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Policy and Social Research Consultants

WHAT PARENTS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

REPORT

PREPARED FOR

THE AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL

DECEMBER 2008

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The Australian Parents Council Inc is assisted by funding from the Commonwealth of Australia through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relation's Quality Outcomes Program.

1. Introduction

This study was commissioned by the Australian Parents Council (APC) in October 2008.

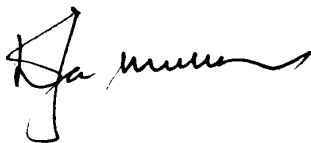
In this report, we:

- ◆ provide a summary of main findings;
- ◆ describe the methodology, and
- ◆ present the findings in detail.

The questionnaire used is included as Appendix I, and a full statistical analysis is provided separately on CD-rom as Appendix II.

The study was designed, and the questionnaire devised, by this firm in consultation with APC. The fieldwork was carried out to this firm's specifications by Australian Fieldwork Solutions, drawing a sample from a panel supplied by Research Now.

We would be happy to discuss this report at any mutually convenient time.



Dr DENIS MULLER

Principal

December 2008

2. Summary of main findings

2.1 Choosing schools

Catholic and Independent school parents are very similar in what they regard as important factors in choosing a **primary** school.

Of most importance are five first-order factors:

- ◆ Number of pupils per teacher
- ◆ Quality of the school's facilities and resources
- ◆ Average size of classes
- ◆ Support for struggling or gifted students
- ◆ Approach to discipline

Of least importance is demographic information about the school community: its income level and incidence of students from an Indigenous or non-English-speaking background.

There are more differences between fathers and mothers than between Catholic and Independent parents on the importance attached to the 21 factors offered to respondents. Mothers and fathers see eye-to-eye on only two factors – truancy and expulsions. By comparison, Catholic and Independent parents see eye-to-eye on 12.

Parents identified a cluster of five factors of equal top importance in choosing a **secondary** school:

- ◆ pupils per teacher;
- ◆ facilities and resources;
- ◆ support for struggling or gifted students;
- ◆ approach to discipline, and
- ◆ complaints/issues handling.

In other respects, however, the priority attached to the factors offered for primary schools was very similar for choosing a secondary school as well.

Three pieces of information that governments might collect about primary and secondary schools were considered to be of the most use to parents choosing a school:

- ◆ Average class size
- ◆ Number of pupils per teacher
- ◆ Qualifications of teaching staff

2.2 Comparing schools and student performance

Seven out of ten parents say that the income of students' families should not be taken into account when schools from different areas are compared for performance.

Family income as a factor in school comparisons	Total
Base	1003
	%
Should be taken into account	25
Should not be taken into account	70
Don't know	4

Parents are almost equally divided over whether the number of recently arrived immigrants should be taken into account when comparing schools.

Number of recently arrived immigrants as a factor in school comparisons	Total
Base	1003
	%
Should be taken into account	47
Should not be taken into account	48
Don't know	5

A bare majority of parents say the number of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds is a factor that should be taken into account.

Number of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds as a factor in school comparisons	Total
Base	1003
	%
Should be taken into account	52
Should not be taken into account	43
Don't know	5

A clear majority of parents say that whether a school is in a rural or remote area is a factor that should be taken into account when comparing schools' performance.

Rurality or remoteness as a factor in school comparisons	Total
Base	1003
	%
Should be taken into account	58
Should not be taken into account	37
Don't know	4

There is considerable consistency between men and women and between parents with children in Catholic or Independent schools on these questions. There are noticeable differences, however, between parents from city and country areas. City parents are more likely to say these factors should be taken into account than are country parents.

Comparisons between the performance of a parent's own child and that of other children in the class, across the State or Territory or across Australia, are of moderate to high importance, the most important of these being comparisons across a State or Territory.

On what basis, if any, should comparisons be made?	Total
Base	1003
	%
With children in all schools	64
With children only in schools that are in areas similar to your own	22
These comparisons should not be made	14

About two-thirds of parents say comparisons of their child's performance in school should be compared with children in all schools. Just over one in five say the comparisons should be with children in schools similar to their own (the "like schools" comparison) and a small minority say that comparisons across schools should not be made.

2.3 Judging school performance

The bases for judging school performance considered by parents to be of highest importance are factors associated with the happiness of students, the general direction of the school, the quality of relationships between staff and students, quality of the teaching staff and behaviour management. These are, in a sense, all people-related factors rather than achievement-related.

BASES FOR JUDGING	MEAN 0-10 scale
How happy the students seem to be	8.7
Whether the school is basically heading in the right direction	8.6
The kind of people the students generally turn out to be	8.5
How well the principal and teachers seem to know the students	8.5
The academic qualifications of teaching staff	8.5
Behaviour management strategies	8.5
Participation of teaching staff in professional development	8.4
The atmosphere or “feel” of the school	8.4
Students’ results in public tests or exams	8.4
What you hear about the school from other people	8.0
Students’ sporting or artistic achievements	7.4
How the school expresses its faith (if a faith-based school)	7.3

A large majority say parents should be invited to make judgments about the performance of schools. This majority (80%) were then asked what they felt able to judge a school on.

Whether parents should be invited to judge schools’ performance	Total
Base	1003
	%
Should be invited	80
Should not be invited	9
Don’t know	11

While parents want to be invited to make judgments about a wide range of school performance indicators, their levels of confidence in their ability to do so vary considerably depending on what indicators they are being asked to assess.

A large majority feel able to judge how the school is able or willing to meet the needs of their child. Fairly large majorities also feel able to judge the atmosphere or “feel” of the school, how happy the children

appear to be, and how well the principal and teachers know the children. By contrast, only a bare majority feel able to make judgments about the school’s performance in tests.

The data indicate that while parents certainly want to have this information, they are cautious in asserting their capacity to make judgments about school performance based on it.

2.4 Judging teacher performance

A large majority also say parents should be invited to judge the performance of their child’s teacher or teachers.

Whether parents should be invited to judge teacher's performance	Total
Base	1003
	%
Should be invited	77
Should not be invited	13
Don't know	10

Parents most feel able to make judgments about how well the teacher knows and relates to their child, and how well the teacher communicates with them as parents. They are somewhat less likely to feel able to make a judgment about the teacher’s performance based on test or exam results, on the atmosphere of the classroom and on whether the teacher treats them as partners in the education of their children. This question of partnerships is a matter of some importance to parents, as is reported later. (See comments under Figure 1.)

As with school performance, mothers are generally more likely than fathers to say they feel able to make a judgment about teacher performance.

2.5 The overall picture

2.5.1 Right to, and use of, information

Parents want as much information as they can get about schools and school performance, but will use it as part of a matrix of factors in choosing a school or judging schools and teachers.

Specifically, parents believe they:

- ◆ would benefit from having a wide range of information about schools for the purpose of choosing a school;
- ◆ have a right to make judgments about school and teacher performance;
- ◆ should be provided with a range of information to enable them to make these judgments;
- ◆ are able to rely on their own analysis of the information to make judgments about many of the people-related aspects of school performance;
- ◆ are less able to rely on their own analysis to make judgments about the more academic aspects of school performance.

2.5.2 Making comparisons between schools

This survey revealed a lack of knowledge among parents about the factors known to be critical in making sensible comparisons between schools. This showed up most starkly in their response to whether the family income of a school's students should be taken into account in making comparisons between schools. Only 25% said it should be.

And on the other three factors offered -- -- number of recently arrived immigrants, number of NESB students, and rurality -- only small majorities, at best, recognized these as relevant to school comparisons.

Since it is widely agreed among educationalists that these are all critical factors in making sensible comparisons, some development of the parent community's knowledge on this matter seems to be called for. As matters stand, the parent community is vulnerable to simplistic political arguments of the kind commonly heard when league tables or funding are publicly debated: that schools should be ranked by test results, and funding determined accordingly. While this line of argument is used mostly in reference to government schools, non-government schools are not immune.

Similarly, on the question of comparing student performance, nearly two-thirds of parents say their child's performance should be compared with students in all schools. Only 22% said the comparison should be with children in "like" schools.

As these figures attest, however, there is very widespread support for some kind of comparison to be made of student performance. Only 14% say these comparisons should not be made.

The issue then is, what comparisons are sensible? For parents in this survey, comparisons with other children in the same State or Territory are regarded as more important than national comparisons, and indeed more important than the child's place in his or her own class.

It is well recognized that the socio-economic status of a child's family is a very important factor in his or her school performance, hence the emerging preference among policy makers for "like" school comparisons.

Putting these two ideas together, it would seem beneficial to parents if they were exposed to information about the concept of "like" school comparisons, with a focus on comparisons within a State or Territory and the reasons behind this kind of comparison.

2.5.3 Summary

In summary, this survey shows parents assert the right to a wide range of information about schools and about school and student performance. They will use this information in different ways depending on their own sense of their capacity to rely on it with or without advice from others. They want to see performance comparisons between schools and between students. Their understanding of the underlying concepts governing the design of these comparisons is incomplete, and a campaign to inform parents on these matters would be beneficial if, in fact, comparisons once made are to have any useful meaning for them. Comparisons that give false or misleading readings would be worse than no comparisons at all.

3. Methodology

This was a quantitative survey of parents with children at non-government (Catholic and Independent) schools. Quotas were imposed on the total sample of 1003 so that almost equal numbers of parents with children at Catholic (503) and Independent (500) schools were obtained. This means the confidence level attaching to the results for each sub-population is the same.

The fieldwork was conducted online using a controlled sample. The sample was provided by an online panel provider, Research Now. Members of these panels are recruited online via a wide range of permissioned email activities, affiliate networks, and targeted website advertising. The range of recruitment sources enhances the panels' breadth.

Panellists opt in on each occasion they are asked to take an individual survey by clicking on a private survey link sent to them. Panellists can unsubscribe from the panel at any time they wish.

Panels are used for market and social research purposes only. Respondents are not exposed to any marketing through the panels. This avoids systematic bias which can arise where panels are used for non-research activities.

Panel members are rewarded a cash equivalent amount in voucher form for participating in each online survey. The amount is clearly stated in the invitational email and is related to the survey length, interest and complexity. Typical incentives for consumer surveys range between \$A4 and \$A8. The incentive for the present study was \$1.50. Panel members cannot participate in more than 24 surveys a year, and no more than two a month. They may not participate in more than one survey at a time.

Panels comply with, or exceed, applicable industry standards published by the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) and international equivalents.

The panel data base contains personal and household demographic information, including educational information, as well as information regarding panellists' consumer habits. This allows people qualifying for inclusion in a particular population of interest – in this case parents with children at non-government

schools – to be identified and sampled more quickly and economically than is the case using conventional screening techniques.

The typical time for studies such as this to be left in the field, and therefore available to potential participants, is two to three days. Short field periods (less than three days) mean that potential respondents who are less frequently online are less likely to participate. This study was in the field for 11 days, 10 to 20 November 2008 inclusive. This is a long time in the online world, and gave potential qualifying respondents ample opportunity to learn of, and participate in, the survey.

A “normal” response rate to online surveys using these panels varies between 28% and 62% depending on a variety of factors including time of year, length and complexity of the survey and the intrinsic interest of the subject-matter to potential respondents. These factors are at work in telephone and face-to-face surveys too.

The nominal response rate to this survey was 30.28%. This was calculated by dividing the number of completed valid responses by the number of potential respondents who started but did not complete the survey. Some – probably the vast majority – would have been screened out as not qualifying for inclusion in the population of interest and some would have failed to complete because of timing out or other reasons. It is not possible to discriminate between these two groups of non-completers, and that is why we have called it a nominal response rate. It compares favourably with the rate for telephone surveys.

Samples drawn from a panel such as this cannot be said to be representative of the total population. First, about 75% of the population has access to a computer, meaning that 25% of the population is effectively excluded from participating. Further, it is known that membership of online survey panels tends to be skewed toward higher socio-economic (SES) groups, and this sample was. People whose highest level of educational attainment was a bachelor’s degree or higher were substantially over-sampled; those who had not completed secondary school were substantially under-sampled; those who had completed secondary school or who had a trade or technical qualification were slightly under-sampled.

On the other hand, the panel from which this sample was drawn was large (about 159,000 people) and it is therefore broadly representative of the substantial proportion of the Australian population that has

access to a computer. For that reason, inferences may be drawn about the generalisability of the attitudes reported here with sufficient confidence for the survey's purposes. Were the sample to be truly random, the variance yielded by a sample of 1003 is plus or minus 3.2%. While strictly speaking that confidence level cannot be applied to this sample for the reasons just stated, it is useful to bear it in mind for indicative purposes when reading the data.

4. Findings in detail

Question 1 was a screening question to establish the school sector and school level in which respondents had children. Quotas were imposed on the sample to ensure the inclusion of equal numbers of respondents with children in Catholic and Independent schools. In the event, 503 Catholic and 500 Independent respondents were obtained.

The issues questions began with Question 2.

Question 2:

*There has been some talk lately about the information parents want when choosing schools. Thinking first about choosing a **primary** school: if you were choosing a **primary** school, how important to you would each of the following pieces of information be?*

Twenty-one factors in school choice were offered, in seven categories, as shown in Table 1. The means are derived from ascribing scores to each of the possible responses, with 4 for “very important” and 1 for “not at all important”. Hence anything scoring a mean of 3 or 4 is important and anything below three is less important.

TABLE 1: IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN CHOOSING A PRIMARY SCHOOL

FACTOR	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				MEAN
	Very important	Quite important	Not very important	Not at all important	
Base	1003				
	%	%	%	%	
Factors concerning school size					
The overall size of the school	28	47	22	3	3.0
The average size of the classes	65	31	3	0	3.6
The number of pupils per teacher	69	29	2	0	3.7
Factors concerning school community					
Average income of families with children at the school	5	21	47	25	2.1
How many students from Indigenous backgrounds go to the school	10	19	42	27	2.1
How many students from non-English-speaking backgrounds go to the school	11	25	41	22	2.3
Factors concerning the school's academic credentials					
The school's record in public tests, such as national tests on literacy	45	45	8	2	3.3
Hours per week spent teaching subjects like literacy and numeracy	57	40	3	0	3.5

Table 1 continued overleaf.

TABLE 1 cont: IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN CHOOSING A PRIMARY SCHOOL

FACTOR	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				MEAN
	Very important	Quite important	Not very important	Not at all important	
Base			1003		
	%	%	%	%	
Factors concerning school funding and fees					
Where the school gets its money from	19	43	30	7	2.7
The cost to you of sending a child to the school	48	42	8	2	3.4
Factors concerning school's facilities and resources					
The quality of the school's facilities and resources	70	27	2	0	3.7
The range and quality of activities and services	46	45	9	0	3.4
Factors concerning student wellbeing					
How the school supports children going through a difficult time	55	41	3	0	3.5
The school's approach to canteen food and healthy eating	34	50	14	1	3.2
How the school supports children who struggle academically or are gifted	64	34	2	0	3.6
The school's approach to discipline	65	33	2	0	3.6
The school's truancy rate	42	44	12	1	3.3
The school's rate of expulsions or suspensions	34	42	20	2	3.1
Factors concerning the school's attitude to parents					
Whether parents are encouraged to be partners in their children's education	39	48	10	1	3.3
Whether parents are made to feel welcome in the classroom	45	43	10	1	3.3
How the school manages complaints or issues of concern raised by parents	62	35	2	0	3.6

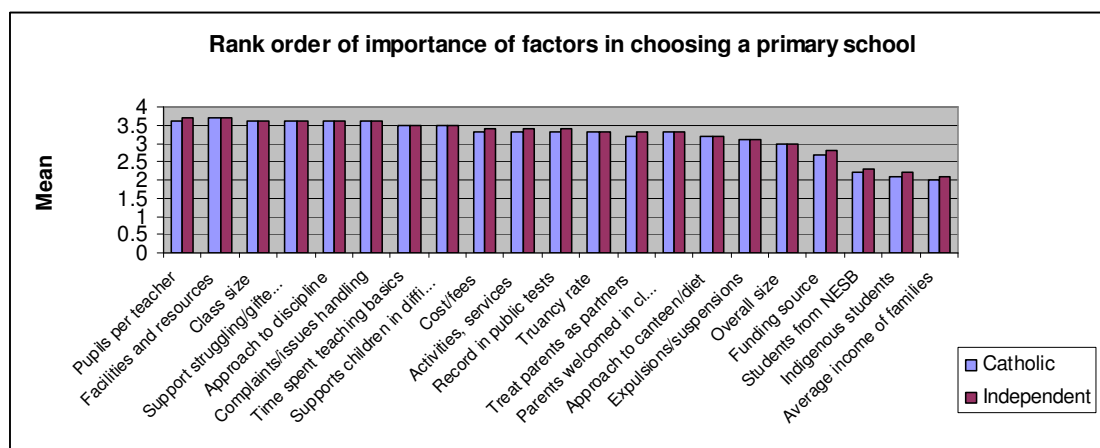
Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Don't know responses are reported in Appendix II and are of the order of 1 to 2%.

Catholic and Independent school parents are very similar in what they regard as important factors in choosing a primary school. As Table 1 and Figure 1 (overleaf) show, there are five first-order factors (means of 3.7 or 3.6 on a scale where "very important" scores 4 and "not at all important" scores 1). The five are:

- ◆ Number of pupils per teacher (3.7)
- ◆ Quality of the school's facilities and resources (3.7)
- ◆ Average size of classes (3.6)
- ◆ Support for struggling or gifted students (3.6)
- ◆ Approach to discipline (3.6)

These priorities are consistent with the results of other qualitative and quantitative research we have done on these issues, and underscore the importance parents attach to a safe and caring environment where their children will not be lost and their individuality will be recognised.¹

FIGURE 1: RANK ORDER OF IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN CHOOSING A PRIMARY SCHOOL



It is more important to parents in both categories to know how many hours per week a school spends teaching literacy and numeracy (scoring a mean of 3.5) than to know the school’s record in public tests on these subjects, although this is not unimportant (mean of 3.3).

It is also quite important to parents to know whether the school encourages them to be partners in their children’s education, and whether they will be welcome in the classroom (means of 3.3).

Of least importance to parents is demographic information about the school community: its income level, and incidence of students from and Indigenous or non-English-speaking background (means of 2.1 to 2.3).

¹ See, for example, *Values and Other Issues in the Education of Young Australians*, Denis Muller & Associates, qualitative and quantitative research conducted for the Australian Parents Council and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, September 2008; *What Parents Want from Their Children’s Education*, Irving Saulwick & Associates, qualitative research conducted for the National Council of Independent Schools Association (NCISA) June 1998.

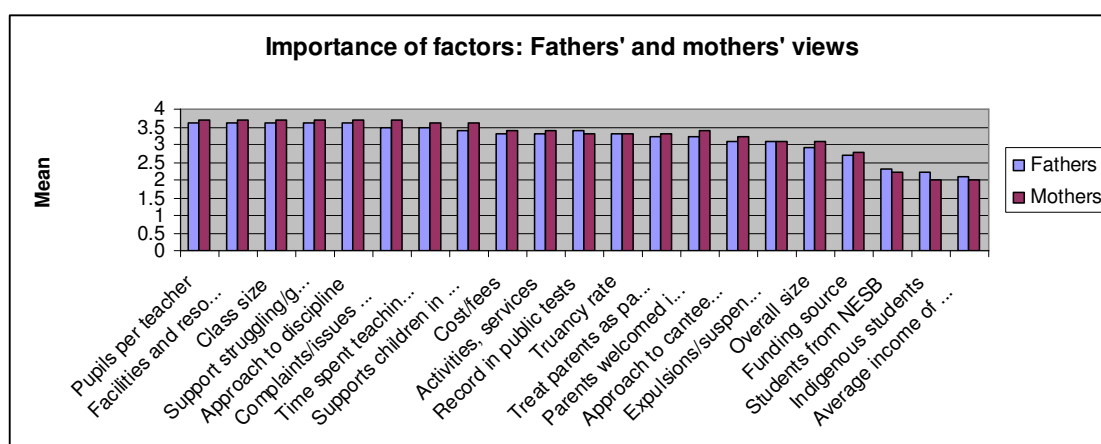
Variations between Catholic and Independent parents are small. However, Independent parents attach slightly more importance to:

- ◆ the number of pupils per teacher;
- ◆ fees and funding;
- ◆ activities and services;
- ◆ public test results, and
- ◆ the demography of the school community.

There are more differences between fathers and mothers than between Catholic and Independent parents on the importance attached to these factors, as Figure 2 shows. Mothers and fathers see eye-to-eye on only two factors – truancy and expulsions. By comparison, Catholic and Independent parents see eye-to-eye on 12.

Mothers tend to place more importance on all 21 factors than do fathers, except for public test results and demography, to which fathers attach more importance.

FIGURE 2: HOW FATHERS AND MOTHERS RATE FACTORS IN CHOICE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL



Other factors mentioned by parents as being very or quite important included location/closeness to home (nominated by 6%) religious affiliation/education (5%) bullying (4%), quality of teaching (4%), curriculum (2%).

Question 3

*Thinking now about choosing a **secondary** school: if you were choosing a **secondary** school, how important to you would each of the following pieces of information be?*

Parents identified a cluster of five factors of equal top importance in choosing a secondary school. Each had a mean of 3.6:

- ◆ pupils per teacher;
- ◆ facilities and resources;
- ◆ support for struggling or gifted students;
- ◆ approach to discipline, and
- ◆ complaints/issues handling.

In other respects, however, the priority attached to the factors offered for primary schools was very similar to that for choosing a secondary school. One additional factor was offered for secondary school choice: the rate of students who stayed on for Years 11 and 12. This was a factor of moderate importance (mean 3.3) and of slightly more importance to Independent parents (mean 3.4) than Catholic (mean 3.3).

Question 4

*There has been some talk lately about publicly comparing the performance of schools on the basis of information that governments could collect about schools. Below are some pieces of information that governments could collect about schools. If you were comparing **primary** schools, how useful would each of these pieces of information be to you in making a comparison?*

TABLE 2: USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION IN CHOOSING A PRIMARY SCHOOL

INFORMATION	LEVEL OF USEFULNESS				MEAN
	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	
Base			1003		
	%	%	%	%	
Information about school size					
The overall size of the school	39	44	14	2	3.2
The average size of the classes	65	32	2	0	3.6
The number of pupils per teacher	67	30	2	0	3.6
Information about the school community					
Average income of families with children at the school	12	27	42	18	2.3
The social and cultural backgrounds of students	17	41	31	10	2.6

Table 2 continued overleaf.

TABLE 2 cont: IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN CHOOSING A PRIMARY SCHOOL

INFORMATION	LEVEL OF USEFULNESS				MEAN
	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	
Base	1003				
	%	%	%	%	
Information about the school's academic credentials and teaching staff					
The school's record in public examinations or tests, including national tests	55	37	6	2	3.5
Qualifications of the teaching staff	63	31	4	1	3.6
Teacher retention or turnover	54	37	7	1	3.4
Teacher absenteeism	45	41	11	1	3.3
Information about the school's funding and fees					
Where the school gets its money from	21	40	29	8	2.8
The cost to you of sending a child to the school	58	36	5	1	3.5
Information about student wellbeing					
The school's truancy rate	32	46	18	3	3.1
The school's rate of expulsions or suspensions	29	43	22	4	3.0

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Don't know responses are reported in Appendix II and are of the order of 1 to 2%.

Three pieces of information that governments might collect about primary schools were considered to be of the most use, each recording a mean of 3.6:

- ◆ Average class size
- ◆ Number of pupils per teacher
- ◆ Qualifications of teaching staff

It will be remembered that the first two were also among the five that parents considered were the most important pieces of information to them in choosing primary schools.

The next most useful pieces of information that governments might collect about primary schools, each recording a mean of 3.5, were:

- ◆ The school's record in public examinations or tests
- ◆ The cost to parents of sending a child to the school

Third in this hierarchy of usefulness were:

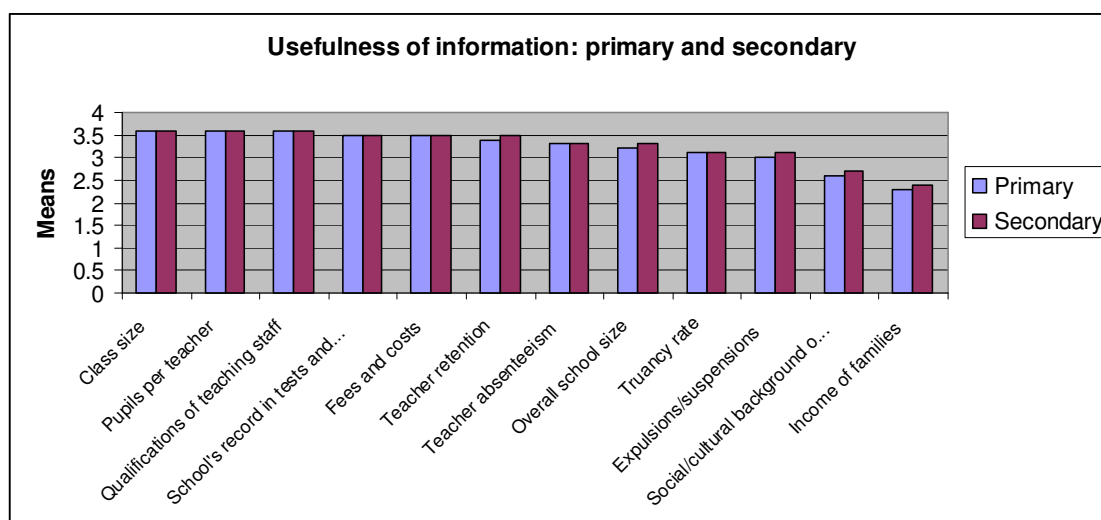
- ◆ Teacher retention or turnover (3.4)
- ◆ Teacher absenteeism (3.3)

- ◆ Overall size of the school (3.2)
- ◆ Truancy rate (3.1)

Of least usefulness was information about the demography of the school community. As might be expected, the usefulness of these various pieces of information correlate broadly with their importance, as measured in the earlier questions.

The usefulness of these pieces of information to parents choosing a secondary school showed a similar pattern, as Figure 3 shows.

FIGURE 3: USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMPARED



It is clear that information about class size, pupil/teacher ratios and teachers' qualifications are considered by parents to be the most useful information they could have when choosing either a primary or a secondary school.

Next is information about the school's academic record and staff stability.

Demographic information about the school's community is least important.

Question 6 (a)

Different schools serve different types of areas. When schools are being compared for performance, would you say the following differences should or should not be taken into account?

The average income level of families with children at the school

TABLE 3: STUDENTS' FAMILY INCOME AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL COMPARISONS

ISSUE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Family income as a factor in school comparisons		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
Should be taken into account	25	24	27	25	25
Should not be taken into account	70	72	69	70	71
Don't know	4	4	5	4	4

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

Seven out of ten parents say that the income of students' families should not be taken into account when schools from different areas are compared for performance. This attitude is consistent across males and females and Catholic and Independent school parents.

Question 6 (b)

The number of recently arrived immigrants at the school

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF RECENTLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANTS AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL COMPARISONS

ISSUE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Number of recently arrived immigrants as a factor in school comparisons		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
Should be taken into account	47	45	49	46	48
Should not be taken into account	48	51	46	50	47
Don't know	5	4	5	5	5

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

Parents are almost equally divided over whether the number of recently arrived immigrants should be taken into account when comparing schools from different areas. Men and Catholic parents may be slightly more likely than women and Independent parents to say it should not be taken into account.

Question 6 (c)

The number of families at the school whose first language is not English

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF NESB STUDENTS AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL COMPARISONS

ISSUE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Number of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds as a factor in school comparisons		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
Should be taken into account	52	50	55	53	51
Should not be taken into account	43	46	40	42	45
Don't know	5	4	5	5	4

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

A bare majority of parents say the number of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds is a factor that should be taken into account when comparing the performance of schools. Women are slightly more likely than men to say this is a factor that should be taken into account.

Question 6 (d)

Whether the school is in a rural or remote area

TABLE 6: RURALITY OR REMOTENESS AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL COMPARISONS

ISSUE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Rurality or remoteness as a factor in school comparisons		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
Should be taken into account	58	57	60	56	60
Should not be taken into account	37	38	36	39	36
Don't know	4	5	4	5	4

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

A clear majority of parents say that whether a school is in a rural or remote area is a factor that should be taken into account when comparing schools' performance. As with the other responses in this set of questions about school comparisons, there is considerable consistency between men and women and between parents with children in Catholic or Independent schools.

In summary, parents do not believe that family income is a factor that should be taken into account when comparing schools’ performance; they are divided over whether the number of recently arrived immigrants should be taken into account, and they say that the number of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and rurality and remoteness, are factors that should be taken into account.

There are noticeable differences between parents from city and country areas on these questions. City parents are more likely to say these factors should be taken into account than are country parents.

The only factor which a majority of country parents (53%) say should be taken into account is rurality or remoteness. Even on this question, however, a larger majority of city parents (60%) say it should be taken into account.

Table 7 summarises these differences between city and country parents.

TABLE 7: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRY PARENTS ON FACTORS IN SCHOOL COMPARISONS

FACTOR	RESPONDENT'S LOCATION			
	Metro		Non-metro	
	Should be taken into account	Should not be taken into account	Should be taken into account	Should not be taken into account
Base	748		255	
	%	%	%	%
Family income	27	70	20	78
Immigrants	49	46	41	56
NESB	53	41	47	50
Rurality	60	35	53	44

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding and because the Don't Knows are reported in Appendix II but not here. They were in the order of 4-5%

Question 7

Here are several ways a school’s performance might be judged.

As a parent, how much importance do you attach to each of them? Please give a score between 0 and 10 for each one, where 0 means you attach no importance to it, and 10 means you attach great importance to it.

Responses on the 0-10 scale have been clustered into Low (0-4), Moderate (5-7) and High (8-10). The means are derived from the scores given for each factor on the scale. The factors have been ranked in order of importance as revealed by the data.

TABLE 8: IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS WAYS OF JUDGING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

BASES FOR JUDGING	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE			MEAN
	Low (0-4)	Moderate (5-7)	High (8-10)	
Base	1003			
	%	%	%	
How happy the students seem to be	1	16	82	8.7
Whether the school is basically heading in the right direction	1	18	80	8.6
The kind of people the students generally turn out to be	2	18	79	8.5
How well the principal and teachers seem to know the students	2	19	78	8.5
The academic qualifications of teaching staff	2	20	77	8.5
Behaviour management strategies	1	20	76	8.5
Participation of teaching staff in professional development	2	21	76	8.4
The atmosphere or "feel" of the school	2	23	74	8.4
Students' results in public tests or exams	2	21	73	8.4
What you hear about the school from other people	4	30	66	8.0
Students' sporting or artistic achievements	8	37	54	7.4
How the school expresses its faith (if a faith-based school)	9	32	55	7.3

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Don't knows are reported in Appendix II but were of the order of 1 to 3%.

Most of these bases for judging school performance are considered by parents to be of high importance, and highest of all are factors associated with the happiness of students, the general direction of the school, the quality of relationships between staff and students, quality of the teaching staff and behaviour management. These are, in a sense, all people-related factors rather than achievement-related. Achievement – especially academic achievement – is important, but as in other research we have done in this field (see earlier references), it usually takes second place in parents' minds to the human side of education.

Question 8

Would you say parents should or should not be invited by the school to make a judgment about how the school is performing?

TABLE 9: ATTITUDES TO PARENTS' BEING INVITED TO JUDGE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

ATTITUDE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Whether parents should be invited to judge schools' performance		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
Should be invited	80	80	80	80	80
Should not be invited	9	10	8	8	9
Don't know	11	10	12	12	10

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

A large majority say parents should be invited to make judgments about the performance of schools. Among the remaining parents, however, there is a degree of equivocation about this, with 9% saying they should not be invited, and 11% being undecided. These findings are consistent across males and females, and across the two school sectors.

The 80% who said parents should be invited to make judgments about the performance of schools were then offered a range of aspects of school performance on which they personally would feel able to make a judgment.

Question 9

Which, if any, of the following aspects of school performance would you personally feel able to make a judgment about? You may choose as many or as few as you like. Please tick any you would feel able to make a judgment about.

The proportions of parents who say they would feel able to judge various aspects of school performance are given in Table 10. The aspects are presented in a hierarchy, with those that the greatest proportion of parents feel able to judge, given first.

TABLE 10: ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PARENTS FEEL ABLE TO JUDGE

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	PROPORTION WHO SAY THEY CAN JUDGE				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
		Male	Female	Cath	Ind
Base	803				
	%	%	%	%	%
The school's willingness or ability to meet your child's needs	80	78	83	82	79
The atmosphere or "feel" of the school	77	72	82	75	78
How happy the students seem to be	76	70	82	75	78
How well the principal and teachers seem to know the students	71	67	75	68	74
Behaviour management strategies	61	58	64	61	61
Whether the school is basically heading in the right direction	61	61	61	58	64
The kind of people the students generally turn out to be	55	53	57	51	59
What you hear about the school from other people	57	54	61	58	57
How the school expresses its faith (if a faith-based school)	53	50	55	52	53
Students' results in public tests or exams	50	51	50	48	53

A large majority of parents feel able to judge how the school is able or willing to meet the needs of their child. Fairly large majorities also feel able to judge the atmosphere or "feel" of the school, how happy the children appear to be, and how well the principal and teachers know the children. After that, however,

noticeably fewer parents say they feel able to judge behaviour management strategies and whether the school is basically heading in the right direction, and fewer still feel able to make judgments about the kind of people the students turn out to be or what the school’s reputation is among other people. Only a bare majority feel able to make judgments about the school’s performance in tests and in the way it expresses its faith (if it is a faith-based school).

TABLE 11: ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PARENTS FEEL ABLE TO JUDGE, COMPARED WITH IMPORTANCE OF THESE ASPECTS

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	IMPORTANCE OF THIS ASPECT	PROPORTION WHO SAY THEY CAN JUDGE IT
	MEAN	%
The school’s willingness or ability to meet your child’s needs	Not tested	80
The atmosphere or “feel” of the school	8.4	77
How happy the students seem to be	8.7	76
How well the principal and teachers seem to know the students	8.5	71
Behaviour management strategies	8.5	61
Whether the school is basically heading in the right direction	8.6	61
The kind of people the students generally turn out to be	8.5	55
What you hear about the school from other people	8.0	57
How the school expresses its faith (if a faith-based school)	7.3	53
Students’ results in public tests or exams	8.4	50

Table 11 compares the importance of various aspects of school performance with the proportions of parents who say they would feel able to make judgments about them. There is a reasonable fit on atmosphere, student happiness and how well the staff know the students. There is a less good fit on behaviour management and school direction, and not much of a fit at all on public test results, school reputation and the kind of students the school turns out.

This suggests that while parents want to be invited to make judgments about a wide range of school performance indicators, their levels of confidence to do so vary considerably depending on what indicators they are being asked to assess. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that it is a specialized area, the aspect of performance which the smallest proportion of parents say they feel able to make a judgment about is the school’s students’ results in tests or public examinations.

Since this is considered to be information of high importance, however, the data indicate that parents certainly want to have this information, but only about half would feel able to make a judgment about the school's performance based on it. This indicates a certain caution on the part of parents about the extent to which they would rely only on their own interpretation of the information.

Question 10

And would you say parents should or should not be invited by the school to make a judgment about how their child's teacher or teachers are performing?

TABLE 12: ATTITUDES TO PARENTS' BEING INVITED TO JUDGE TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE

ATTITUDE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Whether parents should be invited to judge teacher's performance		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
Should be invited	77	76	77	77	76
Should not be invited	13	15	12	13	14
Don't know	10	10	11	11	10

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

A large majority say parents should be invited to judge the performance of their child's teacher or teachers, although again among the remainder of the parent population there is some equivocation, with 10% saying they have no opinion on this question.

Question 11

Based on your own experience as a parent so far, which, if any, of the following aspects of a teacher's performance would you personally feel able to make a judgment about?

TABLE 13: ASPECTS OF TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE PARENTS FEEL ABLE TO JUDGE

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	PROPORTION WHO SAY THEY CAN JUDGE				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
Base		Male	Female	Cath	Ind
		803			
	%	%	%	%	%
How well the teachers seem to know your child	86	85	87	85	87
How the teacher seems to relate to your child	84	82	87	84	84
How well the teacher communicates with you	83	80	87	83	84
Your child's results in tests or exams	71	70	71	68	73
The atmosphere or "feel" of the classroom	69	67	71	67	71
Whether the teacher recognizes you as a partner	69	67	71	69	69

It is clear that parents most feel able to make judgments about how well the teacher knows and relates to their child, and how well the teacher communicates with them as parents. They are somewhat less likely to feel able to make a judgment about the teacher’s performance based on test or exam results, on the atmosphere of the classroom and on whether the teacher treats them as partners in the education of their children, even though this is of some importance to them.

As with school performance, mothers were generally more likely than fathers to say they felt able to make a judgment about teacher performance.

Independent parents were slightly more likely than Catholic parents to say they could judge a teacher’s performance by test results and classroom atmosphere.

Questions 12 and 13

Here are several things parents may wish to know about how their child is getting on at school.

As a parent, how much importance do you attach to each of them? Please give a score between 0 and 10 for each one, where 0 means you attach no importance to it, and 10 means you attach great importance to it.

In Table 14 the means are calculated from the 0-10 scale offered in the question and clustered as before. The findings are presented in a data-driven hierarchy, with the most important at the top.

TABLE 14: IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

TYPES OF INFORMATION	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE			MEAN
	Low (0-4)	Moderate (5-7)	High (8-10)	
Base	1003			
	%	%	%	
Any difficulties your child is having	*	9	89	9.1
How your child is getting on with the teachers	*	13	86	8.8
Your child’s test or exam results	1	15	83	8.7
How your child behaves in class	2	15	83	8.7
The things your child is developing a talent for	*	18	81	8.6
How your child mixes with other students	2	24	74	8.3
Your child’s involvement in school activities	2	27	71	8.2
Your child’s performance compared with other children in State	4	29	67	8.0
Your child’s place in the class overall	5	29	66	7.9
Child’s performance compared with other children across Aust	5	29	66	7.9
Your child’s place in the class in each subject	5	30	64	7.8
Your child’s sporting or artistic achievements	5	41	53	7.4

*Less than 1%. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Don’t knows are reported in Appendix II but were of the order of 1 to 3%.

It can be seen immediately that information centred on a parent’s own child ranks generally more highly in importance than more indirect classes of information, as measured in earlier questions.

Comparisons between the performance of a parent’s own child and that of other children in the class, across the State or Territory or across Australia, are of moderate to high importance, the most important of these being comparisons across a State or Territory.

On this issue of comparisons with the performance of other children, a series of further questions was asked.

Question 14

Should these comparisons with children in other schools be made with children in all schools, or with children only in schools that are in areas similar to your child’s school, or should these comparisons not be made?

TABLE 15: ATTITUDES TO STUDENT COMPARISONS

ATTITUDE	RESPONSES				
	Total	Gender		Sector	
On what basis, if any, should comparisons be made?		Male	Female	Catholic	Indep't
Base	1003	515	488	503	500
	%	%	%	%	%
With children in all schools	64	66	62	63	65
With children only in schools that are in areas similar to your own	22	21	24	24	20
These comparisons should not be made	14	13	15	13	14

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

A clear majority of parents say comparisons of their child’s performance in school should be compared with children in all schools. Just over one in five say the comparisons should be with children in schools similar to their own (the “like schools” comparison) and a small minority say that comparisons across schools should not be made.

These findings are consistent between mothers and fathers and between Catholic and Independent parents.

AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS,
NOVEMBER 2008

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

This survey is being conducted by Denis Muller & Associates and Australian Fieldwork Solutions on behalf of the Australian Parents Council. The council represents parents who have children in non-government schools, that is, Catholic and Independent schools.

Your answers are completely anonymous.

A QUESTION ABOUT THE KIND OF SCHOOL YOUR CHILD OR CHILDREN ATTEND

Q1.

First a question on where your child or children go to school. If you have a child at more than one kind of school, please show each kind of school where you have a child.

- Government (State) primary school
- Government (State) secondary school
- Catholic primary school
- Catholic secondary school
- Independent primary school
- Independent secondary school

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHOOSING SCHOOLS

Q2.

There has been some talk lately about the information parents want when choosing schools.

Thinking first about choosing a **primary** school: if you were choosing a **primary** school, how important to you would each of the following pieces of information be?

Information about school size and staffing

The overall size of the school – that is, the total number of children who go there
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The average size of the classes
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The number of pupils per teacher
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about the school community

The average income level of families with children at the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How many students from Indigenous backgrounds go to the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How many students from non-English-speaking backgrounds go to the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about the school's academic standards

The school's record in public tests, such as national tests on literacy (reading, writing) and numeracy (number skills)
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The hours per week spent teaching subjects like literacy and numeracy
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about funding, facilities and services

Where the school gets its money from
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The cost to you of sending a child to the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The quality of the school's facilities and resources
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The range and quality of activities and services (eg counselling, chess club)

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about discipline, safety and care

How the school supports children going through a difficult time at home or among other children

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's approach to canteen food and healthy eating

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How the school supports children who may struggle academically or who are gifted in some way

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's approach to discipline

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's truancy rate

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's rate of expulsions or suspensions

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about how the school works with parents

Whether parents are encouraged to be partners in their children's education

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Whether parents are made to feel welcome in the classroom

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How the school manages complaints or issues of concern raised by parents

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Any other sort of information that you regard as very important or quite important

Other (please write in and give it a rating)
Very important Quite important

Q3.

Thinking now about choosing a **secondary** school: if you were choosing a **secondary** school, how important to you would each of the following pieces of information be?

Information about school size and staffing

The overall size of the school – that is, the total number of children who go there
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The average size of the classes
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The number of pupils per teacher
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about the school community

The average income level of families with children at the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How many students from Indigenous backgrounds go to the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How many students from non-English-speaking backgrounds go to the school
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about the school's academic standards

The school's record in public examinations such as the exams at the end of Year 12 for entry into university or TAFE
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The hours per week spent teaching subjects like English, history, science, maths
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The rate of students who stay on for Years 11 and 12
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about funding and facilities

Where the school gets its money from
Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The cost to you of sending your child to the school

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The quality of the school's facilities and resources

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The range and quality of activities and services (e.g. counselling, chess club)

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about discipline, safety and care

How the school supports children going through a difficult time at home or among other children

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's approach to canteen food and healthy eating

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How the school supports students who may struggle academically or who are gifted in some way

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's approach to discipline

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's truancy rate

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

The school's rate of expulsions or suspensions

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Information about how the school works with parents

Whether parents are encouraged to be partners in their children's education

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Whether parents are made to feel welcome in the school

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

How the school manages complaints or issues of concern raised by parents

Very important Quite important Not very important Not at all important Don't know/no opinion

Any other sort of information you regard as very important or quite important

Other (please write in and give it a rating)

Very important Quite important

QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPARING SCHOOLS

Q4.

There has been some talk lately about publicly comparing the performance of schools on the basis of information that governments could collect about schools.

Below are some pieces of information that governments could collect about schools. If you were comparing **primary** schools, how useful would each of these pieces of information be to you in making a comparison:

The overall size of the school – that is, the total number of children who go there	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The average size of the classes	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The number of pupils per teacher	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The average income level of families with children at the school	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The social and cultural background of students	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The school's record in public examinations or tests, including national tests	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
Where the school gets its money from	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The cost to you of sending a child there	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The truancy rate	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The rate of expulsions or suspensions	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The qualifications of the teaching staff	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
Teacher retention rates, or turnover among teachers	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The rate of absenteeism among teachers	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion

Q5.

And what if you were comparing **secondary** schools. If you were comparing **secondary** schools, how useful would each of these pieces of information be to you:

The overall size of the school – that is, the total number of students who go there	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The average size of the classes	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The number of teachers per pupil	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The average income level of families with children at the school	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The social and cultural background of students	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The school's record in public examinations or tests, including national tests	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
Where the school gets its money from	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The cost to you of sending a child there	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The truancy rate	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The rate of expulsions or suspensions	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The rate of students who stay on until the end of Year 12	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The qualifications of the teaching staff	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
Teacher retention rates, or turnover among teachers	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion
The rate of absenteeism among teachers	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not at useful	Don't know/no opinion

Q6.

Different schools serve different types of areas. When schools are being compared for performance, would you say the following differences should or should not be taken into account:

(a) The average income level of families with children at the school

- Should
- Should not
- Don't know/no opinion

(b) The number of recently arrived immigrants at the school

- Should
- Should not
- Don't know/no opinion

(c) The number of families at the school whose first language is NOT English

- Should
- Should not
- Don't know/no opinion

(d) Whether the school is in a rural or remote area

- Should
- Should not
- Don't know/no opinion

QUESTIONS ABOUT JUDGING A SCHOOL'S PERFORMANCE

Q7.

Here are several ways a school's performance might be judged.

As a parent, how much importance do you attach to each of them? Please give a score between 0 and 10 for each one, where 0 means you attach no importance to it, and 10 means you attach great importance to it.

(a) How well the principal and teachers seem to know the students

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Don't know/no opinion

(b) The academic qualifications of teaching staff

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Don't know/no opinion

(c) Participation of teaching staff in ongoing professional development

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(d) How the school expresses its faith (if it is a faith-based school)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(e) The atmosphere or "feel" of the school

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(f) The results the school's students achieve in public tests or examinations

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(g) The sporting or artistic achievements of the school's students

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(h) What you hear about the school from other people

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(i) How happy the students seem to be

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(j) The kind of person the school's students generally seem to turn out, or where the students go after leaving the school?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(k) Behaviour management strategies

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Don't know/no opinion

(I) Whether you feel the school is basically heading in the right direction

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Don't know/no opinion

Q8.

Would you say parents

Should
or
Should not

be invited by the school to make a judgment about how the school is performing?

Don't know/no opinion

(If should not, skip to Q10).

(If should, go to Q9).

Q9.

Which, if any, of the following aspects of school performance would you personally feel able to make a judgment about? You may choose as many or as few as you like. Please tick any you would feel able to make a judgment about.

How well the principal and teachers seem to know the students

How the school expresses its faith (if it is a faith-based school)

The atmosphere or "feel" of the school

The test or examination results of the school's students

The school's willingness or ability to meet your child's needs

What you hear about the school from other people

How happy the students seem to be

The kind of person the school's students generally seem to turn out, or where the students go after leaving the school?

Behaviour management strategies

Whether the school is basically heading in the right direction

Other (please write in)

Q10.

And would you say parents

Should
or
Should not

be invited by the school to make a judgment about how their child's teacher or teachers are performing?

Don't know/no opinion

(If should not, skip to Q12).

(If should, go to Q11).

Q11.

Based on your own experience as a parent so far, which, if any, of the following aspects of a teacher's performance would you personally feel able to make a judgment about? You may choose as many or as few as you like. Please tick any you would feel able to make a judgment about.

How well the teacher seems to know your child

The atmosphere or "feel" of the classroom

The test or examination results of your child

How the teacher seems to relate to your child

How well the teacher communicates with you as a parent

Whether the teacher recognises you as a partner in the education of your child

Other (please write in)

QUESTIONS ON WHAT YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT HOW YOUR CHILD IS GETTING ON AT SCHOOL

Q12.

Here are several things parents may wish to know about how their child is getting on at school.

As a parent, how much importance do you attach to each of them? Please give a score between 0 and 10 for each one, where 0 means you attach no importance to it, and 10 means you attach great importance to it.

(a) How your child mixes with other students

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(b) How your child behaves in class

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(c) Your child's sporting or artistic achievements

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(d) Your child's involvement in school activities generally

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(e) The kinds of things your child is developing a talent for, or an interest in

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(f) Any difficulties your child is having

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(g) How your child is getting on with the teacher or teachers

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q13.

And how important are each of the following pieces of information about your child's academic performance?

Please give a score between 0 and 10 for each one, where 0 means you attach no importance to it, and 10 means you attach great importance to it.

(a) Your child's test or examination results

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(b) Your child's place in class in each subject

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(c) Your child's place in the class overall

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(d) How your child performs compared with children in the same class in other schools in the same State/Territory

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(e) How your child performs compared with children in the same class in other schools across Australia

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q14.

Should these comparisons with children in other schools be made:

With children in ALL schools

Or

With children ONLY in schools that are in areas similar to your child's school

Or

Should these comparisons not be made?

FINALLY, JUST A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

Q15.

What is your highest completed level of education:

Primary schooling

Some secondary schooling

Completed secondary schooling (to Year 12 or equivalent)

Trade or technical qualification

University degree or higher

Q16.

What best describes your occupation:

Manager

Professional

Technician/tradesperson

Community or personal service worker

Clerical or administrative worker

Sales worker

Machinery operator/driver

Labourer

Q17.

Your gender

Male

Female

Q18.

Location

Sydney
Other NSW
Melbourne
Other Vic
Brisbane
Other Qld
Adelaide
Other SA
Perth
Other WA
Tas
ACT
NT