

SURVEYING THE SECTOR



How do parents judge the quality of your service? **Dr Jo Verrill** shares key headlines from the Ceeda parent survey benchmark, and tips on how to use parent feedback effectively....

In our latest article looking at parents' views on early years education and childcare services in England, Scotland and Wales, Alan Proto, England Managing Director at Bertram Nurseries Group (pictured) shares his experience of using parent feedback to enhance quality and parent partnerships at Bertram.

First, however, let's look once more at the Ceeda parent survey benchmark - a continuous measure of parent satisfaction based on detailed surveys carried out for day nurseries, preschools and independent nursery schools in England Scotland and Wales. In the last 12 months over 6,200 parents have contributed their views, the vast majority being very happy with the level of service their family receives. Over a third of parents (37%) gave their childcare provider top marks of 10 out of 10 for overall

satisfaction, with an average of 8.89 across all families taking part. Headline findings for all key themes are shown in the graph below.

Making the most of feedback

Each theme in the general parent survey comprises several questions, allowing parents to give detailed feedback supported with open comments and suggestions. Sometimes we can shy away from canvassing honest opinions, perhaps fearing the possibility of receiving 'negative' feedback. In Alan Proto's view, however, all feedback should be welcomed.

"We were delighted, when we recently conducted a Ceeda survey across our 17 nurseries in England, that nearly 400 parents completed the survey over a two-week period," Alan says. "What makes this survey particularly useful is the ability to compare results for our nurseries against the national benchmarks calculated by Ceeda. The majority of the feedback we received from parents was very positive, but some of it was critical, and on some of the questions a number of our nurseries scored lower than the national benchmarks. To my mind, such feedback is gold dust, since it shows us exactly where we need to pick up our game in order to make parents even happier with the service we provide.

"I was anxious that we avoid any negativity around the critical feedback we received. I shared the results of the survey for the group as a whole with all of the nursery managers,



and discussed with them all together the things we are going to do as a group as a result of the feedback we received. I also went through the survey results for each nursery with its manager, one-to-one, highlighting areas where their nursery scored particularly well against the other Holyrood nurseries and the national benchmark, and areas where scores were lower. During these sessions, we drew up an action plan to develop the nursery in areas where parents felt there was room for improvement. We have in each case given a copy of this action plan to parents, and have displayed it in the nursery using 'You said - We did' display boards.

"I am looking forward to surveying our parents again, later this year or early next. I hope we'll see the impact, in higher ratings from parents, reflecting the things we have done in response to this year's survey."

Positive messages

The supportive, positive management culture at Bertram outlined by Alan ensured that parents were quick to engage with the consultation and settings were equally prompt in acting on results. The process further embedded strong parent partnerships as families could see the outcome of their feedback in the form of action plans.

Feedback is information; it allows us to see and understand how families experience services and, if required, adapt provision accordingly. This can often involve small, simple changes that make a big difference for parents. It is important to view feedback in the whole and make extensive use of positive messages by sharing testimonials in visual displays around the setting, on social media and websites and via local press releases. As one parent at Bertram's Altrincham nursery commented, "The staff are always cheerful and helpful and like to have a chat about what my child has been doing that day. I can tell she is happy at nursery by the way she interacts with the staff" - who wouldn't want to share a glowing recommendation like that?

find out more

Dr Jo Verrill is director at Ceeda. To find out more about Ceeda surveys, you can email her at enquiries@ceeda.co.uk or call 0845 680 0631. Visit ceeda.co.uk or share your thoughts on this month's focus by tweeting @ceeda_uk



Source: Ceeda general parent survey benchmark. Averages are calculated across all cases answering the question. Base: 6,220 surveys returned in the period 01/07/13 to 30/06/14