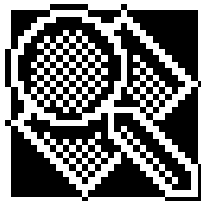


Action on Ethos

Devising and using
a questionnaire
with parents:
sharing
the action.



CARLOGIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Caesar Avenue
Carnoustie
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Angus

Headteacher: Mr. Alex L. Peggie

1 Background

Carlogie School is a relatively new school to the east of the coastal town of Carnoustie. The school was opened in 1976 to cater for the large number of private houses being built. The school has a roll of 470 including a nursery class and a unit for children with special educational needs.

With the appointment of a new Head Teacher a large number of approaches were made to the school by parents and staff regarding the continuance or alteration of various existing practices. The Senior Management Team were concerned that parents had not been sufficiently informed or involved meaningfully in a number of issues directly affecting them and their children. In order to remedy this situation, we needed to know what parents thought about a number of issues e.g. communication between the school and home, whether parents felt welcome when they came into school etc. If we were to gain the co-operation and respect of parents and bring about improvements in relationships and practice we needed to access the views of all parents.

It was decided to devise a questionnaire using our own criteria and aspects of the MVA surveys. This was discussed with staff then issued to each parent. Examples of the types of question were:-

The techniques of communication between home and school are satisfactory. Yes No Don't Know

Do you agree that the school should make it easy for the parents to visit and consult with the school? Yes No Don't Know

2 General Aims of Current Affairs

Initially we were anxious to gather evidence on parental opinion regarding specific school related issues, to find if both parents felt the same about the school or whether there were differences between the male views and the female. We wanted to identify areas where improvements and changes could be made quickly in the interest of both pupils and parents. This process, begun in 1989 is on-going and is now concerned with the following :-

- to continue to provide the opportunity for parents and school users to voice their opinions and, where practicable, to bring about some desired changes and improvements.



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To complement the parent views, children were also surveyed, but so far, only in P7. As well as covering general school topics their survey focused on school trips to London, France and the Adventure Holiday, primary /secondary links (whether they felt they knew enough about their secondary school) and their reactions to the sex education programme they had undertaken. Their views were very interesting and also helped us to realise that in areas where we felt we were doing well, there was still room for improvement.

Flyers were produced to cover specific aspects which were highlighted in the survey as areas where the parents felt they were lacking in knowledge e.g. Learning and Teaching, Action against Bullying, Support for Learning, Homework Policy, 5-14 Development, Assessment Policy etc. These were issued to all families and are now given to all new entrants.

A smaller survey of parent views was conducted 2 years later.

7 Evaluation

The initial survey proved very positive for both the teachers and parents. From the parents' point of view, the survey offered the first opportunity for them to be consulted and involved meaningfully in the way the school was run. Teachers gained a new understanding of parents' views.

Improvement is now seen as a continuing process which needs to be worked on all the time and requires all the interested parties to participate.

Proof of this came with the results of the smaller survey two years later when there was a marked improvement in the responses to the areas we had targeted.

8 Practical Suggestions

As far as the process goes, there is no way to do this but give it a try. There are no right and wrong approaches, only the approach that suits you best. Having said that, it is probably better to start off on a small scale and be very focused because, with experience, one does become better at construction and ensuring a higher reliability and validity. At the end of the day, if the outcome does not result in some action which improves the quality of learning and teaching and the quality of relationships between home and school, then serious consideration requires to be given to the need for the exercise in the first place.

In Carlogie school we know that by asking the views of the parents and older children we have been able to focus on the greatest worries and try to bring about an improvement. As a result while we are not anywhere near perfect, we have a school where parents are welcome and they know this. They are not afraid to come into school and if they wish to see a teacher, this is speedily arranged. The parents are made to feel part of the school and they support the school very strongly. We are aware that it is only by constantly checking and asking that we can make the school an open and friendly place.



Case Study – Number 4

CARLOGIE PRIMARY SCHOOL