the FS1 setting encourages your child to eat healthily	65	29	3	<1	3	<1
with the FS1 setting's provision for sport and recreation activities	59	34	3	1	3	<1

N = 574

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 573 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

Table 2.6 shows that, on the whole, parents were positive about the provision at their child's FS1 setting for pupils to **stay safe**. Nearly all the parents, for example, agreed or strongly agreed that the FS1 setting provides a caring and supportive environment (98 per cent), and a safe and secure environment (97 per cent) for their child. However, it is worth noting that around a quarter of parents were unsure about how the FS1 setting deals with bullying and on their procedures for children and parents to make complaints. Although it may be that parents had not experienced any problems, and so had not needed to make use of these policies, FS1 settings may wish to consider ways in which they could further improve their strategies for disseminating information on their bullying and complaints policies to parents.

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	68	29	1	<1	1	<1
provides a caring and supportive environment for my child	70	28	1	<1	1	<1
deals appropriately with bullying	37	33	2	0	27	1
has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints	37	40	3	1	19	1

N = 574

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 573 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

Table 2.7 presents parents' views on the FS1 settings' provision for pupils to **enjoy and achieve**. This reveals that parents were generally very happy with this aspect of the provision in their child's FS1 setting. For example, the great majority of parents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with how FS1 staff support and treat their child (98 per cent), that the FS1 setting promotes good behaviour (98 per cent) and that the FS1 setting is helping their child's personal, social and moral development (97 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	64	32	3	<1	1	<1
that their child's achievements are recognised and praised	68	26	3	1	3	1
with how the FS1 staff support and treat their child	73	25	<1	<1	1	<1
that the FS1 setting promotes good behaviour	69	29	1	0	2	<1
that the FS1 setting is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem	67	29	1	0	2	<1
that the FS1 setting is helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development	67	30	1	0	2	<1

N = 574

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 573 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

As Table 2.8 shows, parents were slightly less positive about how their child's FS1 setting was supporting pupils to **make a positive contribution**. While nearly all responding parents (96 per cent) agreed that their child's FS1 setting helps their child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children, slightly lower proportions felt that the FS1 setting provides opportunities for their child to help and support other pupils (90 per cent) and for their child to contribute his/her ideas (88 per cent). Indeed around ten per cent of parents were unsure about these aspects of the FS1 settings' provision.

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	45	43	1	0	11	1
The FS1 setting helps my child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children	56	40	<1	0	23	1
The FS1 setting provides opportunities for my child to help and support other pupils	47	43	<1	0	9	1
N = 574						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 571 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

2.4   Overall parental satisfaction

FS1 parents were asked to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with the education their child is receiving and, encouragingly, the majority (98 per cent) of FS1 parents who responded to this question stated that they were happy with their child's education. Just over two-thirds of parents (67 per cent) stated that they were very satisfied, while 31 per cent were satisfied. Only three per cent of responding parents (14 individuals) said that they were not very satisfied with their child's education, while less than one per cent (one individual) were not at all satisfied. These findings appear to be more positive than those from the 2006 survey of responding parents, when 60 per cent of FS1 parents were very satisfied, and 36 per cent were satisfied.

Parents were asked to comment on any concerns that they had about their child's FS1 setting, and 84 parents responded to this question, suggesting that only a minority of parents had concerns. Table 2.9 presents the responses of these parents and shows that their concerns related mainly to the level of communication they have with their child's FS1 setting (nine per cent of all parents), the extent of their child's progress (five per cent) and the teaching methods or standards (four 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	9
Concerns about their child's progress	5
Teaching methods or standards in the FS1 setting	4
Concerns about the level of support provided for your child	3
Concerns about pupil discipline or FS1 policies on pupil behaviour	3
Other	2
No response	85
N = 574	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 84 respondents answered this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

Table 2.10 presents parents' views (in response to an open-ended question) on what they think their child's FS1 setting does well. The most common response, given by just under one third of parents, was that their child's FS1 setting had a positive, welcoming atmosphere and ethos. Just under one quarter of parents (24 per cent) were happy that the FS1 setting focuses on the personal development of children, while a similar proportion (23 per cent) were happy with the curriculum that their child's FS1 setting provides, and felt that it offers a good range of interesting activities. One fifth of parents also felt that their child's FS1 setting provides a good level of support for pupils, for example, to help them with settling in when they first start, and 12 per cent indicated that there is good communication between the FS1 setting and parents.

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	31
It focuses on the personal development of pupils	24
It provides a good curriculum/ range of activities	23
It provides good support for pupils	20
There is good communication with parents	13
FS1 setting does well in all/most areas	8
The setting has good staff	8
It has good policies (e.g. behaviour, reward, healthy eating policies)	7
It has good teaching methods/approaches	5
It has good resources	5
It encourages parental involvement	4
Parents are happy with their child's progress	4
It provides before/after school support	<1
Other	2
Not sure	1
No response	32
N = 574	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 391 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

Parents were also asked to comment on what improvements they thought their child's FS1 setting could make, and Table 2.11 presents their responses. Although eight per cent of parents stated that no improvements were necessary, the most common response, given by 17 per cent of parents, was that there should be better communication with parents. These parents suggested, for example, that their child's FS1 setting should give them more information about their child's progress or behaviour, or that FS1 staff should be more accessible to parents.

A total of eight per cent of parents felt that the facilities or resources in their child's FS1 setting could be improved, while seven per cent reported that there should be more structured learning opportunities within their child's FS1 setting.

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

Improvements	%
Better communication with parents	17
No improvements necessary	8
Improve facilities/ resources	8
Provide more opportunities for structured learning	7
Improve school policies (e.g. healthy eating, behaviour policies)	5
Provide more support for pupils	5
Improve teaching approaches / attitudes of teachers	5
Improve aspects of the curriculum	3
Ensure adequate levels of qualified staff	2
Provide more time/spaces in FS1 setting	1
Provide more extra-curricular activities	1
Provide more opportunities for parental involvement	1
Not sure	1
Other	2
No response	51

N = 574

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 280 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: FS1 survey 2007

3.   Parents' views: Primary schools

3.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire survey of parents of children in primary schools. Questionnaires were received from 1,839 parents, across 35 primary schools and one middle school.

The responding parents were asked to provide some background information about their child who was attending the primary school. This revealed that the average (median) age of the children of responding parents was seven years. These children were fairly evenly distributed across the different year groups, as Table 3.1 illustrates.

Table 3.1   Year group of children of responding parents

Year group	**%**
FS2/Reception	16
Year 1	17
Year 2	16
Year 3	16
Year 4	16
Year 5	11
Year 6	9
No response	1
N = 1946	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to100
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

The length of time that the children had reportedly been in their current primary school ranged from one term to 23 terms, with an average (median) of four terms per pupil. Parents also reported the number of schools that their child had previously attended, and this ranged from no previous schools to seven schools, with the average (median) being one previous school per pupil.

3.2   Partnership between parents and the primary school

Parents whose children had started their current primary school within the last academic year were asked to comment on their experiences of this process. Table 3.2 shows that, in general, parents were positive about their experience of their child starting primary school. For example, 87 per cent of parents whose children had started the primary school within the last academic year agreed or strongly agreed that the primary school had helped their child to settle quickly, while 84 per cent felt that they had received sufficient information about the school when their child started. A slightly lower proportion of parents (73 per cent) agreed that their child's education did not suffer when they moved school.

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 %	Not applicable %	No response %
I received sufficient information about the school when my child started	37	47	3	2	1	1	9
The school helped my child to settle in quickly	49	38	2	1	1	1	10
My child's education did not suffer when he/she moved to this school	40	33	7	2	3	6	10

N = 904

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A filter question: all those respondents who indicated in question 2 that their child had been at the primary school for three terms or less
A total of 813 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

As was the case with FS1 parents, the majority of primary school parents were positive about their relationship with their child's school (see Table 3.3). A total of 96 per cent of parents, for instance, agreed or strongly agreed that they are made to feel welcome when they visit their child's school, 94 per cent agreed that it is easy to talk to a teacher about their child's education, and the same proportion indicated that they are satisfied with the equipment and resources in their child's school. A lower proportion of parents (81 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that the school takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school, while 12 per cent were unsure about this statement. It may be that these parents have had no reason to raise concerns with the school, and are, therefore, unaware of how the school deals with such concerns from parents.

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	45	4	<1	1	<1
The school takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school	26	55	6	1	12	1
I am made to feel welcome when I visit the school	49	47	3	<1	1	1
The school keeps me informed of my child's progress	35	53	8	1	3	1
The school keeps me informed of my child's behaviour	32	55	8	1	4	1
I am satisfied with the school's building and facilities	41	51	5	1	1	1
I am satisfied with the school's equipment and resources	42	52	2	1	2	1

N= 1946

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 1,943 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

Parents with children in Year 6 were asked to give their views on how well their child's school had helped prepare their child for the move to secondary school, and their responses are presented in Table 3.4. A total of 72 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child had been well-prepared for their move to secondary school, although six per cent disagreed with this statement and a further two per cent strongly disagreed. Just under two-thirds of parents (65 per cent) agreed that they had been given sufficient information about the new school, however, 13 per cent felt that they had not been provided with enough information.

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 %	Not applicable %	No response %
I have been provided with sufficient information about the new school	27	38	11	2	2	16	3
My child has been well prepared and supported for the move to the new school	33	39	6	2	8	9	3
N = 172							

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A filter question: all those respondents who indicated that their child was in Year 6
A total of 155 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

Just under a quarter (24 per cent) of parents stated that, over the last year, they had raised concerns with their child's primary school, while 74 per cent had not. Of those 463 parents who had raised concerns, more than two-thirds (68 per cent) were satisfied with how the school had dealt with their concern. Sixty three per cent of these parents reported that the school had taken appropriate action to resolve their concern, while 37 per cent felt that school staff had listened to them and discussed their concern.

Twenty seven per cent of parents who had raised a concern, however, were not happy with the way their child's school had dealt with their concerns, and most commonly, these parents reported that:

- their child's school had not handled their concern in an appropriate or sensitive manner (55 per cent)
- the school had not addressed their concern (54 per cent)
- they would have liked more feedback from the school on how they were dealing with their concern (22 per cent)
- they were made to feel uncomfortable about complaining (13 per cent).

3.3 Primary schools' achievements towards the Every Child Matters outcomes

As Table 3.5 shows, the majority of parents were satisfied with the provision in their child's school for pupils to **be healthy**. Nearly all responding parents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied that the school encourages a healthy and active lifestyle (96 per cent) and healthy eating among pupils (95 per cent). A slightly lower proportion of parents reported that they were satisfied with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities and, in fact, nine per cent of parents (173 individuals) were not satisfied with this provision.

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	36	3	<1	1	1
that the school encourages your child to eat healthily	61	34	3	1	1	<1
with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities	47	42	7	2	2	1

N = 1946

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 1,940 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

As Table 3.6 illustrates, parents had slightly more mixed views on the provision in their child's primary school for pupils to **stay safe**. While the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child's school provides a caring and supportive environment for their child (96 per cent), and a safe and secure environment (95 per cent), they were less likely to agree that the school deals appropriately with bullying and has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints. Moreover, around one fifth of parents were unsure about these latter two aspects of provision, suggesting that parents may benefit from more information from schools on these areas.

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	50	45	3	<1	1	1
provides a caring and supportive environment for my child	46	50	2	<1	3	1
deals appropriately with bullying	29	42	5	1	22	1
has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints	28	47	6	1	17	1
N = 1946						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 1,941 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

Table 3.7 presents parents' views on the provision in their child's school for pupils to **enjoy and achieve**. This shows that the majority of parents were satisfied with this aspect of schools' provision. For example, 95 per cent of parents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with how the school staff support and treat their child, and the same proportion were satisfied that the school promotes good behaviour. The finding that 94 per cent of parents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their child's progress at school is also worth noting.

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	56	38	4	1	1	1
that their child's achievements are recognised and praised	58	34	5	1	2	1
with how the school staff support and treat their child	58	37	3	<1	2	<1
that the school promotes good behaviour	59	36	2	<1	2	1
that the school is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem	55	37	4	1	4	1
that the school is helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development	54	39	3	<1	4	1

N = 1946

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 1,941 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

As was the case among FS1 parents (Section 2.3), primary school parents appeared to be slightly less positive about the provision in their child's school for pupils to **make a positive contribution**. As Table 3.8 shows, parents were less likely to strongly agree with each of the statements about their child's school than was the case in other questions, and they were more likely to indicate that they were unsure. Nevertheless, the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school helps their child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children (92 per cent), provides good opportunities for their child to contribute his/her opinions and ideas (87 per cent), and to help and support other children (86 per cent). Eighty per cent of parents agreed that their child's school encourages pupils to become involved

in decision-making, although 16 per cent of parents were unsure about such provision.

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	34	53	2	<1	11	<1
The school helps my child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children	37	55	2	<1	6	<1
The school provides opportunities for my child to help and support other pupils	34	52	2	<1	12	1
The school encourages pupils to become involved in decision-making (e.g. through School Council)	34	46	2	<1	16	1
N = 1946						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 1,944 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

3.4   Overall parental satisfaction

As was the case in the FS1 setting survey, the majority (95 per cent) of primary school parents who responded to a question about their overall satisfaction indicated that they were happy with the education their child was receiving. More than half (55 per cent) reported that they were very satisfied, while 40 per cent were satisfied. Only five per cent of parents (104 individuals) said that they were not very satisfied with their child's education, while less than one per cent (six individuals) were not at all satisfied. These findings appear to be more positive than those from the 2006 survey of parents, when 51 per cent of responding primary parents were very satisfied, and 42 per cent were satisfied.

Parents were asked to comment on any concerns that they had about their child's primary school, and 343 parents responded to this question, suggesting that only a minority of parents had concerns. Table 3.9 presents the responses of these parents and shows that their concerns related mainly to the level of communication with their child's school (eight per cent of all parents), their child's progress at school (seven per cent), and concerns about the nature or amount of homework their child is given (seven per cent).

Table 3.9   Parents' concerns about their child's school

Parents' concerns	%
The level of communication with, or feedback from, their child's school	8
Concerns about their child's progress	8
Concerns about the nature or amount of homework their child is given	7
Teaching methods or standards in the school	6
Concerns about the level of support provided for your child	5
Concerns about pupil discipline or school policies on pupil behaviour	4
Other	1
No response	82
N = 1946	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 343 respondents answered this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

Table 3.10 presents parents' views on what they thought their child's primary school does well (in response to an open-ended question). This shows that the most common responses, given by around one fifth of parents, were that their child's school has a positive and friendly atmosphere (19 per cent), and provides good support for pupils (17 per cent). Thirteen per cent of parents stated that their child's school offers a good, varied curriculum, and some of these parents praised particular aspects of the curriculum, such as good opportunities for the arts or for modern foreign languages. Eleven per cent of parents also indicated that there was good communication between their child's primary school and parents and that staff were accessible to parents.

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

What the primary school does well	%
It has a good ethos/atmosphere	19
It provides good support for pupils	17
It offers a good curriculum	13
There is good communication with parents	11
It has good policies (e.g. behaviour, reward, healthy eating policies)	8
School does well in all/most areas	7
It offers good extra-curricular activities/ trips	7
It is a happy school	6
The school has good staff	6
It has good teaching methods/approaches	4
Parents are happy with their child's progress	4
It focuses on the personal development of pupils	3
School encourages parental involvement	3
It has good resources	3
Other	2
Not sure	1
No response	47

N = 1946

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 1,041 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

Parents were also asked to comment (in response to an open-ended question) on what improvements they thought their child's primary school could make. Table 3.11 shows that the most common response, given by ten per cent of all parents, was that there should be better communication with parents. These parents suggested, for example, that their child's primary school should give them more information about their child's progress or behaviour, that teachers should be more available to see parents, and that information should be sent to parents by alternative means (for example, by e-mail or through the school website).

Ten per cent of parents indicated that the policies in their child's school (most commonly, healthy eating, discipline and safety policies) needed to be improved, while eight per cent felt that aspects of the curriculum could be improved, for example, more opportunities for sports and multi-cultural education.

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

Improvements	%
Better communication with parents	10
Improve school policies (e.g. healthy eating, behaviour policies)	10
Improve aspects of the curriculum	8
Provide more extra-curricular activities	6
Improve facilities/ resources	6
Provide more support for pupils	5
Improve teaching approaches / attitudes of teachers	5
No improvements necessary	4
Provide more support for parents	2
Provide more opportunities for parental involvement	1
Better recruitment and retention of teachers	1
Not sure	<1
Other	2
No response	60
N = 1946	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 782 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Primary School survey 2007

4. Parents' views: Secondary schools

4.1 Introduction

The findings from the secondary school survey of parents are presented in this chapter. These findings are based on responses from 382 parents, across six secondary schools.

The ages of the children of responding secondary school parents ranged from 11 to 19 years, with an average (median) of 13 years. As Table 4.1 shows, although parents with children in all year groups were represented, a greater proportion of responses were from parents with children in Years 7 to 10.

Table 4.1   Year group of children of responding parents

Year group	%
Year 7	25
Year 8	20
Year 9	19
Year 10	19
Year 11	8
Year 12	3
Year 13	3
Year 14	1
No response	3
N = 382	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to100
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

The length of time that the children had reportedly been in their current school ranged from one term to 18 terms, with an average (median) of six terms per pupil. Parents also reported the number of schools that their child had attended before starting at their current secondary school, and this appeared to vary considerably among pupils. Pupils had attended between one and eight primary schools, between zero and five middle schools and between zero and four secondary schools prior to starting at their current secondary school. The total number of schools that pupils had previously attended ranged from no schools to ten schools, with an average (median) of three schools per pupil.

4.2   Partnership between parents and the secondary school

Where children had started at their current secondary school within the last academic year, parents were asked their views on this process. Table 4.2 presents their responses, and reveals that the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they received sufficient information about the school when their child started (82 per cent), and that the school helped their child to settle in quickly (79 per cent). Lower proportions of parents, however, agreed that their child's education did not suffer when they moved schools (68 per cent), and that the school ensured good continuity of learning (63 per cent). Schools may wish to consider, therefore, ways in which they could further facilitate the transition for pupils starting at the school.

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 %	Not applicable %	No response %
I received sufficient information about the school when my child started	21	61	6	3	1	1	8
The school helped my child to settle in quickly	22	57	5	3	4	1	8
The school ensured good continuity of learning for my child	18	45	12	4	12	1	8
My child's education did not suffer when he/she moved to this school	22	46	13	6	4	1	8
N = 163							

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A filter question: all those respondents who indicated in question 2 that their child had been at the secondary school for three terms or less.
A total of 149 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

As Table 4.3 shows, most of the secondary school parents who responded to the survey were positive about their relationship with their child's school (although it is worth noting that their responses were slightly less positive than those of primary and FS1 parents). The majority of parents, for instance, strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the school's building and facilities (89 per cent) and equipment and resources (89 per cent), and indicated that they were made to feel welcome when they visit their child's school (86 per cent). Lower proportions of parents, however, agreed or strongly agreed that it is easy to talk to a teacher about their child's education (76 per cent), and that the school takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school (60 per cent). It is notable that just under a quarter (24 per cent) of parents were unsure whether their child's school takes account of parents' concerns.

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	19	57	12	3	8	1
The school takes account of parents' suggestions and concerns about the school	8	52	12	3	24	1
I am made to feel welcome when I visit the school	24	62	7	2	3	2
The school keeps me informed of my child's progress	24	59	12	2	2	1
The school keeps me informed of my child's behaviour	23	59	10	2	3	2
I am satisfied with the school's building and facilities	27	62	6	1	4	1
I am satisfied with the school's equipment and resources	29	60	5	1	5	1

N = 382

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 379 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

Nearly two-fifths (39 per cent) of parents reported that they had raised concerns with their child's secondary school, over the last year (while 59 per cent had not). More than half (58 per cent) of these parents were satisfied with how the school had dealt with their concern, and this was most commonly because:

- the school took appropriate action to resolve the problem (55 per cent)
- school staff were helpful and supportive (33 per cent)
- there was good communication between parents and school staff (nine per cent).

However, 38 per cent of parents who raised a concern (57 individuals) were not satisfied with the way their child's school had dealt with it. These parents expressed the following reasons for their dissatisfaction:

- the school did not address their concern (33 per cent)
- the school did not handle their concern in an appropriate or sensitive manner (33 per cent)
- they would have liked more feedback from the school on how the issue was being resolved (32 per cent)
- the school was slow to respond to their concern (25 per cent)
- their concern was only partly addressed by the school (16 per cent).

4.3 Secondary schools' achievements towards the Every Child Matters outcomes

Overall, secondary school parents appeared to be satisfied with the provision in their child's school for pupils to **be healthy**. As shown in Table 4.4, a total of 92 per cent of parents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities, while 84 per cent were satisfied that the school encourages a healthy and active lifestyle among pupils. A slightly lower proportion of parents (71 per cent), however, were satisfied that the school encourages their child to eat healthily and, in fact, 20 per cent were not satisfied with this aspect of the provision in their child's school. Just over two-thirds of parents were very or fairly satisfied that the school provides appropriate drug awareness education (67 per cent) and sex and relationships education (69 per cent), although notable proportions of

parents were unsure about these aspects of provision (28 per cent and 26 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	33	51	10	1	5	1
that the school encourages their child to eat healthily	23	48	17	3	9	1
with the school's provision for sport and recreation activities	45	47	4	1	2	1
that the school provides appropriate drug awareness education for their child	28	39	3	1	28	1
that the school provides appropriate sex and relationships education for your child	26	43	3	1	26	1

N = 382

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 381 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

As was the case among FS1 and primary school parents, secondary school parents had slightly more mixed views about the provision in their child's school for pupils to **stay safe** (see Table 4.5). While the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child's school provides an environment that is safe and secure (93 per cent) and caring and supportive (82 per cent), they were less likely to agree that the school deals appropriately with bullying (59 per cent) and has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints (67 per cent).

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	35	58	3	1	2	1
provides a caring and supportive environment for my child	25	57	9	2	7	1
deals appropriately with bullying	19	40	12	5	24	‹1
has clear procedures for children and parents to make complaints	17	50	11	5	16	2
N = 382						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 381 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

Parents' views on the provision in their child's school for pupils to **enjoy and achieve** were, on the whole, very positive. As Table 4.6 illustrates, most parents were very or fairly satisfied with their child's progress at school (86 per cent), that their child's achievements are recognised and praised (86 per cent), and that the school promotes good behaviour (84 per cent). A slightly lower proportion (78 per cent) of parents, however, were satisfied that the school is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem.

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	46	40	10	2	1	1
that their child's achievements are recognised and praised	44	42	6	4	3	1
with how the school staff support and treat their child	35	47	8	4	5	1
that the school promotes good behaviour	36	48	8	3	4	1
that the school is helping to develop their child's confidence and self-esteem	37	41	9	5	6	1
that the school is helping to develop their child's personal, social and moral development	34	46	7	5	7	1
N = 382						

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 380 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

Table 4.7 presents parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to **make a positive contribution**. This reveals that, although most parents were positive about this aspect of schools' provision, notable proportions of parents were unsure. More than three-quarters of parents, for example, agreed or strongly agreed that the school provides good opportunities for their child to contribute his/her opinions and ideas (80 per cent), and helps them to develop positive relationships with adults and other pupils (79 per cent). However, slightly lower proportions of parents agreed that the school provides opportunities for their child to help and support other pupils (72 per cent) and to participate in voluntary activities to support the community (69 per cent). Moreover, around one fifth of parents were unsure about these aspects of provision.

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	21	59	6	3	11	1
The school helps my child to develop positive relationships with adults and other children	21	58	8	1	12	1
The school provides opportunities for my child to help and support other pupils	19	53	5	1	22	1
The school encourages pupils to become involved in decision-making (e.g. through School Council)	19	56	6	1	18	<1
The school provides opportunities for pupils to take part in voluntary activities to support the community (e.g. voluntary work, fundraising)	20	49	6	3	20	2

N = 382

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 381 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

Parents whose children were in Year 9 or above at secondary school (199 parents) were asked to comment on whether, by the time of the survey, they had received enough information about the choices that will be open to them when they finish Year 11. More than half (56 per cent) of these parents stated that they had received sufficient information, although 33 per cent felt that they had not, and a further eight per cent were unsure.

This feeling among some parents that they were not sufficiently informed about their child's post-16 options appears to be consistent with parents' views on schools' provision for pupils to **achieve economic well-being** (see Table 4.8). More than half the parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child's school was helping to develop the skills needed for further learning or employment, for example, by encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning (71 per cent), and helping them to develop team-working and enterprise skills (55 per cent). However, lower proportions of parents agreed that their child's school provides appropriate support and guidance to prepare them for the future. Indeed, notable proportions of parents were unsure about these aspects of their child's schooling, suggesting that parents could benefit from further information from schools on their careers education and guidance provision.

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	11	38	9	3	30	9
The school provides good opportunities for work-related learning and work experience	12	33	9	5	28	13
The school provides my child with access to a range of learning opportunities post-16 to meet his/her needs	9	25	9	3	38	15
The careers education and guidance provided to my child is helpful	10	36	6	5	28	15
The school supports my child to develop team-working and enterprise skills	11	44	5	1	24	15
The school is preparing my child well for adult and working life	11	36	10	3	26	14
The school is preparing my child well for further education or training	11	40	8	2	25	14
My child is encouraged to take some responsibility for his/her own learning	20	51	5	1	11	13

N = 382

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 355 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

Three of the six SCE secondary schools have boarding facilities for their pupils, and parents with children attending one of these boarding houses were asked their views of the provision. A total of 48 parents responded to this question and, as Table 4.9 illustrates, parents were, on the whole, positive about their child's boarding house. The majority of parents, for example, were very satisfied or fairly satisfied that the boarding house provides a safe environment for their child (89 per cent), keeps them informed of any issues concerning their child (84 per cent) and provides appropriate medical support for their child (83 per cent). Parents appeared to be less satisfied, however, with the standard of living accommodation provided for their child, as 26 per

cent reported that they were not very satisfied with this, and a further six per cent were not at all satisfied.

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

Parents' satisfaction that the boarding house...	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Not very satisfied %	Not at all satisfied %	Not sure %
provides a satisfactory standard of living accommodation for their child	28	36	26	6	4
provides an appropriate standard of supervision for their child	38	43	6	9	4
keeps them informed of any issues concerning their child	44	40	9	2	4
supports their child to have an active and healthy lifestyle	35	28	9	15	13
provides appropriate medical support for their child	56	27	9	2	7
provides a safe environment for their child	38	51	7	2	2
provides appropriate after-school recreational facilities and activities for their child	35	35	13	13	4
has a good standard of pupil behaviour	26	48	15	2	9
N = 48					

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A filter question: all those respondents with boarding facilities at their child's school
Parents who did not respond to this question were removed from the analysis as it was assumed their children were non-boarders
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

4.4   Overall parental satisfaction

A total of 83 per cent of secondary school parents who responded to a question about their overall satisfaction with their child's education reported that were happy with the education their child was receiving – 35 per cent of parents indicated that they were very satisfied, while 48 per cent were satisfied. A total of 15 per cent of parents (44 individuals) stated that they were not very satisfied with their child's education, while one per cent (four individuals) were not at all satisfied. These findings are slightly less positive than in the 2006 survey of secondary school parents, when 89 per cent of responding parents were satisfied with their child's education (37 per cent were very

satisfied and 52 per cent were satisfied). Secondary school parents also appeared to be notably less satisfied with their child's education than parents with children in primary schools and FS1 settings.

Parents were asked to comment on any concerns that they had about their child's secondary school, and 85 parents responded to this question, suggesting that only a minority of parents had concerns. As shown in Table 4.10, the main concerns reported by parents related to the level of communication with their child's school (11 per cent), the teaching methods or standards in the school (11 per cent), concerns about the level of support provided to their child (nine per cent) and concerns about pupil discipline (nine per cent).

Table 4.10   Parents' concerns about their child's school

Parents' concerns	%
The level of communication with, or feedback from, their child's school	11
Teaching methods or standards in the school	11
Concerns about the level of support provided for your child	9
Concerns about pupil discipline or school policies on pupil behaviour	9
Concerns about their child's progress	7
Concerns about the nature or amount of homework their child is given	7
Concerns about the curriculum their child is following	4
Other	1
No response	78
N = 382	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 85 parents answered this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

Table 4.11 presents parents' views on what they thought their child's secondary school does well (in response to an open-ended question). This illustrates that parents most commonly indicated that their child's school provides good support for pupils (15 per cent), and offers a good, varied curriculum (14 per cent). Nine per cent of parents also reported that the school has good teaching methods and approaches. While these responses are broadly similar to those provided by parents with children in FS1 settings and primary schools, secondary school parents were much less likely to indicate that their child's school has a positive ethos and atmosphere (six per cent of secondary parents, compared with 20 per cent of primary parents and 33 per cent of FS1 parents).

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	15
It offers a good curriculum	14
It has good teaching methods/approaches	9
There is good communication with parents	7
It offers good extra-curricular activities	7
It has a good ethos/atmosphere	6
It has good policies (e.g. behaviour, reward, healthy eating policies)	6
It focuses on the personal development of pupils	5
It has good facilities / resources	5
School does well in all/most areas	4
Parents are happy with their child's progress	1
School encourages parental involvement	<1
Other	1
Not sure	<1
No response	56
N = 382	

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: Secondary School survey 2007

While parents identified aspects of their child's school that they thought were positive, they also identified areas where they thought their child's school could improve. Table 4.12 shows that parents most commonly reported that they would like to see improvements to the policies in their child's school (12 per cent). These included healthy eating policies, behaviour and discipline policies and safety policies. Eleven per cent of parents also identified the need for better communication between parents and the school, while ten per cent would like to see more support for pupils.

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

Improvements	%
Improve school policies (e.g. healthy eating, behaviour policies)	12
Better communication with parents	11
Provide more support for pupils	10
Improve teaching approaches / attitudes of teachers	8
Improve aspects of the curriculum	6
Better recruitment and retention of teachers	5
Provide more extra-curricular activities	4
Improve facilities/ resources	4
No improvements necessary	3
Provide more opportunities for parental involvement	2
Provide more support for parents	1
Not sure	<1
Other	4
No response	57
N = 382	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 166 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER survey of parents with children in SCE schools: Secondary School survey 2007

5.   Conclusions

On the whole, the NFER surveys provide independent evidence that parents are very positive about the Service schools their children are attending. In respect of all three surveys, the majority of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the education their children are receiving, and the proportions were particularly high for FS1 settings (98 per cent) and primary schools (95 per cent).

There is also strong evidence this year, despite the fact that children in Service schools tend to change schools more often than UK-based children, that parents have good levels of satisfaction with the ways in which schools are addressing the Every Child Matters agenda and its associated outcomes. The majority of parents, for example, were satisfied with schools' provision for pupils to be healthy, and enjoy and achieve. Parents appeared to be slightly less sure, however, about some aspects of schools' provision for pupils to make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. More specifically, notable minorities of parents were unsure how their child's school/ FS1 setting deals with bullying, or with complaints from parents or children, whether the school/ FS1 setting provides opportunities for their child to contribute his or her opinions and ideas, and whether the school provides appropriate support and guidance for further education and employment. Schools may wish to consider, therefore, both whether they could enhance their provision in these areas, and the ways in which they could improve their strategies for disseminating information to parents about such provision.

Parents identified a range of areas of provision that they thought their child's school did well. In FS1 settings and primary schools, parents most commonly reported that their child's FS1 setting/ school had a positive, welcoming ethos, that it provided a good level of support for pupils, focused on the personal development of pupils, and that it offered a good, varied curriculum. The areas identified by secondary school parents were slightly different, and they were much less likely than primary parents to highlight the positive ethos of their child's school. Instead, secondary school parents most commonly reported that their child's school provided good support for pupils, and offered a varied curriculum.

Parents were also invited to identify areas of potential improvement for their child's school. Although there were some small differences between FS1, primary and secondary school parents, the most common response, among all parents, was a perception that there could be better communication between their child's school and parents. More specifically, parents suggested that teachers could be more accessible, that schools could consider sending information to parents via alternative means (such as by e-mail or through the school website), and that they would like greater feedback on their child's progress and behaviour. School-parent communication has been raised as an issue in the previous surveys of parents and, given the circumstances of Service families, and the fact that they may live some distance from their child's school, this appears to be an ongoing area for development for schools.

While the overall pattern of responses of parents in the different phases of education (FS1, primary and secondary) was broadly similar, there were some interesting differences in the responses of these groups of parents. In the main, FS1 and primary school parents tended to be more positive about their child's school than secondary school parents, and this reflects a pattern that is often found in UK-based surveys. Parents with children in FS1 settings and primary schools were, for example, notably more likely than secondary school parents to report that their child's school has a positive ethos, that teachers are accessible should parents need to talk to them, and they were less likely to have raised concerns with their child's school.

Higher proportions of FS1 and primary school parents also stated that they were satisfied with the education their child was receiving, compared with parents of children in secondary schools – 98 per cent of FS1 parents were satisfied, compared with 95 per cent of primary school parents and 83 per cent of secondary parents. Furthermore, while the proportion of FS1 and primary parents who were satisfied with their child's education had increased from the 2006 survey, the proportion of secondary parents had decreased.

Although this difference between primary and secondary school parents is not unique to SCE schools (Ofsted (2006)[2], for example, found that primary schools parents tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with their child's school), the fact that the proportion of secondary school parents who were satisfied with their child's school has declined suggests that there may be

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[2]   OFSTED (2006). Parents' Satisfaction with Schools (HMI 2634). London: Ofsted.

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some selected areas for potential improvement in secondary schools. In particular, secondary schools may wish to review their communication strategies, to ensure that parents feel adequately informed about their child's education, and to ensure that they feel that teachers are accessible should parents need to talk to them.