

## Hints and Tips for Constructing a Useful Questionnaire

Questionnaires are an effective means of collecting data on people's views within schools and communities. To ensure your questionnaire is relevant, concise and easy to complete please find below a few points to consider when constructing your survey:

### ❖ Think about the issues within your whole school and community in relation to pupils, parents and staff.

Make a list of the information you need to gather and consider which group you would like to consult. This could be completed during a School Nutrition Action Group (or relevant equivalent) / school council meeting.

#### Suggested Steering Group Workshop

Split the attendees into small mixed groups and ask them to write down the issues they would like to tackle within school. Ask them to make a list of questions relating to these issues and state which group(s) they would like to consult with. Invite each group to feedback their thoughts and then agree a list of questions for your questionnaire.

### ❖ Evaluate if it is necessary to complete a questionnaire.

There may be a more efficient method of consulting with your target group. These might include:

- Small focus groups to facilitate discussions around the issues identified. This might be at staff / governor meetings or during tutor time with pupils.
- Suggestion boxes with a small amount of questions on post cards or slips for people to complete (around 3-4 questions).
- Open surgeries – you might like to have a small panel of people from you steering group in a specified location providing the opportunity for people to go and discuss their views on a particular issue.
- Write your questions and possible answers on large sheets of flip chart paper – ask your target audience to put a sticker in the appropriate answer. This will provide an overall response to the questions. This could be completed during a parents evening, staff meeting or assembly. The flip charts could be monitored by members of staff or people from the steering group.

### ❖ Consider the appropriate format and language of your questionnaire and ensure it is suitable for your target group(s).

If your target group is KS1 pupils you may like to use pictures, symbols and faces to gather their responses and maintain their interest.

### ❖ Think about how many people you would like to complete the survey.

You may wish to survey the whole school or take a sample if the target group is large. If your survey is for pupils you could select one class per year group or one entire year to take part.

### ❖ Complete a small pilot questionnaire.

This will ensure that the questions and answers are worded correctly and will provide the most effective feedback.

❖ **Evaluate the most appropriate method of completing your survey.**

There may be a possibility of developing a computer based or online survey. This could save time when collating the results and is also more sustainable. You may wish (if appropriate) to discuss this with the IT specialist or team within school. If the survey is for students you may be able to link the completion of the survey to an IT lesson. One possible online survey system is [www.surveymonkeys.com](http://www.surveymonkeys.com)

❖ **Review the style of questions on your survey.**

Generally people are more likely to complete closed questions (yes / no or multiple choice questions) than complete open questions which ask for their comments and opinions. If you do use open question ensure there is enough space for people to write their responses. It is also easier to collate answers to closed questions.

Ask one question at a time and state how many possible responses there are to the questions. Then provide an appropriate response for example

1. *Do you have school dinners?* (please circle ONE answer only)

Yes (please go to q3)    No (please go to q2)    Sometimes (please go to q3)

2. *Why don't you have a school dinner?*

❖ **Limit your questions.**

A long questionnaire could be daunting and people may lose interest towards the end of the survey. A list of 10 useful questions should provide enough feedback. You may like to complete some follow up questions at a later date or provide people a contact email address or telephone number if they would like to provide more feedback.

❖ **Maximise your response rates.**

Response rates for questionnaires can be poor. You may like to try one of the following:

- Provide an incentive like a prize draw especially if targeting staff or parents.
- If you are targeting parents, you could ask pupils to talk to parents using clip boards in the playground at the end of the day.
- If your survey is aimed at pupils you might like to provide the questionnaire as homework or ask pupils to complete it during tutor time.

❖ **Collating responses and providing feedback**

Collating the responses can be a time consuming task but could be carried out by a SNAG pupil or as part of a math or ICT lesson. Provide an overview to feedback at the next SNAG (steering group) / school council so that actions can be taken in response to results.

It is important to provide summary of feedback to the whole school and community. Ideas include a poster with the key points and actions, an overview in a school assembly a staff meeting, a paragraph in a parents newsletter or on the school website.