

Report: Findings from the postal consultation with parent / carers of pupils living within COMART secondary school catchment area but whose children attend school outside the area.

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1. Introduction and Methodology

As part of a larger consultation on the future of Comart School, 461 self completion questionnaires were sent out in September 2003 to all parents / carers who live within Comart's catchment area but who send their child/ren to a school outside of the area. The purpose of the part of the consultation is to find out why parents / carers did not chose Comart and if they thought the choice that they did make was correct.

105 questionnaire were returned giving a response rate of 23%, which can be considered a good response for the type of consultation. Without knowing the make up or circumstances of these who responded it is difficult to say if these results are representative of all those who send their child/ren to schools outside of Comart's catchment. However, because of the high level of similarity in the responses and the relatively high response rate it can be said that it gives a very good indication of the views of those who live within Comart's catchment but choose to send their child/ren to schools outside the area.

2. Main findings

2.1 Why schools other than COMART were chosen.

Parents and carers were asked to give reasons why they choose to send their child/ren to schools other than COMART despite COMART being their nearest school. The table below represents respondent's views.

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Preference for a church school	33	27
GCSE performance	54	3
Attendance at Comart	51	5
Range of curriculum subjects at Comart	20	18
Child's choice	62	8
Concern about anti social behaviour	75	4
other	38	

Base: All respondents (105)

2.2 Satisfaction with choice of school

Nearly everyone (97%) was satisfied with their choice of school outside of Comart's catchment area. From the table below it can be seen that from comments made about their chosen school that nearly three out of five respondents (57%) were just (no reason given) happy or satisfied with their choice of school. Over a quarter (28%) mentioned their child's happiness. Typical comments included 'my son settled in very quickly and is very happy with his school' and 'she is very happy with the school and so are we'.

Table 2.2: Comment on satisfaction with their choice of school

Very happy or happy / very satisfied or satisfied	57%
Mention of child's happiness	28%
Child is improving / progressing / achieving	13%
Behaviour of pupils is better / more discipline	7%
Other	20%

2.3 Extra costs

More than four out of five respondents (84%) said that they had incurred extra costs in terms of travel time or money by sending their child to a school outside of Comart's catchment. However, of those who incurred extra costs (87 respondents) eighty five (98%) said that the benefits of sending their child to their chosen school outweighed the incurred costs.

Table 2.3: Comments on extra costs incurred

It has been worth it	33%
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Education more important than money	11%
Happiness of child is more important than money	11%
Child has mature / become more responsible	9%
Cost / time has not been a problem	4%
other	33%

The vast majority of comments about the cost incurred highlighted the positive aspects of attending what respondents considered a better school rather than being negative about this extra cost. Typical comment were; "I have to pay £6 per week for bus fares and I'm on income support so money is very tight but it is worth it", "a small price to pay for an average education" and "not only do my children know local children but have made friends city wide which would not have happened if I kept their education local".

2.4 Joining in / making friends

More than four out of five respondents said that it had not made it more difficult for their children to join in extra curricular activities (80%), nor had it made it more difficult for them to maintaining a group of friends (86%) by travelling across the city to attend a distant school.

2.5 What would make choosing Comart more likely

Parents and carers were asked, if they were choosing a school now what changes to Comart would make it more likely that they would choose it.

Table 2.5.1: What would make it more likely for you to choose Comart

	Number of responses	Percentage of all respondents (%)
nothing	44	48
more sporting opportunities	5	5
a different specialism	17	19
more vocational curriculum	16	17
other	48	52

Base: All who answer the question (92)

Table 2.5.2: 'Other' changes that would make it more likely for you to choose Comart

	Number of responses	Percentage of all respondents (%)
more discipline - action on bullying / truancy	16	39
mix of background	8	20
improvement in attitude (Staff, parents, children & authority)	4	10
improved attainment	3	7
expanded curriculum	2	5
other	13	32

Base: All who answered 'other' above and who a stated their 'other' opinion (41)

3. Conclusions

Throughout the analysis of responses from parents / carers the issues of anti social behaviours comes up continually particularly around issues of bullying and truancy (sometimes perceived). Academic achievement on the other hand is mentioned very little and it seems that the happiness of the child concerned and the piece of mind of the parent is of more importance.